

**The Making of
the Socialist Personality:
Education and Socialisation
in the German Democratic Republic
1958-1978**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which two decades of socialisation in the socialist education system of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) left their mark on the people growing up there from 1958 to 1978. The centre of investigation is the enigmatic ‘socialist personality’, an ideal human being cast from a mould rich in Marxist-Leninist principles. The ‘socialist personality’ was meant to have an all-round education of ‘head, heart and hand’ and to possess a wide range of virtues which took their cue from societal requirements rather than individual interests. The ‘subjects’ under investigation are children and young people up to the age of eighteen, whose experiences both within the education system and beyond are being explored. With this thesis I aim to show that between the project of turning children into ‘socialist personalities’ and its implementation at the grassroots stood human nature. It is my contention that despite the regime’s claim to total control of education and socialisation, the practical execution of this experiment in social engineering had its limits. It collided with young people’s individuality and self-determination, as well as with influences of a ‘parallel education system’ that often, but not always, had a different set of values: the family, peers, the Churches, and the Western lifestyle model just across the border. Yet whilst the great majority of young people were immune to the inculcation of certain aspects of education and socialisation (notably politicisation and militarisation), they did internalise a number of ‘good’ socialist values (for example love of peace, solidarity and helpfulness) during their formative years. At the end of the 1970s, the ‘end products’ of the GDR education system, whilst not resembling the envisaged ‘socialist personality’, showed nevertheless traits of a ‘new kind of human being’.

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List of Abbreviations

Abt.	<i>Abteilung</i> (department)
AG	<i>Arbeitsgemeinschaft</i> (after-school club)
ApuZ	<i>Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament</i>
APW	<i>Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften</i> (Academy of Pedagogical Sciences)
ASt.	<i>Außenstelle</i> (branch)
BArch	<i>Bundesarchiv</i> (Federal Archive)
Bd.	<i>Band</i> (volume)
BStU	<i>Archiv der Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit der ehemaligen DDR</i> (Archive of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic)
BmA	<i>Berufsausbildung mit Abitur</i> (vocational training with <i>Abitur</i>)
BVfS	<i>Bezirksverwaltung des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit</i> (Regional State Security Authority)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ČSSR	Czech and Slovakia Socialist Republic
DDR	<i>Deutsche Demokratische Republik</i> (German Democratic Republic)
DEFA	<i>Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft</i> (GDR film studios)
DIPF/BBF	<i>Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung/ Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung</i> (German Institute for International Pedagogical Research/ Library for Educational History Research)
DLZ	<i>Deutsche Lehrerzeitung</i>
DPZI	<i>Deutsches Pädagogisches Zentralinstitut</i> (German Pedagogical Central Institute)
DSF	<i>Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft</i> (German-Soviet Friendship Association)
DTSB	<i>Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund</i> (German Gymnastics and Sports Association)
EOS	<i>Erweiterte Oberschule</i> (Extended Secondary School)
FAZ	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>
FDGB	<i>Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</i> (Free German Trade Union)
FDJ	<i>Freie Deutsche Jugend</i> (Free German Youth)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GBI.	<i>Gesetzblatt der DDR</i>
GST	<i>Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik</i> (Society for Sports and Technology)
GUE	<i>Gesellschaft für Unterricht und Erziehung</i> (Union for Teaching and Education)
HA	<i>Hauptabteilung</i> (main department)
IM	<i>Informeller Mitarbeiter</i> (amateur informant of the MfS)
JG	<i>Junge Gemeinde</i> (youth group of the Protestant Church)
JHS	<i>Juristische Hochschule</i> (MfS High School of Jurisprudence in Potsdam)
JW	<i>Jugendweihe</i> (socialist coming-of-age ceremony)
KArch Gotha	<i>Kreisarchiv für den Landkreis Gotha</i> (regional archive Gotha)
KArch L-EIC	<i>Kreisarchiv des Landkreises Eichsfeld</i> (regional archive Eichsfeld)

KD	<i>Kreisdienststelle</i> (MfS regional office)
KJS	<i>Kinder- und Jugendsportschule</i> (Children and Youth Sports School)
KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> (Communist Party in Germany)
LPG	<i>Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft</i> (agricultural collective)
MEW	<i>Marx-Engels-Werke</i> (collected works of Marx and Engels)
MfNV	<i>Ministerium für Nationale Verteidigung</i> (Ministry of National Defence)
MfS	<i>Ministerium für Staatssicherheit</i> (Ministry of State Security)
MfV	<i>Ministerium für Volksbildung</i> (Ministry of People's Education)
ML	<i>Marxismus-Leninismus</i>
MMM	<i>Messe der Meister für Morgen</i> (Fair of Tomorrow's Masters)
MTS	<i>Maschinen-Traktoren-Station</i> (tractor depot)
NÖSPL	<i>Neues Ökonomisches System der Planung und Leitung</i> (New Economic System of Planning and Leadership)
NVA	<i>Nationale Volksarmee</i> (National People's Army)
PE	Physical education
POS	<i>Polytechnische Oberschule</i> (Polytechnic High School)
Napola	<i>Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt</i> (National Political Education Institution)
ND	<i>Neues Deutschland</i>
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> (National Socialist German Workers Party)
NVA	<i>Nationale Volksarmee</i> (National People's Army)
RdK	<i>Rat des Kreises</i> (local council)
SAPMO-BArch	<i>Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv</i> (Foundation of the Archives of the Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archive)
SArch/PPR	<i>Schularchiv Salzmannschule/ Protokolle Pädagogischer Rat</i>
SBZ	<i>Sowjetische Besatzungszone</i> (Soviet Zone of Occupation)
SED	<i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</i> (Socialist Unity Party)
SMAD	<i>Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland</i> (Soviet Military Administration in Germany)
Stasi	<i>Staatssicherheit</i> (Ministry of State Security)
TGL	<i>Technische Normen, Gütevorschriften und Lieferbedingungen</i> (GDR equivalent of DIN standard)
ThHStAW	<i>Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar</i> (Thuringian Central State Archive Weimar)
TOP	<i>Tagesordnungspunkt</i> (agenda item)
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Socialist Soviet Republics
WKU	<i>Wehrkundeunterricht</i> (military education lessons)
YCL	Young Communist League
ZAIG	<i>Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe</i> (Central Evaluation and Information Group)
ZIJ	<i>Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung im Deutschen Jugendinstitut Leipzig</i> (Central Institute for Youth Research in the German Youth Institute Leipzig)
ZK	<i>Zentralkomitee</i> (Central Committee)
ZSGL	<i>Zentrale Schulgewerkschaftsleitung</i> (Central School Union Leadership)

Chapter 1. Introduction

Living with the 'Big Bad Wolf': Education in the GDR

At a press conference in 1977 on the achievements of pre-school education, a functionary of the Socialist Unity Party (SED)¹ said that for children growing up in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the 'Big Bad Wolf' existed not only in the world of fairy tales but also in the real world, in the shape of 'revanchists and enemies of peace', whom children were taught to hate from kindergarten and school.² This is a striking example of how politicians and pedagogues were open about the fact that education in East Germany was coloured by political circumstances and ideology. But was the GDR alone in transmitting its values via the education system? Any society educates its young people according to its own principles, political, religious or cultural. So the relevant issue is not 'Was it morally right for schools to teach values?' but rather 'Which values did they teach, and to what effect?'. Teaching values is of crucial importance for the well-being of any society. Over 180 years ago, Georg W. F. Hegel went so far as to say:

Civil society has the right and duty of overseeing and influencing education, inasmuch as education bears upon the child's capacity to become a member of society. Society's right here is paramount over the arbitrary and contingent preferences of parents.³

In the past, three social institutions might have shared the work of transmitting values to children: the parental home, the school and the Church. In the GDR, this division of labour followed Hegelian priorities. Whilst the influence of the Church was relegated to the fringes, the school's role as the primary educator became increasingly important as the influence of parents waned due to their work commitments.

Thus the task of the GDR education system was to convey knowledge not only of facts, but also – and especially – of values. In English, the word 'education' embodies those two objectives. Sometimes, this linguistic parsimony poses problems when translating from English into another language. The ingenious one-liner 'I have never let school interfere with my education', attributed to Mark Twain,⁴ is translated into German as '*Ich habe mir nie meine Erziehung durch Schulbildung verderben lassen.*' In German, the distinction between the intellectual and the moral side of

¹ SED: *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*.

² Article in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), 'Der böse Wolf der Kinder in der DDR – Haß als Lernziel' (10.12.1977), BStU MfS ZAIG 8820/1.

³ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie of Right* (1821), 13. Quoted in A. Partington (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (Oxford, 1996), 330.

⁴ Cf. <<http://www.twainquotes.com/Education.html>> [accessed 23.6.2002] (eleventh quote).

education is greatly facilitated by the existence of two words. Whereas *Bildung* describes the procurement of factual knowledge and the development of primarily intellectual abilities, *Erziehung* is the formation of moral behaviour, will and character and the instilling of norms and values (e.g. ideological, political, philosophical, religious, ethical),⁵ or ‘socialisation’, the process by which children become aware of and are taught to integrate into society.⁶

In the GDR, the state regarded itself as being one with society. The primary goal for everyone in this society should be to become a ‘socialist personality’, an ideal human being cast from a mould rich in Marxist-Leninist principles. The socialist personality was meant to have an all-round education (intellectually, morally and physically)⁷ and be well balanced, consciously shaping societal life, changing nature, being the active builder and defender of the future communist society, and enjoying a fulfilled and happy life in socialist society. This was the aim enshrined in the 1965 Act on the Integrated Socialist Education System,⁸ which committed teachers and parents alike to bring up children for the purposes of the common good.

This thesis is concerned with the ways in which two decades of socialisation in the socialist education system of the GDR left their mark on the people growing up there from the late 1950s to the late 1970s. At the centre stands the ubiquitous and enigmatic ‘socialist personality’. Through a detailed, empirical study of how this paradigm was employed by the state to manipulate ‘its’ people and their ensuing reactions I hope to assess the disparity between the GDR’s utopian visions of the young socialists and the real human beings who sat on the school benches.

Historiography on education

Research into East German education began in the 1950s, both in the GDR and in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Owing to their contrasting values and worldview (or *Weltanschauung*), research in East and West often differed according to authors’ political inclinations. Historiography in the GDR aimed to portray the success of the ruling party’s education policy. It was designed to create an educational tradition for the ‘first socialist state on German soil’, to explain and legitimise the course of events and

⁵ W. Eichler, ‘Menschenbild und Erziehungspraxis in der DDR’, in E. Badstübner (ed.), *Befremdlich anders. Leben in der DDR* (Berlin, 2004), 560.

⁶ Cf. ‘socialisation’ in *The Chambers Dictionary* (Edinburgh, 2002), 1569.

⁷ This trinity was not exclusively sought after by Marxists. The Victorian visionary John Badley, for example, founded Bedales School in Hampshire on the principle ‘head, heart and hand’.

⁸ Kanzlei des Staatsrates der DDR (ed.), *Materialien der 12. Sitzung der Volkskammer der DDR und das Gesetz über das einheitliche sozialistische Bildungswesen* (Heft 5, 1965) [henceforth *Bildungsgesetz*], § 1, 88.

the policies of those in power, by following the blueprint of and helped along by the Soviet Union.⁹ The most impressive collective project undertaken was the grandly named series *Monumenta paedagogica*, which was edited by members of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, started in 1960 and finished twenty-five volumes later in 1988. It traced education in the German lands from the late 18th century to the contemporary GDR school system.¹⁰ Although these works need to be taken with more than a pinch of salt, it seems imprudent simply to label them ‘worthless’. They constitute contemporary documents which show how the East German education system perceived itself, and therefore deserve our attention.

West German works emphasised the party-political orientation of the education system, and were particularly critical of the position of power the school in the GDR held over the fate of children.¹¹ With limited access to information, researchers had to rely on officially published books and the rather selective testimonies of teachers and pupils who had fled from the GDR. There were however some observers, particularly from the English-speaking world, who found some aspects of the GDR worthy of praise, especially in the 1960s, when it was not yet clear which of the two education systems, or political systems for that matter, might prove the more successful or enduring.¹² In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of books were published by educationalists, focusing on the structure of the education system rather than its effects.¹³ A refreshing alternative to this approach was put forward by Brigitte Deja-Löhhöfel in 1988, who showed an alertness and sensibility for the ‘actors’ in the education system on the other side of the Wall.¹⁴

The one point where authors from East and West generally agreed was in the superiority of the system on their side of the (initially metaphoric) Wall. Whereas writers in the FRG pointed to missing freedom and authoritarianism compared to the

⁹ W. Mehnert *et al.* (eds), *Grundfragen der proletarischen Erziehung. Pädagogische und bildungspolitische Fragen* (Berlin, 1983); Authors’ collective, *Die Schule in der DDR* (Berlin, 1959).

¹⁰ Kommission für Deutsche Erziehungs- und Schulgeschichte der Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften der DDR (ed.), *Monumenta paedagogica*, (Berlin, 1960-1988).

¹¹ H. Helmrich, B. Ahrndt, *Schüler in der DDR. Zwei Erlebnisberichte. 1945-1952, 1964-1977* (Munich, 1980); G. Möbus, *Klassenkampf im Kindergarten. Das Kindesalter in der Sicht der kommunistischen Pädagogik* (Berlin, 1956).

¹² M. J. Moore-Rinvoluceri, *Education in East Germany* (Newton Abbot, 1973); N. Grant, *Society, Schools and Progress in Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 1969); H. Vogt, *Bildung und Erziehung in der DDR. Sozialistisch-industriegesellschaftliche Curriculum-Reform in Kindergarten, Schule und Berufsbildung* (Stuttgart, 1969).

¹³ O. Anweiler, *Schulpolitik und Schulsystem in der DDR* (Opladen, 1988); D. Waterkamp, *Das Einheitsprinzip im Bildungswesen der DDR. Eine historisch-systemtheoretische Untersuchung* (Cologne, 1985); *idem*, *Lehrplanreform in der DDR. Die zehnklassige allgemeinbildende polytechnische Oberschule 1963-1972* (Hanover, 1975).

¹⁴ B. Deja-Löhhöfel, *Erziehung nach Plan. Schule und Ausbildung in der DDR* (Berlin, 1988).

West, the GDR emphasised its egalitarian principles and the large state-budget expenditure on education.

In the first decade after the fall of the Wall, research on education in the GDR grew exponentially. The above-mentioned educationalists continued to concentrate on historical theory, but now with the added bonus of primary-source material from the newly opened archives. The main focus here was on the repressive and ideologically contaminated nature of the system.¹⁵

In contrast to this approach, recent years have also witnessed a flourishing of comparative and social history.¹⁶ This trend began in the FRG in the 1980s,¹⁷ and was an attempt to look ‘into’ GDR society instead of simply ‘onto’ it. A number of studies have been published in this field, based on case studies, interviews, as well as a number of valuable autobiographies.¹⁸

When contemplating the publications by East German authors in the last fifteen years, a range of different trends are perceptible. Firstly, in the immediate aftermath of the regime’s downfall, the ‘settlement of accounts’ was on the agenda.¹⁹ And then in recent years, there has been the phenomenon of highly saleable, hyped ‘memoirs’ by relatively young authors, who claim to be the voice of the ‘lost generation’ of the *Wende*, as the period from autumn 1989 until unification in 1990 has come to be known. Often collections of short, ‘fun’ essays that showed the GDR as a cabinet of absurdities, these works were part of the wave of ‘*Ostalgie*’, a neologism of East and nostalgia,

¹⁵ C. Führ, C. Berg, *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte*, vol. VI: ‘1945 bis zur Gegenwart’, here part II ‘Deutsche Demokratische Republik und neue Bundesländer’ (Munich, 1998); S. Häder, H.-E. Tenorth (eds), *Bildungsgeschichte einer Diktatur. Bildung und Erziehung in SBZ und DDR im historisch-gesellschaftlichen Kontext* (Weinheim, 1997); G. Geißler, U. Wiegmann, *Pädagogik und Herrschaft in der DDR. Die parteilichen, geheimdienstlichen und vormilitärischen Erziehungsverhältnisse* (Frankfurt/Main: 1996); H.-E. Tenorth et al., *Politisierung im Schulalltag der DDR. Durchsetzung und Scheitern einer Erziehungsambition* (Weinheim, 1996); H.-H. Krüger, W. Marotzki (eds), *Pädagogik und Erziehungsalltag in der DDR: zwischen Systemvorgaben und Pluralität, Studien zur Erziehungswissenschaft und Bildungsforschung* (Opladen, 1994).

¹⁶ U. and W. Benz (eds), *Deutschland, deine Kinder. Zur Prägung von Feindbildern in Ost und West* (Munich, 2001); S. Häder, *Schülerkindheit in Ost-Berlin. Sozialisation unter den Bedingungen der Diktatur 1945-1958* (Cologne, 1998); A. Leschinsky, G. Kluchert, *Zwischen zwei Diktaturen. Gespräche über die Schulzeit im Nationalsozialismus und in der SBZ/DDR* (Weinheim, 1997); M. Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship. Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford, 1995); H. Kaelble et al. (eds), *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart, 1994).

¹⁷ N. Haase et al. (eds), *VEB Nachwuchs. Jugend in der DDR* (Reinbek, 1983).

¹⁸ B. Felsmann (ed.), *Beim kleinen Trompeter habe ich immer geweint. Kindheit in der DDR – Erinnerungen an die Jungen Pioniere* (Berlin, 2003); C. Dieckmann, *Die Liebe in den Zeiten des Landfilms: eigens erlebte Geschichten* (Berlin, 2002); J. Rodden, *Repainting the little red schoolhouse. A history of Eastern German Education 1945-1995* (Oxford, 2002); U. Mietzner, *Enteignung der Subjekte. Lehrer und Schule in der DDR. Eine Schule in Mecklenburg von 1945 bis zum Mauerbau* (Opladen, 1998); C. Kleßmann (ed.), *Kinder der Opposition. Berichte aus Pfarrhäusern in der DDR* (Gütersloh, 1993); J. Fuchs, G. Hieke, *Dumm geschult? Ein Schüler und sein Lehrer* (Berlin, 1992); W. Solms (ed.), *Begrenzt glücklich: Kindheit in der DDR* (Marburg, 1992).

¹⁹ H.-J. Maaz, *Der Gefühlsstau: ein Psychogramm der DDR* (Berlin, 1990); F. Klier, *Lüg Vaterland. Erziehung in der DDR* (Munich, 1990).

which infected the German media around the end of the millennium.²⁰ Thirdly, there is the category of legitimising literature.²¹ Fourthly and lastly, one finds more serious, academic studies that make use of their authors' own experiences with life in the GDR and balance them with new findings from the archives.²²

The meticulousness with which the authorities documented life in the GDR is a tremendous boon for historians, as it offers a unique view into the workings of the system. The hitherto unexplored archival sources gave rise to a large number of dissertation projects. Thanks to 'youth' being a very popular area for researchers, the field of education and socialisation is no longer *terra incognita*;²³ it is however, still far from being fully explored since research projects exclusively devoted to the implementation of education are rare.

Rarer still are recent works that focus on the concept of the 'socialist personality' in particular. In the early 1980s, Jutta Wilhelmi made an excellent effort to determine whether or not there were any 'socialist personalities' incarnate amongst the GDR youth.²⁴ In 1997, Maria Elisabeth Müller delivered a useful overview of the development of the concept; she did however stay on the surface of the problem by focussing on theory rather than implementation.²⁵ An attempt to remedy this shortcoming was undertaken in 2005 by the young French historian Emmanuel Droit, who examined the effects of ideology and educational practices on young people in East Berlin. His dissertation has not yet been published, but a journal article presented a condensed version of his work.²⁶ This study promises to give illuminating insights into how the 'objects' and 'actors' of the education system perceived the state's efforts to turn them into socialist human beings.

²⁰ In order of decreasing quality: A. Gröschner, *Moskauer Eis* (Leipzig, 2000); C. Rusch, *Meine Freie Deutsche Jugend* (Frankfurt/Main, 2003); J. Hensel, *Zonenkinder* (Reinbek, 2002).

²¹ L. Corvalán, *Gespräche mit Margot Honecker über das andere Deutschland* (Berlin, 2001); S. Bollinger, F. Vilmar (eds), *Die DDR war anders. Kritische Würdigung ihrer wichtigen soziokulturellen Einrichtungen* (Berlin, 2002).

²² D. Kirchhöfer *et al.* (eds), *Kindheit in der DDR* (Frankfurt/Main, 2003); E. Badstübner (ed.), *Befremdlich anders. Leben in der DDR* (Berlin, 2000); E. Ahrberg, „Mit gestutzten Flügeln“. *Jugend in der DDR* (Magdeburg, 1996).

²³ A. Saunders, *Youth and Patriotism: Changing dimensions in Eastern Germany, 1979-2002, focussing on Sachsen-Anhalt* (unpublished doctoral thesis, 2004); M. D. Ohse, *Jugend nach dem Mauerbau. Anpassung, Protest und Eigensinn. DDR 1961-1974* (Berlin, 2003); M. Fenemore, *Nonconformity on the borders of dictatorship. Youth subcultures in the GDR 1949-1965* (unpublished doctoral thesis, 2002); P. Skyba, *Vom Hoffnungsträger zum Sicherheitsrisiko. Jugend in der DDR und Jugendpolitik der SED 1949-1961* (Cologne, 2000); M. Michalzik, "An der Seite der Genossen..." *Offizielles Jugendbild und politische Sozialisation im SED-Staat. Zum Scheitern der sozialistischen Erziehung in der DDR* (Melle, 1994).

²⁴ J. Wilhelmi, *Jugend in der DDR. Der Weg zur "sozialistischen Persönlichkeit"* (Berlin, 1983).

²⁵ M. E. Müller, *Zwischen Ritual und Alltag: der Traum von einer sozialistischen Persönlichkeit* (Frankfurt/Main, 1997).

²⁶ E. Droit, 'L'éducation en RDA ou la quête de l'homme socialiste nouveau 1949-1990' in *Histoire de l'Education* (no. 101, January 2004), 3-33.

Various other fields of research are of relevance for those interested in the upbringing of children in the GDR. There are of course the mass organisations for young people,²⁷ but there is also the state secret police [*Staatssicherheit*, or *Stasi*], who kept a close eye on ‘youth as the inner enemy’ (Dorothee Wierling),²⁸ and did not shy away from using minors to spy on their friends.²⁹ The omnipresence of the Stasi and its portrayal as a defining element of GDR society in many of the above mentioned works should be regarded with caution, for it is questionable whether the majority of East German young people felt its presence in their life to the extent often suggested.

Finally, a number of books published during the 1990s were commented editions of primary-source material that presented an overview of the overwhelming amounts of paper stored away in the archives.³⁰ One of the most notable works in this respect was a four-volume joint effort on the history, structure and functionality of the GDR education system, commissioned by the Ministry for Education in Brandenburg in 1996.³¹

So it is clear that the plethora of books which emerged since 1989 have largely focussed on the structure of the education system, policies, and the curriculum, without showing much of the impact this had on the recipients. The voices of the players on stage have been largely ignored. Recent years however have seen a growing trend towards social history. Such studies are indispensable for a profound understanding of how education was perceived in everyday life by those being educated.

Overview of recent wider debates

With such a wealth of new information available from ‘inside the GDR’ (Mary Fulbrook), what were the wider debates on the nature of this ‘lost country’, as Wolfgang Engler called it?³² Since the GDR’s demise, historians have been trying to outbid each

²⁷ L. Ansorg, *Kinder im Klassenkampf. Die Geschichte der Pionierorganisation von 1948 bis Ende der 50er Jahre* (Berlin, 1997); U. Mählert, G.-R. Stephan, *Blaue Hemden, Rote Fahnen. Die Geschichte der Freien Deutschen Jugend* (Opladen, 1996); H. Gotschlich (ed.), “*Links und links und Schritt gehalten...*“ *Die FDJ: Konzepte – Abläufe – Grenzen* (Berlin, 1994).

²⁸ D. Wierling, ‘Die Jugend als innerer Feind. Konflikte in der Erziehungsdiktatur der sechziger Jahre’ in Kaelble, *Sozialgeschichte*, 404-25.

²⁹ K. Behnke, J. Wolf (eds), *Stasi auf dem Schulhof. Der Missbrauch von Kindern und Jugendlichen durch das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (Berlin, 1998); J. Mothes (ed.), *Beschädigte Seelen. DDR-Jugend und Staatssicherheit* (Bremen, 1996).

³⁰ E. Brislinger et al. (eds), *Jugend im Osten. Sozialwissenschaftliche Daten und Kontextwissen aus der DDR sowie den neuen Bundesländern 1969-1995* (Berlin, 1997); E. Schulze (ed.), *DDR-Jugend. Ein statistisches Handbuch* (Berlin, 1995); O. Anweiler et al. (eds), *Bildungspolitik in Deutschland 1945-1990. Ein historisch-vergleichender Quellenband* (Opladen, 1993).

³¹ Bildungsministerium Brandenburg (ed.), *Geschichte, Struktur und Funktionsweise der DDR-Volksbildung*, vol. 1-4 (Berlin, 1996-1997).

³² W. Engler, *Die Ostdeutschen. Kunde von einem verlorenen Land* (Berlin, 1999).

other in finding the epithet that would best describe its ruling system.³³ Most agree that it was a dictatorship. The big divide however runs between two groups, pro and con a ‘totalitarian dictatorship’.

On the one hand are those who see in the GDR a totalitarian state under Moscow’s armed protection, with secret police surveillance of its oppressed, miserable and short-changed people.³⁴ Whilst during the 1970s and 1980s the general consensus amongst West German historians was that the GDR was *not* a totalitarian state,³⁵ there was an astounding reappraisal in the early 1990s when East Germans’ raw anger at having lived ‘imprisoned for forty years’ was fuelled with new revelations of the privileges enjoyed by the ‘upper ten thousand’, deplorable details of *Stasi* intrusion into people’s lives and other scandals. Politicians and the media of the Western democracies were quick to condemn the GDR as an ‘unjust’ or ‘unlawful state’ [*Unrechtsstaat*]. Advocates of the totalitarianism approach seemed to find proof of their claim in the six-point catalogue of what defines a totalitarian state by Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski (ideology, mass party, secret police, news monopoly, arms monopoly, planned economy) and Hannah Arendt’s reflections on the GDR.³⁶ Thus, comparisons with the Third Reich (‘the second German dictatorship’) and the Soviet Union (‘Stalinist’ or ‘post-Stalinist’) were often employed to mark the parallels between those systems.

Whilst this interpretation still looms large in the public perception,³⁷ another group of historians has set out to seek a more differentiated description. Their suggestions of an alternative approach to the totalitarian model are altogether more plausible and convincing. The most striking shortcoming of the ‘top-down’ approach is its focus on intention rather than on the realities. Yes, it is true that all six premises of a totalitarian state as listed above existed in the GDR, but their effectiveness was not to such an extent as that one could speak of a success. The regime simply aspired to totalitarianism. Many excellent studies have shown the ‘limits of dictatorship’ (Richard

³³ For a detailed discussion of this issue, see C. Ross, *The East German Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London, 2002). Also T. Diedrich, H. Ehlert, ‘Moderne Diktatur’ – ‘Erziehungsdiktatur’ – ‘Fürsorgediktatur’ oder was sonst? – Das Herrschaftssystem der DDR und der Versuch seiner Definition. Ein Tagungsbericht’ in *Potsdamer Bulletin* (no. 12, February 1998), 17-25; R. Jessen, ‘DDR-Geschichte und Totalitarismustheorie’ in *Berliner Debatte INITIAL* 4/5 (1995), 17-24.

³⁴ K. Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat. Geschichte und Strukturen der DDR* (Munich, 1998); A. Mitter, S. Wolle, *Untergang auf Raten. Unbekannte Kapitel der DDR-Geschichte* (Munich, 1993).

³⁵ E. Jesse, ‘War die DDR totalitär?’ in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament* [henceforth APuZ], (40/1994), 12-23.

³⁶ C. Friedrich, Z. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, 1956); H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London, 1958).

³⁷ K. Jarausch, ‘Realer Sozialismus als Fürsorgediktatur. Zur begrifflichen Einordnung der DDR’ in *APuZ*, (20/1998), 34.

Bessel) by drawing attention to the bureaucratic chaos of the so-called ‘monolith’ SED, the participation of the ‘people’ in the workings of the ‘state’, and testified to the survival of individual will and self-determination.³⁸

So, if the GDR was not a totalitarian state, what was it? The most prominent alternative suggestions range from ‘modern dictatorship’ (Jürgen Kocka),³⁹ ‘welfare dictatorship’ (Konrad Jarausch),⁴⁰ ‘education dictatorship’ (Dorothee Wierling),⁴¹ to simply ‘socialist dictatorship’ (Martin Sabrow).⁴² The search (or as it sometimes seems, the battle) for the right terminology pervades the area of society, too. Here, historians, political scientists and sociologists have put a number of crucial terms forward in recent years. There is Sigrid Meuschel’s thesis of an envisaged ‘*entdifferenzierte Gesellschaft*’ [a politically homogenised society],⁴³ Jürgen Kocka’s ‘*durchherrschte Gesellschaft*’ [a society drenched through with authority],⁴⁴ as well as Alf Lüdtke’s term ‘*Eigensinn*’, which may be translated as obstinacy or frowardness.⁴⁵ The latter term has found an all-round positive reception among historians, for it is able to show the existing suppression as well as the non-acceptance of it, thereby outlining (again) the ‘limits of dictatorship’.⁴⁶

I would like to close with a reservation. All of the above proposals with their theoretical and empirical analyses have proved very useful for a more differentiated understanding of the ‘SED regime’, which, it is sometimes necessary to recall, was made up of flesh and blood. Although I have tried to capture the twists and turns of scholarly debate, I am reluctant to make sweeping generalisations which identify arguments as either right or wrong, especially in limited space. In my opinion, the ‘battle of terminology’ will continue indefinitely, for there are simply too many

³⁸ E.g. Fulbrook, *Anatomy*; Kaelble, *Sozialgeschichte*. Cf. also J. Madarász, *Conflict and compromise in East Germany 1971-1989. A precarious stability* (Basingstoke, 2003); K. Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as experience. Towards a socio-cultural history of the GDR* (New York, 1999); R. Bessel, R. Jessen (eds), *Die Grenzen der Diktatur. Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR* (Göttingen, 1996).

³⁹ J. Kocka (ed.), *Historische DDR-Forschung: Aufsätze und Studien* (Berlin, 1992), 12.

⁴⁰ K. Jarausch, ‘Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship’ in *idem*, *Dictatorship*, 47-69.

⁴¹ Wierling in Kaelble, *Sozialgeschichte*, 404-25.

⁴² M. Sabrow, P. Walter (eds), *Historische Forschung und sozialistische Diktatur. Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR* (Leipzig, 1995).

⁴³ S. Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteierrschaft: zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR 1945-1989* (Frankfurt/Main, 1992), esp. 10ff.

⁴⁴ J. Kocka, ‘Eine durchherrschte Gesellschaft’ in Kaelble, *Sozialgeschichte*, 547-53.

⁴⁵ A. Lüdtke, P. Becker (eds), *Akten. Eingaben. Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte. Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag* (Berlin, 1997), 13-25. See also T. Lindenberger (ed.), *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Cologne, 1999).

⁴⁶ Lüdtke is one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the ‘history of everyday life’ and uses this approach to underpin his most illuminating studies of East German history ‘from within’. See A. Lüdtke (ed.), *The history of everyday life. Reconstructing historical experiences and ways of life* (Princeton, 1995); *idem*, ‘Everyday History in Germany after 1989’ in *Kasus* (1999), 117-26; *idem*, ‘Alltagsgeschichte: Aneignung und Akteure. Oder - es hat noch kaum begonnen!’ in *WerkstattGeschichte* (17/1997), 83-91.

considerations to be made when trying to define the GDR for one word or phrase to suffice. What comparative base does one use – the Third Reich, the Soviet bloc, or the FRG? From what angle is the system being described – top or bottom? Whichever perspective one chooses, it will only be one of many, and hence limited. As Torsten Diedrich and Hans Ehlert have written, in their report of a conference at the *Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung* Potsdam in 1997, on the quest for the correct term:

Even if one would combine the cornucopia of interpretative models proposed at this conference and speak of a ‘modern socialist welfare society of Stalinist-Soviet specification’, one would not be able to conceptually master the manifold phenomena and processes.⁴⁷

This dilemma might explain why so many analyses of the GDR bear titles which begin with the word ‘between’. GDR society was a society torn between two sides in many respects: modernity and old-world qualities, tolerance and terror, system defaults and obstinacy, to name but a few. I toyed with the idea of entitling this study ‘Between indoctrination and impenetrability’, but then opted for the hands-on title of ‘The Making of...’, the practical side of which I will turn to now.

Sources

In order to gain as detailed a picture of this process as possible I collected a wide range of source material. The view ‘from above’ is documented in official records kept by a number of archives. The archives chosen for my research represent each level of the educational hierarchy in the GDR, thereby allowing a view of both how demands from the executive filtered through to the grassroots, and also the feedback to the top. The Berlin branch of the Federal Archive was a mine of information, where documents relating to education originated from various corners of the GDR’s bureaucratic system. I consulted those of the Ministry of People’s Education (MfV);⁴⁸ and from within the SED’s Central Committee (ZK),⁴⁹ those of the Department of People’s Education, the Department of Youth and the Department for Questions of Security. The Office for Youth Questions, the State Secretariat for Church Questions, and the offices of high-ranking functionaries such as Erich Honecker, Paul Verner and Kurt Hager held other records on education. The archives of the parties and mass organisations of the GDR (SAPMO)⁵⁰ hold information on the Pioneer Organisation (PO), the Free German Youth

⁴⁷ Cf. Diedrich and Ehlert in *Potsdamer Bulletin* (February 1998), 25.

⁴⁸ MfV: *Ministerium für Volksbildung* [Ministry of People’s Education].

⁴⁹ ZK: *Zentralkomitee* [Central Committee].

⁵⁰ SAPMO: *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR*.

Organisation (FDJ),⁵¹ the German Gymnastics and Sports Federation (DTSB)⁵² and the Society for Sports and Technology (GST).⁵³ The Federal Archive also holds a large number of surveys conducted by the Central Institute for Youth Research (ZIJ)⁵⁴ Leipzig between 1966 and 1990, which constitute valuable primary sources on the opinions of young people at the time. Documents from the central archive as well as files from the regional branches of the Ministry of State Security (MfS),⁵⁵ currently administered by the Birtler Authority in Berlin, gave extremely interesting insights into the workings of the system and realities of life. The provenance of the material from the last two sources is of course particularly problematic to evaluate, since it was selected (or even commissioned) by state functionaries.

In addition to these documents made by and for people at the centre of power, I selected the former district of Erfurt as the region that I wanted to explore in more detail in order to see how far the long arm of the state reached in the provinces. The MfV had one branch and representatives in each regional capital [*Bezirksstadt*] as well as in the smaller district towns [*Kreisstadt*]. In order to avoid confusion, henceforth the German words *Bezirk* and *Kreis* will be used to describe the larger and smaller administrative districts. I consulted the archive of the MfV's branch in Bezirk Erfurt, held by the Thuringian Principal State Archive in Weimar, as well as documents of two MfV branches on the lowest administrative level, in Gotha and Heiligenstadt. The latter was responsible for the Kreis Eichsfeld, an area close to the inner-German border and of special interest to me, for it was home to a large Catholic community. I was interested to see whether this led to any specific problems with regard to implementing education policies for pupils and functionaries alike. Kreis Gotha was chosen because I had access to the perfectly intact archive of one school within its boundaries, that of the former *Erweiterte Oberschule* (EOS)⁵⁶ Salzmannschule in the small village of Schnepfenthal.

This school was something of an oddity insofar as it was one of the few 'traditional schools' in the GDR, having been founded in 1784 by the theologian and reform pedagogue Christian Gotthilf Salzmann (1744-1811).⁵⁷ His humanist and philanthropic ideals aimed for children to associate respectfully with each other, their

⁵¹ FDJ: *Freie Deutsche Jugend* [Free German Youth].

⁵² DTSB: *Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund* [German Gymnastics and Sports Federation].

⁵³ GST: *Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik* [Society for Sports and Technology].

⁵⁴ ZIJ: *Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung* [Central Institute for Youth Research].

⁵⁵ MfS: *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* [Ministry for State Security].

⁵⁶ *Erweiterte Oberschule* [secondary school].

⁵⁷ On the school's history, see G. Fuhlbrügge, 'Die Salzmannschule als Erweiterte Oberschule in der DDR' in H. Kemper, U. Seidelmann (eds), *Menschenbild und Bildungsverständnis bei Christian Gotthilf Salzmann* (Weinheim, 1995), 171-94; Authors' collective, *200 Jahre Salzmannschule. Gothaer Museumsheft. Abhandlungen und Berichte zur Regionalgeschichte* (Gotha, 1984), vol. 1 and 2.

educators, and nature.⁵⁸ His call for a natural development of ‘body and spirit’, which included academic as well as practical work, attracted Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths (1759-1839) who became his associate and created the first German school sports field in Schnepfenthal and introduced PE into the school curriculum.⁵⁹ Their holistic concept of education as well as the cordial relationship between pupils and teachers miraculously survived when the school became the EOS Salzmannschule and which was often described by those who knew it as a veritable island, hidden away in the Thuringian Forest and standing the test of time throughout varying historical climates.

Returning to my source material, the above selection allowed me insights into the workings of the system from the lowest level of ‘real people’ in a case-study school up to the highest echelons in Berlin. The centralist structure of the GDR allows one to draw some countrywide conclusions from this cross-section. I must add that I would like to have made more than one case study of a school, but my attempts to locate other complete archives were thwarted. As a general rule, the POS⁶⁰ cleared out their records after ten years, and the way records were kept by individual EOS depended on the diligence of the individual headteacher. Added to this is that in the gallimaufry of 1989-1990, many documents were deliberately destroyed to hide anything which might compromise teachers in the new political system. I nevertheless unearthed two other sources of information: some documents found in the very rudimentary archive of a village POS in Vogelsberg, Kreis Sömmerda, and the school chronicle of a POS in Weimar.

In search of original material I visited the German Diary Archive in Emmendingen, Baden-Württemberg. Since 1998, this archive has saved and collected diaries, memoirs and letters of ‘ordinary’ people for posterity and constitutes a valuable source for studies on the history of everyday life.⁶¹ It currently has just over 1200 documents filed, of which only eighty originate from the GDR, and of those, only a tiny fraction was useful for my research. Especially since the publication of Victor Klemperer’s diaries there has been a growing awareness of how valuable diaries are that were written with no end in mind other than writing down what happened. It would be

⁵⁸ C. G. Salzmann, *Krebsbüchlein oder Anweisung zu einer unvernünftigen Erziehung der Kinder* (1780); *idem*, *Ameisenbüchlein oder Anweisung zu einer vernünftigen Erziehung der Erzieher* (1806).

⁵⁹ J. C. F. GutsMuths, *Gymnastik für die Jugend* (1793) – written 18 years before Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), who is commonly regarded as the ‘German father of gymnastics’, somewhat unjustly took the credit for introducing the Germans to gymnastics.

⁶⁰ POS: *Polytechnische Oberschule* [polytechnic high school].

⁶¹ A comparable institution would be the Mass Observation Archive at the University of Sussex, which collects material about everyday life in Britain.

good if a branch of this archive could open somewhere in Eastern Germany in order to save more GDR material from the dustbin.

A cornerstone of this research is the use of oral history material. The advantage of being a historian of the GDR is that ‘the living presence of the past’,⁶² i.e. contemporary witnesses, are still in plentiful supply – and a source that in my opinion cannot be ignored. The use of interviews or questionnaires to collect accounts and reminiscences of past events has become increasingly common since the late 1970s;⁶³ and in 1987, a groundbreaking study involving 160 interviews in the GDR by a group of West German historians was undertaken.⁶⁴ This methodology has advantages and drawbacks. Critics of the method point to the potential unreliability of the source because of the tendency for memory to restructure the past, forget or repress, and argue that events and experiences recalled from an adult perspective interpret rather than record facts because the witness has since been subject to various influences and learning experiences, which may lead to conscious or unconscious misrepresentation and reconstruction of facts.

Notwithstanding the subjectivity of oral history accounts, they provide an invaluable source for research projects. First of all, these accounts present a genuine perspective ‘from within’ on a variety of issues, such as ‘the real life,’ historical events, personal experiences and emotions. Secondly, oral history reveals factual data which does not exist in written sources. It can make people speak whose experiences would otherwise be lost. As Christoph Dieckmann, ZEIT-columnist and observer of life in the GDR and ex-GDR, wrote: ‘History is made by great people and happens to small people.’ [*Die großen Leute machen Geschichte, den kleinen stößt sie zu.*]⁶⁵ Whilst historians will argue over the first part of this statement, the second part is undoubtedly true. Especially for a study of a social experiment, the voices of children and young people cannot be excluded. Their memories and experiences provide details of how children reacted to the set of values and rules taught in school, how they coped and perhaps even exploited demands, and how the education system shaped their identities as citizens of the GDR. If we dismiss oral histories and instead focus exclusively on

⁶² Cf. Droit in *Histoire*, 11.

⁶³ An early advocate of oral history was Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: oral history* (Oxford, 1978). See also L. Niethammer (ed.), *Lebenserfahrung und kollektives Gedächtnis. Die Praxis der ‘Oral History’* (Frankfurt/Main, 1980).

⁶⁴ L. Niethammer et al., *Die volkseigene Erfahrung: eine Archäologie des Lebens in der Industrieprovinz der DDR. 30 biographische Eröffnungen* (Berlin, 1991).

⁶⁵ Cf. C. Dieckmann, ‘Weimarer Rede: Krieg im Frieden – Neun Sätze über die Welt’ in *Die ZEIT* (17.3.2002), <http://www.zeit.de/reden/weltpolitik/dieckmann_weimarerrede_200213> [accessed 4.5.2002] (part 2).

official data from state archives, the result will be an analysis of the superficial structure, but from the perspective of functionaries. In order to examine the results of education and socialisation from the recipients' perspectives, the voices of former pupils, their experiences, struggles, and views, are simply indispensable. And finally, as Dorothee Wierling has shown with her excellent study of the first generation of East Germans,⁶⁶ oral history methods provide for a 'multi perspective history'. Instead of telling *one* history, gathered from various types of sources, she aimed to show the complexity of historical circumstances by presenting findings from oral history interviews that exist next to one another and sometimes, most interestingly perhaps, even stand in conflict.⁶⁷ Josie McLellan, who explored the concept of memory in the GDR in great detail, came to a similar conclusion, saying that memory is not a fixed entity, but 'a many-layered and changing collection of discourses about the past'.⁶⁸ So, if oral history material is treated with these precautions in mind and 'even greater circumspection than the other sources,'⁶⁹ interviews and questionnaires planned and conducted well, interpreted and used carefully, historical research can be enriched by insights from a unique angle.

For the purpose of this thesis, an in-depth questionnaire comprising twenty-five questions on experiences with education and socialisation in the GDR was devised and distributed to people who experienced the education system in the 1960s and 1970s, be it as kindergarten children, pupils, parents, teachers or functionaries. The results of this enterprise were forty-four extremely illuminating sets of answers and two three-hour long recorded interviews with former teachers from Schnepfenthal, insights into life in the GDR that I could not have obtained otherwise. I do not claim that my sample was broadly representative, but the choice of my interviewees was made so as to guarantee a wide variety of regional origins, social, professional and age backgrounds, political orientation, but with all of them sharing the experience of the GDR's unified school system (which turned out not to be so unified after all). I quote verbatim extensively from the questionnaires and interview transcripts in order to maintain authenticity. Some of the names have been anonymised. One interviewee did not agree for the interview to be published. Of the forty-six interviewees, twenty-eight were female and

⁶⁶ D. Wierling, *Geboren im Jahr Eins. Der Jahrgang 1949 in der DDR. Versuch einer Kollektivbiographie* (Berlin, 2002).

⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁸ J. McLellan, *Anti-Fascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades 1945-1989* (Oxford, 2004). Quoted from *Remembering Spain: the contested history of the International Brigades in the German Democratic Republic* (unpublished doctoral thesis, 2001), 10.

⁶⁹ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (2000), 3rd ed., 118.

eighteen male. Thirty-eight were former pupils, eight parents, three kindergarten teachers, two primary schoolteachers and nine schoolteachers. Twenty-seven were members of the Protestant Church, four were Catholic. Four were SED members, one was a member of the Christian Democratic Party and one of the Liberal Democratic Party. Twenty had left school aged sixteen (approximately at the stage of O-Level or GCSE exams); and twenty-six went on to the EOS to do their *Abitur* (equivalent to A-Level exams). Their professional background (apart from those in the education sector) divides as follows: accountant, actress, administrator, agricultural engineer, medical and chemistry laboratory assistant, church musician, economist, electrician, electronic technician, engineer, farmer, freelance copywriter, graphic designer, industrial manager, metalworker, paediatric nurse, physician, scientific assistant, site manager, theologian, toolmaker, and vicar. As regards the geographical origin, sixteen grew up in villages, and thirty in towns. Thirty-one lived in Bezirk Erfurt, four in Berlin, two in Bezirk Cottbus, two in Bezirk Dresden, two in Bezirk Halle, two in Bezirk Rostock and one each in Bezirk Magdeburg, Schwerin, Suhl and Karl-Marx-Stadt.⁷⁰ All interviewees were ‘normal’ citizens of the GDR.⁷¹ When a find in the Federal Archive and some of the questionnaire answers uncovered the existence of Christian institutes of higher education in the GDR, I additionally contacted the former Thuringian bishop Werner Leich as well as four former pupils and teachers of two denominational schools and one Catholic EOS who kindly answered my questions and made unpublished material available to me.

Other sources, such as newspapers, magazines, school textbooks, contemporary literature and children’s books as well as music discs were consulted in the Prussian State Library, the Federal Archive’s library, the Matthias Domaschk Archive and the library of the German Institute for International Pedagogical Research, all in Berlin. Some newspaper articles that were unobtainable elsewhere came from the Contemporary History Archive at the Berlin-Brandenburg Education Centre.

It is impossible to do justice to every individual ex-GDR citizen who might read this thesis in the hope of finding his personality analysed and put into a certain category. Individuals in historical research have in too many cases been grouped under headings such as ‘the state’ or ‘the people’. Fortunately though, after a morally-charged period following the demise of the regime, in more recent years, historians’ assignment of historical roles to the various actors in GDR history has become ‘far less moralising or

⁷⁰ The Saxon town of Chemnitz was called Karl-Marx-Stadt from 1953 until 1990.

⁷¹ See the appendix for interviewees’ statistics.

condemnatory’, as Mary Fulbrook observed, and ‘people are no longer cast simply as villains or heroes, victims or accomplices.’⁷² Or, as Hermann Weber said, it is now commonly acknowledged that historical research has ‘the duty to show how many different shades of grey there were’.⁷³

So is it stating the simple truth to say that every single East German experienced ‘the’ GDR differently, lived his or her own life in a unique set of circumstances and hence holds different memories of GDR history? Employing an empirical approach to my research, drawing my conclusions from a number of individual cases, such as the *Salzmannschule* case study and the questionnaire answers, I will highlight the plural nature of ‘personalities’ that could exist in a state that claimed otherwise.

Central questions, aims and methodology

Education in the GDR is a subject of intense debate. It is a terrain full of pitfalls for the historian, where the Rankean approach of portraying history ‘as it really was’ is complicated by the overlap of three approaches: scholarly research, contemporary witnesses and collective memory.⁷⁴ I regard this not as a drawback however, but as part and parcel of embarking on a social history project. With this thesis, I aim to show that between the project of turning children into socialist personalities and its implementation at the grassroots stood human nature. It is my contention that despite the regime’s claim to total control of education and socialisation, the practical execution of this experiment in social engineering had its limits. It collided with the striving for individuality and self-determination, as well as with influences such as the family, peer groups, the Church, and the existence of a Western lifestyle model just across the border.

A close examination of primary sources such as school reports, essays, ZIJ surveys and the answers to my questionnaires shows that whilst the great majority of young people were immune to the inculcation of certain aspects of education and socialisation (politicisation, militarisation), they did internalise a number of ‘good’ socialist values (love of peace, solidarity, helpfulness) during their formative years. Thus, my second hypothesis is that the fall of the regime in 1989 is no proof for the

⁷² M. Fulbrook, ‘Approaches to Contemporary History since 1945: Politics and Paradigms’ in *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* (1/2004), <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/portal/alias_zeithistorische-forschungen/lang_de/tabID_40208147/Default.aspx> [accessed 3.3.2004] (page 16).

⁷³ Interview with H. Weber in *Thüringer Allgemeine*, Sunday supplement (16.3.2003), 3.

⁷⁴ Cf. D. Süß, review of M. Sabrow *et al.*, *Zeitgeschichte als Streitgeschichte. Große Kontroversen nach 1945* (Munich, 2003) in *sehepunkte* (4/2004), <<http://www.sehepunkte.historicum.net/2004/04/5789.html>> [accessed 20.5.2004] (page 1).

complete failure of its education system. When the people took to the streets that autumn, they were not demonstrating for capitalist values, but for a better, or real socialism. Young people were vaguely supportive of the utopian vision, but were unenthused by the grey reality of everyday life.

My third contention is that the GDR education system gave birth to many flatterers and specialists in false optimism and deceit. Instead of the hoped for 'socialist personalities', the education system produced generations of two-faced fellow travellers. Initially, children participated willingly in their ideological socialisation. As they grew older and adolescence kicked in, the large majority still did as they were told, but shut off emotionally. At this point, some also withdrew obedience, but in most cases this was not a sign of political conviction and opposition, but simply normal teenage behaviour as may be found in any political system. The main reason behind this Janus-phenomenon was that most young people passed through a 'parallel education system' with a different set of values: next to the official one of school, pioneers and FDJ was the private one composed of parents, friends and Western influences.

In order to examine these claims, my thesis will answer these central questions: To what extent were young people susceptible to the efforts of the state to mould them into the desired shape? How did the concept of the socialist personality and its implementation change over time? To what degree was the concept successful? What were the long-term effects of the education system on people?

It is imperative at this point to address a particularly difficult problem for historians attempting to paint a general picture of how *the* education affected *the* young generation, namely how to relate a history representative of the very different perceptions of people in the GDR. It is indisputable that these experiences ranged the full gamut from carefree happiness to outright terror. These different realities of life in the GDR, for realities they surely are to each individual, must not be forgotten. One must ask however, how reasonable a goal it is to give a true account that would satisfy everybody? Perhaps a more attainable goal would be to provide a new account that redresses certain imbalances in previous studies.

Robinson Crusoe lived on his fictional island for twenty-eight years – the same length of time that real people in East Germany lived behind the Wall. The enquiry of my thesis starts three years prior to the building of the Wall. This timeframe has been chosen because it includes the still under-researched middle years of the GDR, which happen to be the time during which most major decisions and changes relevant to education took place. The starting point 1958 was selected because of two events.

Firstly, the 8th SED Party Congress officially proclaimed the ‘socialist personality’ as the aim of socialist education; and secondly, one of Karl Marx’ principal demands for education, the combination of school and work in the shape of the introduction of polytechnic education lessons, was realised. The year 1978 closes the frame of investigation. It was marked by a novelty in the school curriculum, which was hotly debated and also contested by a large number of parents – the introduction of compulsory military education lessons for all pupils.

In contrast to the various studies on education discussed earlier, this thesis will not give a structural overview of the GDR’s education system, but it will trace how children and young people experienced the state’s attempts to turn them into ‘socialist personalities’. Methodologically, this thesis adopts a ‘bottom-up’ approach which focuses on the experiences of the actors, on those who were directly involved in education: the children, teachers and parents. However, in order to see what the desired and also the unintended effects of state policy proved to be over the space of twenty years, it also includes an overview of central policies.

To some extent, the efforts to make ‘socialist personalities’ lasted from the cradle to the grave, but I have chosen to look at the years actually spent in the education system. This includes the education and socialisation in crèche, kindergarten, and in POS and EOS. Not incorporated in this study are the specialist schools [*Sonderschulen*] for children with physical and mental disabilities, children’s homes, university or adult education, nor schools in the bilingual region of the Sorbs.⁷⁵ Much of this work is based on hitherto untapped archival material as well as questionnaires that give the view of contemporary witnesses and actors.

The position of Christian children in the socialist education system is a recurrent theme in several chapters, since the contact with religion and the Church was one of the SED’s sore points.⁷⁶ I explore the fundamental conflicts which children of Christian conviction faced in relation to the demands of the ‘socialist personality’ and their different ways of dealing with them. The main focus in this work is on members of the

⁷⁵ For an in-depth treatment of the Sorbian school system, see the excellent study by E. Pech, *Die Sorbenpolitik der DDR: 1949-1970. Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (Bautzen, 1999), esp. ch. 2, 97-158. See also P. Barker, *Slavs in Germany – the Sorbian minority and the German state since 1945* (Lewiston, 2000).

⁷⁶ On the Churches in the GDR, see the standard work by D. Pollack, *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft: zum Wandel der gesellschaftlichen Lage der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR* (Stuttgart, 1994). See also S. V. Gerlach, *Staat und Kirche in der DDR. War die DDR ein totalitäres System?* (Frankfurt/Main, 1999); E. Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949-1989* (Berlin, 1997); G. Besier, *Der SED-Staat und die Kirche*, vol. 1-3 (Munich, 1993-1995). For a first-rate autobiographical account of Christian life in the GDR, see K.-P. Hertzsch, *Sag meinen Kindern, dass sie weiterziehn. Erinnerungen* (Stuttgart, 2002).

Protestant Church, but the case of Catholic children is considered in a case study on the Eichsfeld.⁷⁷ The Church was the only institution which challenged the SED over the educational monopoly of the state. The 1946 and 1959 School Laws made perfectly clear that ‘the academic [*schulische*] education of the youth is solely the concern of the state.’⁷⁸ Rosalind Pritchard wrote ‘Education, as the key to forming the outlook and value system of the young, was the most bitterly contested issue dividing church and state.’⁷⁹ The root cause of the conflict was the incompatibility of the two very different worldviews, both reaching for the same clientele. ‘Socialist personalities’ of course were meant to have a Marxist-Leninist worldview, and hence a negative attitude towards religion.⁸⁰ Officially, the freedom of belief and conscience was guaranteed by all three constitutions from 1949, 1968, and 1974, as well by the 1946 Law on the Democratisation of the German School. The 1959 School Law and 1965 Education Act were noticeably more noncommittal in their declarations: the mention of freedom of faith was missing completely from the 1959 School Law,⁸¹ whereas the 1965 Education Act guaranteed the same rights for every citizen of the state, ‘regardless of their gender, social standing, *Weltanschauung*, creed, and race,’ but also codified the ‘socialist personality’ with profound knowledge of Marxism-Leninism as the educational aim.⁸² The 1974 Youth Law finally tied the youth to the socialist worldview by emphasising the imperative to educate everyone to become a socialist personality.⁸³

In real life, the law did not spare Christian children from seeing their religion associated with the class enemy and being ridiculed at school on religious grounds, although probably not to the extent that has been suggested by Hans-Joachim Maaz.⁸⁴ In the long term, the SED’s anti-clerical stance did succeed in dechristianising East

⁷⁷ Other religious denominations which existed in the GDR, such as the Freikirche, methodists, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehova’s Witnesses, cannot be examined within the framework of this study.

⁷⁸ ‘Argumentation zu Verleumdungen des Schulgesetzes und der Schulordnung durch einige reaktionäre Kirchenkreise’ (4.3.1960), BArch DR2/6341. Cf. also D. Reiher (ed.), *Kirchlicher Unterricht in der DDR 1949-1990. Dokumentation eines Weges* (Göttingen, 1992), 11.

⁷⁹ R. Pritchard, *Reconstructing Education. East German schools and universities after unification* (New York, 1999), 80.

⁸⁰ See for example J. Heise, “...Die Arbeit auf dem Gebiet des Atheismus intensivieren und qualifizieren” Zum Wandel in der atheistischen Propaganda und Lehre in der DDR von den Anfängen bis Ende der siebziger Jahre’ in H. Dähn, H. Gotschlich, „*Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung...“: Jugend im Spannungsfeld von Staat und Kirche in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1989* (Berlin, 1998), 150-67.

⁸¹ Cf. 1949 Constitution, ch. V, art. 41-48; 1968 and 1974 Constitution, art. 20 and 39 in both; 1946 Act on the Democratisation of the German School, § 1. Quoted in I. K. Schneider, *Weltanschauliche Erziehung in der DDR. Normen – Praxis – Opposition. Eine kommentierte Dokumentation* (Opladen, 1995), 25-33.

⁸² Cf. *Bildungsgesetz*, 83f.

⁸³ Cf. ‘Gesetz über die Teilnahme der Jugend an der Gestaltung der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft und über ihre allseitige Förderung in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik – Jugendgesetz der DDR’ (28.1.1974) [henceforth *Jugendgesetz*], § 1 and 2, in *Verfassung der DDR und Jugendgesetz* (Berlin, 1988), 14th ed., 41f.

⁸⁴ Cf. Maaz, *Gefühlsstau*, 30.

German society, although secularisation is usually a by-product of industrialisation to some extent anyway. Jutta Ecarius showed how religiosity in the East changed over the course of the 20th century: from being part of everyday life for the grandparents' generation born in the 1920s, through the turmoil of conflict and intergenerational differences between children socialised by the state and their parents and increasing marginalisation in the late 1940s and 1950s, to losing prominence in the 1960s and 1970s.⁸⁵ Eastern Germany, once the heartland of Lutheran tradition, is today the second most atheistic region in Europe after the Czech Republic.⁸⁶ This decline in the importance of religion is evident from the statistics. In 1949, 90% of the GDR's population belonged to either the Protestant (81%) or the Catholic Church (11%), compared to a total of 30% in 1990. The number of Protestants had dwindled to a little more than 25%, whereas the number of Catholics did not slump quite so spectacularly, down to 4%. Those professing no religious affiliation have increased from between 5 and 8 % in 1950 to almost 70% in four decades of socialist rule.⁸⁷

The structure of this thesis is not chronological; in analysing the concept of the 'socialist personality', it is more useful if the various areas in young people's lives are laid out clearly in a topical rather than a temporal way. The following chapter first gives a brief historical overview showing the emergence of the idea of the 'socialist personality' before examining its development over the four decades of the GDR's existence. Chapter three deals with the making of the intellect, and hence looks into the educational side of kindergarten and school life. Chapter four examines the conveyance of civic values and 'political ideological' education. Chapter five discusses the moral values of the socialist personality and looks at what was considered to be good or evil by the regime. Chapter six is concerned with the societal values valid for a 'socialist personality'. Finally chapter seven, the conclusion, re-examines the main issues addressed in the thesis and presents a summary of the changes in young people's attitudes as a result of their education and socialisation in the GDR.

By in-depth study of the diverse responses to the utopian idea of creating an ideal socialist human being, I hope this thesis will reflect the realities of life in the

⁸⁵ J. Ecarius, 'Ostdeutsche Kindheiten im sozialgeschichtlichen Wandel' in *APuZ* (31.5.2002), 31-9.

⁸⁶ On the topic of disengagement from the Church, see K. Gabriel, J. Pilvousek *et al.*, *Religion und Kirchen in Ost(Mittel)Europa: Deutschland-Ost. Gott nach dem Kommunismus* (Ostfildern, 2003).

⁸⁷ In comparison, church membership in the FRG did not undergo a comparable decline, at least in formal terms for taxation purposes (although attendance at church and active religious observance did decline). 96% of the population were church members in 1950, and 85% still in 1990. Cf. D. Pollack, 'Secularisation in Germany after 1945' in C. Kleßmann (ed.), *The divided past. Rewriting post-war German history* (Oxford, 2001), 105f. and Pritchard, *Reconstructing Education*, 82.

GDR, dismantle some stereotypes and contribute to the as yet unresolved, perhaps unresolvable, debate about the nature of society under dictatorship.

Chapter 2. The Quest for the ‘Socialist Personality’

This chapter introduces the concept of the ‘socialist personality’ by tracing its development through time. After examining its origins in the works of Marx and Engels, looking to the Soviet model as well as peering into the murky waters of comparisons with the personality ideal prevalent in the Third Reich in the first part of this chapter, we will investigate how the quest for the ‘socialist personality’ progressed in East Germany from 1945 until 1989.

Where does one start when tackling this elusive concept? Gerhart Neuner, the president of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences¹ in East Berlin from 1961 until 1989, said that personality constitutes ‘one of the most complicated subjects of scientific knowledge, [...] just as unfathomable as the atom or the electron.’² I will not deal with the biological, philosophical or psychological sphere of personality study.³ Rather, as a historian I am concerned with the fourth aspect of human personality, the social sphere. And it is this that makes a human being’s personality. No man is an island, but lives within the framework of society. Most children are born into ‘the smallest cell of society’,⁴ the family, and will initially adopt their parents’ sets of values, views and behaviour. With every new day, however, the influence of other ‘cells’, or surrounds, increases: for example through playground friends, kindergarten, school, first loves, first job, work colleagues. As the child passes through adolescence into adulthood, these influences are most likely at first to rival, then to complement parental influences. This immediate social framework plus other aspects such as traditional morality, politics or culture surrounding them make up a unique cocktail of formative influences which, in addition to any innate character, give each human being his or her distinctive ‘personality’. The flavour of this cocktail depends strongly on the kind of society into which one is born.

In the socialist society under scrutiny here, the SED strove to be the greatest authority of influence and attempted to shape the people’s personality by impressing upon them their particular convictions and principles, with the aim that they adopt these

¹ *Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften* (APW). Until 1970, this institution was called *Deutsches Pädagogisches Zentralinstitut* [German Pedagogical Central Institute].

² G. Neuner, *Sozialistische Persönlichkeit – ihr Werden, ihre Erziehung* (Berlin, 1976), 80.

³ For a psychological approach to the subject, see the following: G. Matthews *et al.*, *Personality Traits* (Cambridge, 2003); S. Wolff, *Childhood and Human Nature. The Development of Personality* (London, 1989).

⁴ Thus the first sentence in the *Familiengesetzbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (20.12.1965), Staatsverlag der DDR (Berlin, 1970), 4th ed., 13.

as their own. The ‘state’ (i.e. the decision-makers within the party and the executors of their will at various levels of the hierarchy) used the comprehensive system of education for its supreme aim and ideal: the creation of the ‘all-round developed socialist personality’. This idea was based on the thinking of Marx and Engels; there were however a number of precursors in world history which were seen as exemplary or progressive by East German decision makers.⁵ Pivotal roles were attributed to classical antiquity in constructing the idea of the ‘ideal personality’ (albeit only for a ‘parasitic minority of the ruling class’);⁶ to the Renaissance and its notion of the ‘universal man’ [*uomo universale*]; and to the Enlightenment [*Aufklärung*]. It was the ‘combination of personality and productivity’, and ‘the progressive bourgeoisie’s belief in the creative, world-changing power of man’ that made its advocates like Goethe and Schiller base their ideal personality on the ‘principle of activity.’⁷ Hence, *Faust’s* famous dictum ‘in the beginning was the deed’ [*im Anfang war die Tat*] was always interpreted to suit the socialist idea of the overriding importance of ‘deed’, or work, and not the ‘word’, to the formation of personality.⁸ An outstanding and revered figure in educational thinking in the GDR was Wilhelm v. Humboldt (1767-1835), whose understanding of education was not the ‘force feeding of the individual with knowledge and cultural facts, but the shaping of the whole man, of all his abilities, intellect and emotion, volition and drive, will and deeds.’⁹ Central to the development of Marx’ and Engel’s notion of socialism and personality were the three notable early 19th utopian socialists: Comte Saint-Simon, François Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, with their ideas on materialism, critique of bourgeois society and capitalism; as well as Owen’s pioneering cooperative communities (supported by, among others, Jeremy Bentham) and success in educating working-class children.¹⁰ Yet, despite paying tribute to these earlier developments, GDR historiography emphasised that these had to remain exceptions in their own time, when ‘a deep cleavage existed between the ‘ambitious educational demands of the rich [...] and the sad reality, whereby most people could hardly read or write’,¹¹ and

⁵ See J. Irmscher (ed.), *Das Ideal der allseitig entwickelten Persönlichkeit – seine Entstehung und sozialistische Verwirklichung*, Winkelmann Society Papers, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1976).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷ W. Hecht, ‘Das Persönlichkeitsideal von Aufklärung und Klassik’ in Irmscher, *Das Ideal*, 48.

⁸ On this topic, see D. J. Farrelly, *Goethe in East Germany 1949-1989: Toward a History of Goethe Reception in the GDR* (London, 1998).

⁹ W. Girmus, ‘Humboldts Gedanken zur Gattungsnatur des Menschen’ in Irmscher, *Das Ideal*, 63.

¹⁰ See R. Owen, *A new view of society or Essays on the principle of the formation of the human character* (London, 1813).

¹¹ R. Ahrbeck, ‘Zum Persönlichkeitsideal in der Renaissance’ in Irmscher, *Das Ideal*, 37.

concluded that ‘only under the societal conditions of socialism can personality fully and consistently blossom.’¹²

The summit model: Marx and Engels

When trying to summarise the thoughts on education of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, one encounters two main problems. The first is that Marx and Engels, despite their huge literary output (an international research commission is currently working on a new edition of the 114 volumes of the Marx-Engels-Complete-Edition, due to be finished by 2030),¹³ have only left us with a rather general definition of what they thought to be an ideal education:

By education we understand three things: firstly – intellectual education; secondly – physical training, as it is given in gymnastic schools and through military exercises; thirdly – polytechnic education, which informs on the general scientific principles of all production processes, and which at the same time initiates the child and the young person into the practical use and handling of the elementary instruments of all businesses.¹⁴

The second is that they made a great number of varying and broad statements on education (albeit no single work devoted exclusively to the topic), which allow for an equally great number of different interpretations.¹⁵ Commentators of both Marxist and anti-Marxist camps agree on one point, namely that in order to interpret Marx’ and Engels’s pedagogical thoughts, it is necessary to consider the totality of their statements.¹⁶

After finding and weaving together the various strands dealing with education in their opus, the central ideas may be summarised as follows. Firstly, all children should benefit from free full-time education (child labour was, and in many parts of the world still is, a problem). Secondly, educational privileges need to be abolished and the same

¹² F. Kühnert, ‘Zur Entstehung des Ideals der allseitig entwickelten Persönlichkeit im griechisch-römischen Altertum’ in Irmscher, *Das Ideal*, 9-15, here 15.

¹³ J. Bisky, ‘Nun wird auch MEGA fortgesetzt’ in *Berliner Zeitung* (29.12.1998), 11f.

¹⁴ From Marx’s address to the 1st International Working Men’s Association (13.3.1866). Cf. S. Baske, ‘Bildung und Erziehung bei Karl Marx und das Bildungssystem der DDR’ in K. Löw (ed.), *Karl Marx und das politische System der DDR*, (Asperg, 1982), 77f. NB: all translations from German and French are my own.

¹⁵ The earliest mention of education is found in ‘Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England’ in *MEW* (1972), vol. 2, 225-506. There Engels criticised both the bourgeoisie and religious sects for withholding or offering only one-sided education to working class children: ‘When the bourgeoisie leaves them just enough of life as is necessary, then we must not be surprised that it only gives them just enough education as is in the interest of the bourgeoisie.’ (page 338). Statements on education can also be found in *Die Heilige Familie oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik. Gegen Bruno Bauer und Konsorten* (1845), *MEW* (1972), vol. 2, 62-73; Marx’s *Thesen über Feuerbach* (1845), thesis no. 3 (‘The educator must himself be educated.’), *MEW* (1969), vol. 3, 5ff.; *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (1845-46), *MEW* (1969), vol. 3, 37-50 and 214-21. NB: The abbreviation *MEW* stands for ‘Marx-Engels-Werke’, the collected works by Marx and Engels edited in the GDR. In total, forty-three of the famous ‘blue volumes’ were published between 1956 and 1984.

¹⁶ S. Baske in Löw, *Karl Marx*, 77.

level of schooling made accessible to all members of society. As determined by the scientific development of history, education was to lose its class character (thanks to the proletarian revolution) with the transition from a capitalist to a socialist and finally communist society (the end of class distinction altogether). Thirdly, this education should guarantee all members of society free all-round development and full use of their physical and intellectual abilities. Special importance was attributed to polytechnic education and productive work as the logical complement to academic learning. Fourthly, education should be free from the influence of religion and the state. Fifthly, adult education and lifelong learning form part of the education system. When comparing these demands with the GDR education system, it is striking how much the latter stayed faithful to these principles, except in one notable point, the non-intervention of the state. The extent to which this demand was disregarded will become evident in the course of this work.

Their reflections on education represented the bedrock for East German educationalists. *Das Kommunistische Manifest* (1848) and especially *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (1867), were seen to be of ‘special importance for the determination of the role of education and socialisation in society’.¹⁷ This seems exaggerated, as on closer inspection there are in fact few and brief remarks on education to be found there.¹⁸ It was further claimed that by drawing up the doctrine of dialectical and historical materialism, Marx and Engels had ‘initiated a turning point in the development of pedagogy, as in so many other fields.’¹⁹ Although the authors admitted that Marx and Engels were no pedagogues ‘in the strict sense of the word’, it was argued that ‘questions, problems and answers from virtually all areas of societal education’ could be found in their works and that they had brought out the ‘fundamental bases of the scientific pedagogy of the working class.’²⁰ This rather fuzzy, but weighty claim is typical of the way historians in the GDR dealt with the works of Marx and Engels, allowing nothing to impinge on their pivotal role, and that interpretations of their works were bent in such a way that they would fit the current predominant ideas. Soviet historiography on the other hand did not always evaluate Marx role to be so elevated or even untouchable. For example in an edited volume entitled *General*

¹⁷ H. Schuffenhauer *et al.* (eds), *Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels. Über Pädagogik und Bildungspolitik* (Berlin, 1976), vol. 1, 15f.

¹⁸ See for example remarks on the question of socialisation within the family and society in *Das Kommunistische Manifest, MEW*, vol. 4 (1974), 49f.; on the cost of training apprentices in *Das Kapital*, book 1, *MEW*, vol. 23 (1968), 389.

¹⁹ Schuffenhauer, *Karl Marx*, 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Principles of education (1976), it was stated that in their works, Marx and Engels 'do not give an answer to all questions that occupy Marxist pedagogues', and that 'some very important ideas of communist education, especially the demand for societal education and the idea of polytechnic education, [they] have expressed only along general lines.'²¹

The Marxist 'idea of a human being' [*Menschenbild*] found its way, with some variations, into the educational theories of every socialist state²² (with the possible exception of Cambodia and China during the Cultural Revolution). In order to achieve this aspiration, two different conditions needed to be fulfilled, one economic and one political. Firstly, Marx argued that no significant education of the masses was possible until the advent of industrialisation and, ironically, until the capitalist system had created a sufficient level of material wealth. Secondly, the very same capitalism presented a hindrance to the fully free development of man and had to be overcome by proletarian revolution. Communist social order would provide even greater resources for education and remove the distractions created by class antagonism.²³ In Marxist theory, for the mastering of all functions of production in a post-capitalist society, a capable, all-round developed new human being was called for.

Between capitalist and communist society would lie a transitional period, politically headed by the proletariat, called socialism. In this society, man would start to change from a 'despairing, egoistic loner' (moulded by the 'wolf law' of capitalism) into a free, good and productive personality, incapable of behaving in a selfish or evil manner.²⁴ Michael Beintker noted that the indisputable moral failure of some people in the socialist society of the GDR was officially seen as simply a relic of a 'dying epoch'.²⁵ Socialist society was meant to create the political, economical and ideological prerequisites and open the way to communism.

This future society would breed a new type of human being who would possess the following characteristics: communist awareness, highest all-round education, constructiveness, harmony with society and fellow human beings, moral perfection, material wealth and stable happiness.²⁶ The 'new human beings' of course would not be

²¹ F.F. Korolev, W.J. Gmurman (eds), *Allgemeine Grundlagen der Pädagogik*, USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, (Berlin, 1972), 73. Quoted by Baske in Löw, 77.

²² S. Fishman, L. Martin, *Estranged Twins. Education and Society in the Two Germanies* (New York, 1987), 77.

²³ Schuffenhauer, *Karl Marx*, 36-58.

²⁴ M. Beintker, 'Marxistisches Menschenbild' in R. Eppelmann *et al.* (eds), *Lexikon des DDR-Sozialismus. Das Staats- und Gesellschaftssystem der DDR* (Paderborn, 1997), 538f.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 539.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 539f.

identical clones, but would be influenced in their development by three main factors – production, society at large and the work environment. Already in *Die deutsche Ideologie*, Marx and Engels emphasised production as the one central activity crucial to overcome the division of intellectual and physical work and abilities, a demand which was translated into practice in the GDR by polytechnic education. In *Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie* (1859), Marx expanded this thought thus:

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of human beings that determines their existence; it is on the contrary, their social existence, which determines their consciousness.²⁷

This hypothesis, better known as historical materialism, builds on a postulate expressed already in 1845: ‘If human beings are shaped by the circumstances, then one must shape the circumstances humanely.’²⁸ This view raised great hopes as to the ‘mouldability’ of human beings,²⁹ a thought to which a great deal of importance was attached during the reconstruction of post-war East Germany in the form of the equation ‘a new society equals new human beings.’³⁰ Thus society features as a second key factor. In his notes on *Das Kapital*, Marx stressed that human beings always belong to a specific society and within it, to a specific class (in pre-communist societies).³¹ Each individual’s scope to develop his or her capabilities would be different, depending on his or her class affiliation. This is connected to the third factor, the work environment determined by the division of labour: everyone having different talents and capabilities leads to different specifications of personalities. According to Marx and Engels, the share which production and work hold in moulding a human being’s personality is much higher than the genetic makeup, as they expressed in the much-quoted phrase: ‘Whether an individual develops his or her talent like Raphael depends on the demand.’³² A quote from Dorothee Wierling nicely sums up the importance attributed to the teachings of Marx in the GDR:

Because Marx seems to be the first one who identified laws behind historic changes and harnessed them for humanity, true personhood in its highest form begins evidently with him, and with the October Revolution the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.³³

²⁷ *MEW*, vol. 13 (1972), 8.

²⁸ Marx and Engels in ‘Die Heilige Familie’, *MEW*, vol. 2 (1972), 138.

²⁹ Eichler in Badstübner, *Befremdlich anders*, 554.

³⁰ Beintker in Eppelmann, *Lexikon*, 538.

³¹ *MEW*, vol. 23 (1968), 637. Quoted in Schuffenhauer, *Karl Marx*, 33.

³² *Deutsche Ideologie*, 378. Quoted in Schuffenhauer, *Karl Marx*, 34.

³³ Wierling, *Geboren*, 247f.

'Heaven on Earth': The Soviet Union

This 'Heaven on Earth' was next to Marx the ultimate paradigm for GDR educationalists. Any work on the topic stresses that the most important principles and methods in education were owed to two people in particular: Nadezhda K. Krupskaya and Anton S. Makarenko. Schools, pedagogical training colleges and holiday camps for children in the GDR often carried their names. Krupskaya (1869-1939), as well as being Lenin's wife, headed together with Anatoly V. Lunacharsky the People's Commissariat of Education after the October Revolution until Lenin's death in 1924.³⁴ Makarenko (1888-1939) was the most influential educational theorist of the Soviet Union, but also a hands-on teacher.³⁵

The aim of the Communist Party in their work of educating a backward people was to combine a high ideological level with professional skill and strong moral qualities. In pre-revolutionary Russia, the level of literacy amongst the population was very low.³⁶ Hence a radical break with the past and the complete transformation of education was called for. In 1919, pre-school education as well as free, compulsory general and polytechnic schooling up to the age of seventeen founded on Marxist principles was introduced. Western commentators often used a quote attributed to Lenin to describe the level of indoctrination prevalent in the USSR at that time: 'Give us a child for eight years and it will be a Bolshevik forever.'³⁷ Historians from the Eastern camp, in contrast, presented Lenin's ambition in a somewhat different tone, namely to educate all-round developed human beings capable of doing everything. This is where communism would head for and where it would lead, but only after many years. It was Lenin who introduced the ideal of the 'new human being' into Marxist thinking, who *gradually* would be shaped out of the simple masses with the help of the revolutionary vanguard party. He emphasised that the attempt to anticipate the future result (the new human being) straight away would be 'tantamount to trying to teach higher mathematics to a four-year old child'.³⁸ Lenin's contribution to the Marxist personality model can

³⁴ On her educational contribution, see N. Krupskaya, *Pedagogical Works* (Moscow, 1957-1963); N. Krupskaya, *A Search in Pedagogics* (Moscow, 1990).

³⁵ See A. Makarenko, V.V. Kumarin, *Anton Makarenko, his life and his work in education* (Moscow, 1976).

³⁶ M. Iovchuk, *Socialist Culture and Educating a New Personality* (Moscow, 1966), 14. On literacy in Russia, see J. Brooks, *When Russia learned to read: literacy and popular literature 1861-1917* (Princeton, 1985).

³⁷ Quoted in 'Respectfully quoted. A dictionary of quotations.' (1989) <<http://www.bartleby.com/73/194.html>> [accessed 30.06.2004] (no.194). This is suspiciously similar to the quote popularly attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the Jesuit Saint: 'Give me the child until he is seven, and I will show you the man.'

³⁸ B. Bittighöfer, 'Zum Werden der allseitig entwickelten Persönlichkeit im Prozeß der sozialistischen Umgestaltung der Gesellschaft' in Irmscher, *Das Ideal*, 78.

therefore be seen as bringing a more 'realistic' approach. In Soviet pedagogy, attention was paid to the shaping of the personality on its path to future completeness and less so to proclamations of having achieved this perfect all-round developed personality already.

The Stalinist years were completely ignored in post-1956 GDR literature on the subject, as if a seamless continuation of Leninist principles had been the case throughout Soviet history. This was of course not true.³⁹ Under Stalin's rule, education was geared towards training a sufficiently educated workforce, academic demands took a step-down from Leninist ambitions (for example the introduction in 1931 of only four years schooling for rural children and seven years for urban children).⁴⁰ The Khrushchev reforms brought with them a focus on polytechnic education throughout the late 1950s and 1960s (as mirrored by the other socialist countries including of course the GDR), and gradual success in improving literacy levels.⁴¹ The 1970s and 1980s saw a professionalisation of the education system and the fulfilling of the aim of ten-year schooling for all pupils, alongside an unbroken, continuing emphasis on the inculcation of discipline and patriotic attitudes.⁴²

What remained unchanged throughout the lifespan of the GDR was the high regard with which its scientists and functionaries held Soviet science, and psychology in particular, in matters relating to the formation of personality. Mikhail Iovchuk described the problems facing the creators of the *homo sovieticus*⁴³ in the USSR in the 1960s in a way that must have seemed very relevant to the SED and their efforts to create the '*homo germanicus orientalis*':

Some western writers reiterate that socialism can only remake the political system, the economy and technology, but it cannot change people's minds and morals, their spiritual life, because all people are by nature individualistic and egoistical and can never become collectivists and humanists. They allege that in the Soviet Union it is the 'elite' that spreads the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, but the way of thinking and the life of the bulk of the people remains traditionally the same, namely individualistic, egoistical and alien to collectivism. They contend that the way of thinking and morals of

³⁹ See N. I. Boldyrev, *W. I. Lenin und J. W. Stalin über die Erziehung zur kommunistischen Moral* (Berlin, 1952); H. Brumme, *Stalin über Volksbildung und Erziehung* (Berlin, 1951).

⁴⁰ On Stalinism, see J. Baberowski, *Der rote Terror. Die Geschichte des Stalinismus* (Darmstadt, 2003).

⁴¹ See L. A. Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union* (Dordrecht, 2003).

⁴² On the history of education in the Soviet Union, see O. Anweiler, *Bildungssysteme in Europa* (Weinheim, 1996); N. Grant, *Soviet Education* (Harmondsworth, 1979); O. Anweiler, *Geschichte der Schule und Pädagogik in Russland vom Ende des Zarenreiches bis zum Beginn der Stalin-Ära* (Berlin, 1978).

⁴³ The term '*homo sovieticus*' was used critically and as a condemnation of a particular social type and became popular in the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Cf. S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: ordinary life in extraordinary times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York, 1999), 1-4.

the Soviet youth are quite different from those of old party members and that in its consciousness and behaviour the younger generation follows the western pattern.⁴⁴

This tendency to externalise problems, in this case they existed only in the minds of 'Western writers', was followed by the SED (whatever their privately held views), and they stubbornly persisted in painting a rosy picture. Iovchuk went on to say that if any of the above sceptics were to visit the USSR, they could convince themselves that 'the bulk of members of Soviet society have forever broken with bourgeois and feudal social relations based on private ownership', that if any cult existed in the USSR then, it was the 'cult of labour' and that 'the party and the whole Soviet people consider the main task in cultural and ideological work today is to educate all working people in a communist spirit [...] and to encourage all-round and harmonious development of the personality.'⁴⁵ Nevertheless, not all works that came out of the Soviet Union on the topic of educating a new human being were of uniform character. For example, Georgi Smirnov's thoughts on the new moral qualities and views of the Soviet youth were much more balanced. He was careful to stress the diversity of opinions which existed in socialist society and described the building blocks of a socialist personality thus:

In relation to the individual, social consciousness takes the form of the sum of total knowledge and experience, political, legal, moral and other principles, standards, appraisals, goals and ideals that society (state, party, family) through education and upbringing and system of propaganda seeks to instil in its members.⁴⁶

Smirnov emphasised the importance of taking the personal interests of the new Soviet man seriously, for 'it is he, his views, his beliefs and ideals, his deeds that determine the future of the land of the Soviets, the future of socialism and communism.'⁴⁷ Views such as these were attended to by the theoreticians working in the APW and transmitted to the functionaries in the MfV, but were usually kept under lock and key.

National Socialism and the comparison with the GDR

The Nazi regime is relevant to this study in two ways: firstly, because the SED had to confront the heritage left by Nazism, and secondly, because, if they shared nothing else, both regimes had radical ambitions for the young. The NSDAP⁴⁸ cannot be accused of seeking to perpetuate the old social order with their education policy and, by their own standards, achieved some degree of 'success'. The brutalisation of the young generation played a large part in transforming the land of Luther, Bach and Goethe into the land of

⁴⁴ Iovchuk, *Socialist Culture*, 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 34-46.

⁴⁶ G. Smirnov, *The Soviet Man. The Making of a socialist type of personality* (Moscow, 1973), 48.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁴⁸ NSDAP: *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* [National Socialist German Workers Party].

Hitler and the Holocaust.⁴⁹ What was the personality ideal propagated in the Third Reich, which had such persuasive power in inculcating and radicalising the German population?⁵⁰

Following his party's ascension to power in 1933, Hitler planned a radical remoulding of Germany's education system. As Nigel Grant pointed out, however, most of the changes did not come into effect until 1938; and many others were hindered thereafter by the outbreak of the war.⁵¹ Principal changes were the centralisation and nazification of the school system, teaching profession and curriculum to suit the National Socialists' needs. These needs were headed by the inculcation of character or, as Arthur Hearnden summarised, a sense of 'orderliness, obedience, comradeship, leadership and above all receptivity to the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*'.⁵² Such 'virtues' were also conveyed in youth organisations such as the *Hitlerjugend* [Hitler Youth] or the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* [German Girl League], which were intended to control and prescribe their after-school activities.

Places of even more extreme inculcation of the youth were elite schools such as the *Adolf-Hitler-Schulen* (schools for 12 to 18-year olds showing leadership qualities) and the *Napola* or National Political Education Institutions.⁵³ Of the latter, a contemporary saying was 'Men make history – we make men', referring to the fact that graduates of the SS-led Napolas were destined to become the future leaders of the NSDAP (a goal that most of them were not able to achieve during the short lifespan of the Third Reich; but quite a few made up for it by occupying influential positions in West German society, both as democrats and as neo-Nazis).⁵⁴ Another new educational aspect was the strong focus on physical fitness. The ideal new man should be 'swift as a greyhound, tough as leather and hard as Krupp steel';⁵⁵ as exemplified in the perfect bodies of the athletes in Leni Riefenstahl's film *Olympia* (filmed in 1936). These physical characteristics combined with aforementioned virtues of character were undoubtedly geared towards the new man in his most useful incarnation for the Nazis,

⁴⁹ Cf. M. Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany* (Cambridge, 1997), jacket flap.

⁵⁰ On education in the Third Reich, see R. Dithmar (ed.), *Schule und Unterricht im Dritten Reich* (Ludwigfelde, 2001); H.-U. Otto, H. Sünker (eds) *Education and Fascism. Political Identity and Social Education in Nazi Germany - Knowledge, Identity and School Life Series*, 6 (London, 1997); C. Schwedtke, *Adolf Hitlers Gedanken zur Erziehung und zum Unterricht* (Frankfurt/Main, 1933).

⁵¹ Grant, *Society*, 207.

⁵² A. Hearnden, *Education in the Two Germanies* (Oxford, 1974), 38. See also V. D. Rust, *Education in East and West Germany. A Bibliography* (New York, London, 1984), xxi.

⁵³ *Napola: Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten*.

⁵⁴ For more information on this subject, see B. Leineweber et al., *Das Erbe der Napola. Versuch einer Generationengeschichte des Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg, 1996).

⁵⁵ This dictum caused derision among some parts of the German population, since the most prominent Nazi leaders did not represent their own ideals. A popular rhyme went 'Blond like Hitler, slim like Göring and swift like Goebbels.'

namely that of a staunch soldier. Correspondingly, the ideal new woman was characterised by her devotion as a soldier's wife and above all the bearer of many strong children. The gearing of youth education in this direction took, as Val D. Rust observed, priority over intellectual development and academic achievement throughout Germany until the collapse of the Nazi regime in 1945.⁵⁶ Nazi 'pedagogy' was in many ways the complete opposite of the all-encompassing humanist traditions of German pedagogy. Hitler himself described it thus:

My pedagogy is hard. Any weakness must be hammered away. In my *Ordensburgen* a youth will grow up of which the world will be scared. I want a violent, overbearing, cruel youth. [...] I do not want an intellectual education. Knowledge ruins the youth.⁵⁷

In the longer term, Nazi ideology suggested that educators had less of a role to play in any case. Racial policy and struggle would create the New Man in all his perfection, whereas Soviet ideology had rejected eugenics completely in the 1930s.⁵⁸ Some commentators have pointed to the similarities that existed between the personality ideal of the Third Reich and the GDR. Going even further, it was argued that the GDR was a totalitarian state just as much as Nazi Germany – a popular theme for discourse especially in the early 1990s, following the demise of East Germany.⁵⁹ The complex question of whether or not these two regimes are comparable in their brutality cannot be addressed in this framework.⁶⁰ They clearly were not in their lethality and in the most general of terms: although the system in the GDR was dirigiste and doctrinaire, it was melded from ideals far removed from fascism, even in the loosest sense of the word; for example, the emphasis on peace and goodwill to all 'anti-imperialist' nations and equality between the sexes. Antifascism in East German education had real substance and was not just a name – a point that has been forcefully argued by Mark Fenemore.⁶¹

Whilst it is problematic to portray these two systems as soul mates, it is nevertheless impossible to deny certain similarities, such as the prevailing personality ideal. The desired 'new human being' in both systems possessed a wealth of virtues, the

⁵⁶ Rust, *Education*, xxi.

⁵⁷ H. Rauschnig, *Gespräche mit Hitler* (Zurich, 1940), 237. NB: *Ordensburgen* were finishing schools for future Nazi leaders. Quoted in 'Alfred Lemnitz: Die antifaschistische Erziehung in der DDR' (14.10.1961), BArch DR2/6337.

⁵⁸ Cf. R. J. Overy, *The dictators: Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia* (London, 2004), 243f.

⁵⁹ H. Ottensmeier, *Faschistisches Bildungssystem in Deutschland zwischen 1933 und 1989: Kontinuität zwischen Drittem Reich und DDR* (Hamburg, 1991). But the topic has lost none of its fascination to-date. See for example R. Bytwerk, *Bending spines: the Propagandas of Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic* (Michigan, 2004).

⁶⁰ See my argument in ch. 1. For an in-depth treatment of the problem of comparability of fascist and socialist dictatorships, see Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, esp. 19-43. See also H. Oberreuter, G. Heydemann, *Diktaturen in Deutschland – Vergleichsaspekte. Strukturen, Institutionen und Verhaltensweisen* (Bonn, 2003).

⁶¹ Fenemore, *Nonconformity*, esp. ch. 1, section entitled 'Antifascist myth and reality.' See also my argument in ch. 4.

most important 'being healthy in body, soul and spirit', full of 'whole-hearted enthusiasm and readiness to make sacrifices for the collective, its party with its leadership', being disciplined and 'critical of any person or development marked out [negatively] by ideology and party respectively.'⁶² This description by Hermann Ottensmeier picked out some of the central existing concordances, and is noteworthy especially for its last point (which could of course lead to a lengthy discussion on how far both systems went in priming their young to be critical or hostile towards 'enemies', and with what final aim in mind). Ottensmeier's general conclusion, that the young generation seemed to be the appropriate 'raw material' for potentates in order to form the new human being who is necessary for the continuation and development of their notion of rule, is nothing new. This wisdom has been around as long as man has walked the earth, and every political system, including a democracy, holds their youth in high esteem, for, to use one of Erich Honecker's favourite phrases, 'he who has the youth has the future.' The second part of this chapter investigates how the East German regime attempted to shape the bearers of its future.

Soviet Zone of Occupation/German Democratic Republic 1945-1957

After twelve years of fascist ideology, the watchword (in both East and West) was 'New Germany – New People'. Those Germans who happened to live in the Soviet Zone of Occupation or SBZ,⁶³ were immediately exposed to a radically different ideology. The Soviet authorities and exiled German communists and socialists set about creating a new society out of the rubble that was left after the fall of the Third Reich. Four facts made the task of the new leadership extremely delicate: that this radical new *Weltanschauung* was imposed very abruptly; that it was imposed under compulsion; that the Nazis had portrayed it as the evil antithesis and that the great majority of the SBZ's population had to learn a whole new set of ideological, political and moral values very rapidly.

In the SBZ, the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD)⁶⁴ adopted an old demand of the reform pedagogy movement by decreeing the eight-year integrated school [*Einheitsschule*] in the 'Act for Democratisation of the German School' [*Gesetz zur Demokratisierung der deutschen Schule*] which was passed on 12 June 1946, a date commemorated from 1951 onwards as 'teachers' day'. The Act was the fundamental document of the 'antifascist-democratic school reform'. Its other main points were:

⁶² Ottensmeier, *Faschistisches Bildungssystem*, 35.

⁶³ SBZ : *Sowjetische Besatzungszone*.

⁶⁴ SMAD: *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland*.

destruction of the educational privilege of the ruling and possessing classes; secularity [*Weltlichkeit*], unity [*Einheitlichkeit*] of the education system run by the state [*Staatlichkeit*]; scientific character of the curriculum and equality of opportunities for all.⁶⁵ The idea of an integrated school included from the start pre-school education and vocational training. With the beginning of the academic year 1951, the first ten-class schools were opened and new curricula and textbooks presented. ‘They offered a suitable basis to educate the pupils in all subjects to a scientific and materialistic *Weltanschauung* and to democratic patriotism. [...] The process of socialisation and education received to a large extent a socialist content.’⁶⁶ In order to raise the level of performance, only fully qualified teachers were allowed to teach from 1952 onwards.

The ‘*homo sovieticus*’, supposedly existing in the USSR, served as the model for the new human being that was needed to build the new society. The main goal of the new leadership was the creation of individuals who, as the Polish political scientist Jerzy Macków put it, ‘uncritically sacrificed their freedom on the altar of unlimited loyalty towards the state’.⁶⁷

In the immediate postwar years, this high aim pervaded the relatively open and diverse discussions and rhetoric, but, as Irma Hanke wrote, ‘a marked reserve [by the SED] is noticeable towards the problem of what this man of the new time should be like *concretely*.’⁶⁸ The main demands for the new personality were inextricably linked to the practical needs of moral and economic reconstruction of the time. These were above all the overcoming of the fascist legacy left behind in people’s minds, the implementation of antifascist thinking as well as fighting the economic problems of the black market and raising the work ethic.⁶⁹

By 1947/48, the initial hopeful debates ceased to be pluralistic, as the voices of social democrats and alternative worldviews were drowned out by emerging communist cadres. Hanke’s research showed that that between 1948 and 1955 there were ‘practically no debates on the socialist *Menschenbild* initiated by the party.’⁷⁰ She gave several reasons for this. Above all, at the time the SED did not possess the ‘intellectual equipment’ to work out its personality model. Then there was the ‘intellectual

⁶⁵ BStU MfS-HA XX 187, 2.

⁶⁶ K.-H.Günther, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Erziehung* (Berlin, 1980), 95.

⁶⁷ J. Macków in *Die ZEIT* (22.3.2001), 13.

⁶⁸ [emphasis in the original] I. Hanke, ‘Vom neuen Menschen zur sozialistischen Persönlichkeit. Zum Menschenbild der SED’ in *Deutschland Archiv* (no. 9, May 1976), 494. NB: Hanke’s research, being a West German political scientist, was based mainly on her reading of the SED’s theoretical journal *Einheit*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

inadequacy' of Stalinism; further the party's uncertainty as to whether the intellectuals would follow the prescribed path; the lack of people able to 'explain' Marxism-Leninism scientifically; and lastly, uncertainty with regard to the future of the two separate Germanies.⁷¹ Sonja Häder called these years the 'totalitarian or Stalinist phase' in the history of the GDR, basing her claim on the fact that at that time the 'most radical societal encroachments and structural changes,' hectoring and repression took place with great dynamism.⁷²

Although Hanke's description of the Stalinist years is largely accurate, her contention that there was no debate coming from the SED on the *Menschenbild* needs to be revised.⁷³ There was an ongoing theoretical debate on the varying merits of the 'new man', notably in pedagogical circles.⁷⁴ For instance, at a board meeting of the Union for Teaching and Education (GUE)⁷⁵ in 1949, talk involved 'socialist pedagogy', but not (yet) the term 'socialist personality.' Instead, the educational aim of the 'new democratic school' was 'to prepare our children and young people for a life in which they must be Hennecke activists', and to educate them to become adults 'who erect an antifascist-democratic order.'⁷⁶

Another example is Otto Grotewohl taking a Leninist view of children's education in 1949, when he said they represented 'our purest and best human material for the future, which must not be left to the various reactionary forces.'⁷⁷ Further proof of the SED's concern with the *Menschenbild* was the publication of the rules of the young pioneers in February 1949.⁷⁸ At that time, this catalogue of desirable qualities was still free of 'party-political alignment'⁷⁹ in order to reach as many children and parents as possible, and included relatively general commitments such as love of peace, their homeland, discipline, orderliness, learning and the truth.⁸⁰ Altogether, the moral qualities required of the young pioneers did not present something radically new, but were rather reminiscent of Prussian values.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 495.

⁷² Häder, *Schülerkindheit*, 21ff.

⁷³ To Hanke's credit it one must bear in mind that at the time of researching her article (1976), access to GDR primary sources was very difficult.

⁷⁴ See Eichler in Badstübner, *Befremdlich anders*, 552-75.

⁷⁵ GUE: *Gewerkschaft für Unterricht und Erziehung*.

⁷⁶ Paper by 'Kollege Siebert', 'Zur Konkretisierung des Erziehungsideals' (15.2.1949) in G. Geißler *et al.* (eds), *Schule: Streng vertraulich! Die Volksbildung der DDR in Dokumenten* (Berlin, 1996), 104f. NB: Adolf Hennecke (1905-1975) was a collier and initiated the GDR's activists' movement in 1948.

⁷⁷ L. Ansorg, 'Die Pionierorganisation "Ernst Thälmann"' in G. R. Stephan *et al.* (eds), *Die Parteien und Organisationen der DDR* (Berlin, 2002), 665.

⁷⁸ At the 18th FDJ Central Council Congress.

⁷⁹ Ansorg in Stephan, *Die Parteien*, 665.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

The year 1952 was particularly important for the genesis of the actual term of the ‘socialist personality.’⁸¹ The 2nd SED Party Congress in July 1952 decided on the ‘systematic establishing of the foundations of socialism in the GDR’.⁸² Ever since this proclamation of the ‘*Aufbau des Sozialismus*’ [establishing socialism], education in school had the objective of developing ‘socialist personalities.’⁸³ The new objective [‘*Kampfziel*’] was also reflected in a change of the wording of the pioneer laws and vow.

The following year, although memorable for major upsets in the socialist world such as Stalin’s death on 5 March and the June uprising in the GDR, was not marked by any major theoretical changes to the personality ideal, presumably due to more pressing practical problems. However, the events of 17 June 1953 led to a short-lived ‘new course’ by the SED of respecting or pretending to respect opinions different from their own, an end to the repression of the *Jungen Gemeinden*⁸⁴ and of ‘bourgeois’ views – policies which had been criticised by the GUE.⁸⁵ An end to ideological pressure in the sphere of education, however, did not take place.⁸⁶ A peculiarity is that even after Stalin’s death, the Stalinist personality cult continued to flourish in the GDR, with the ideal personality being endowed with features mirroring his: a staunch antifascist (never mind the 1939 Hitler-Stalin-Pact), a hero of the Soviet Union and an activist of the ‘new time’,⁸⁷ albeit in an East German context.

Regarding the concept of the ‘socialist personality’, the year 1955 marked a stepping-stone from which the discussion really took off. This year saw some major improvements in the GDR’s international standing, such as the Soviet Union’s official termination of the state of war with both Germanies; the founding of the Warsaw Pact;⁸⁸

⁸¹ 1952 was furthermore a remarkable given the accumulation of several important events, such as the ‘Stalin Note’ (March), beginning of militarisation programme with *Kasernierte Volkspolizei* [Barracked People’s Police] including air and sea forces (June), said 2nd SED Party Conference (July), founding of the GST (August), first *Pioniertreffen* [GDR-wide reunion of pioneers] and conferment of the name ‘Ernst Thälmann’ upon pioneer organisation (August) as well as the beginning of a heavy-handed course by the SED on the *Junge Gemeinde* from autumn 1952 until June 1953.

⁸² Authors’ collective (eds), *Unser Staat. DDR-Zeittafel 1949-1983* (Berlin, 1984), 26f.

⁸³ The date of 1952 is also cited by S. Barth in ‘Bildung und Kultur in der DDR’ in Bundeszentrale für Politische Aufklärung (ed.), *Kultur im Wiederaufbau*. Part 2. Schriftenreihe: Informationen zur Politischen Bildung, vol. 256, in http://www.bpb.de/publikationen/WV9LQV,0,0,Kultur_im_Wiederaufbau_%28Teil_2%29.html [accessed 7.6.2002] (page 1).

⁸⁴ The *Jungen Gemeinden* [literally ‘Young Congregation’] – were, and still are, the Protestant Church’s youth groups.

⁸⁵ Cf. GUE letter to the Minister of People’s Education Else Zaisser (11.7.1953) in Geißler, *Schule: Streng vertraulich!*, 131-34.

⁸⁶ Häder, *Schülerkindheit*, 340.

⁸⁷ Hanke in *Deutschland Archiv*, 495.

⁸⁸ Although the GDR became a member only in 1958, it meant a strengthening of the Eastern bloc and a boost of confidence for the socialist camp.

and most importantly, the treaty with the Soviet Union on the recognition of the GDR. At the 25th Meeting of the SED's Central Committee in October, the 'amplified establishment of the foundations of socialism' was decided. According to Hanke, it was only from now on that the party heightened attention to the 'societal task of education by the school' in order to 'master the new tasks', which focused primarily on the 'integration into the state and willingness to cooperate of the whole population'.⁸⁹

In the wake of the 20th CPSU Party Congress of 1956, another short period of thaw, or *Tauwetterperiode*,⁹⁰ occurred in the GDR. The idolatry of Stalin waned, and the SED was seemingly willing to discuss mistakes made in the past and amenable to reforms, albeit within the socialist framework. However, when tentative democratic demands were made, notably by intellectuals such as Wolfgang Harich and Walter Janka with their ideas of a 'special German path to socialism', the mechanisms of suppression functioned more efficiently than in 1953 and opposition voices and notions were swiftly nipped in the bud.⁹¹

The SED returned to sowing the seeds of socialist awareness in its people. To this effect, a philosophical conference under the heading 'New Life – New People' took place in April 1957, which was intended to acquaint the public with 'theoretical and practical problems of socialist morale.'⁹² The conference addressed primarily the working population, whose representatives learned that the fulfilment of life lay in the fight for socialism, which was meant to manifest itself predominantly in the rise of efficiency at work.⁹³

By the end of the 1950s, the party's efforts to create 'socialist personalities' moved up a gear. In 1958, questions of ideology, morale and personality finally took centre stage and it is this year which marks the beginning of my examination of SED policies concerning the 'making of the socialist personality' and its popular reception.

Two busy years of innovation and guidelines: 1958 and 1959

At the 5th SED Party Congress in July 1958, the party leadership did not own up to the fact that a socialist worldview had not yet gained currency on the desired massive scale. Instead, it was claimed that 'new societal relations between people and a new morale'

⁸⁹ Hanke in *Deutschland Archiv*, 497.

⁹⁰ 'Short' in this context means until the end of 1956, beginning of 1957, by which time the SED had got back its firm grasp. Cf. I.-S. Kowalczyk, *Das bewegte Jahrzehnt. Geschichte der DDR von 1949 bis 1961* (Bonn, 2003), 88.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 85-8.

⁹² Hanke in *Deutschland Archiv*, 498.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

had already developed.⁹⁴ In order to promulgate this new morale, the party leadership attempted for the first time to formulate default standards for the population's behaviour. Walter Ulbricht announced the 'Ten Commandments for the new socialist human being', intended to give shape to the moral countenance of GDR citizens. The title of these guidelines as well as their presentation was no coincidence, but a means of underlining the SED's own quasi-religious stance and values and complemented the rituals adapted from the Church (such as the coming-of-age ceremony *Jugendweihe* offered since 1955 as a substitute for confirmation, or the socialist naming ceremony practiced since 1958 instead of baptism). The SED's new version of the Ten Commandments did not rank any one higher than the other, but were listed in the following order:

Thou shalt exercise solidarity with the peoples fighting for or defending their national independence.

Thou shalt live cleanly and decently and respect thy family.

Thou shalt bring up thy children in the spirit of peace and Socialism to be all-round educated, highly principled and physically steeled human beings.

Thou shalt always strive to better thy feats, be economical and strengthen the socialist work discipline.

Thou shalt protect and increase public property.

Thou shalt act in the spirit of mutual aid and comradesly cooperation in building Socialism, respect the collective and heed its critique.

Thou shalt accomplish good deeds for Socialism, for Socialism leads to a better life for all workers.

Thou shalt help to abolish the exploitation of man by man.

Thou shalt love thy fatherland and always be prepared to apply all thy strength and ability to the defence of the workers-and-peasants-power.

Thou shalt always apply thyself to international solidarity of the working class and all workers as well as the indestructible connexion of all socialist countries.⁹⁵

These guidelines were not only widely published in the media, but also produced as a small concertina-shaped card that could stand neatly on the mantelpiece in the home. These moral values were very typical of the 1950s, with their focus on strengthening the young fatherland, encouraging the workforce to more productivity and continuing to stress good Prussian values such as cleanliness and decency. They further purported that in socialism, personal and societal interests were identical. Those who might not have agreed with these guidelines must consequently have been opposed to socialism. For the rest, abiding by these commandments was meant to create pride in belonging to a morally superior community. From the end of the 1950s, the term 'socialist community' [*sozialistische Gemeinschaft*] began to make frequent appearances in the media and politicians' speeches. Initially it described work teams, but was more and more

⁹⁴ M. Gibas, *Propaganda in der DDR* (Erfurt, 2000), 47.

⁹⁵ '10 Gebote für den neuen sozialistischen Menschen' (Reichenbach, 1959).

employed as a reference to the whole of society, which was supposedly made up of socialist personalities.

During the congress, the party leadership also explained for the first time in somewhat more detail what the anticipated result of socialist education should be. Monika Gibas summarised it thus: the new human being of the socialist epoch must be an all-round developed personality of high theoretical and artistic general education, show combative activity and be capable of acting in a collective and comradely manner. The socialist revolution in ideology and culture would create a scientific worldview and a highly moral view of life, the overcoming of superstition as well as of capitalist immorality and 'non-culture' [*Unkultur*].⁹⁶ In a speech, Ulbricht gave the definition of what socialist education meant in 1958, namely:

The all-round development of the personality, education to solidarity and collective action, education to love to work, education to combative activity, mediation of a high theoretical and artistic general education, development of all intellectual and physical abilities, which means educating the socialist consciousness for the good of the people and the nation.⁹⁷

In the centre of the educational resolutions of the congress stood the announcement of the 'transition to the socialist development of the school system', which led to the passing of the synonymous act in December 1959 which made the POS the only permitted model for schools throughout the GDR and obligatory up to year 10. The EOS catered for the small minority who continued their education to the *Abitur*. Ulbricht proclaimed another important novelty during the party congress: 'The core question of the further development of the school system is the introduction of polytechnic instruction and the children's education to love work and the working people.'⁹⁸ True to Marxist principles, compulsory polytechnic instruction was introduced for pupils from age thirteen with the beginning of the academic year in September 1958.

In 1959, the SED Central Committee declared in its theses 'On the socialist development of the school system in the GDR' the ten-year, polytechnic school (POS) to be the new socialist type of school, following on from the official accomplishment of the antifascist and democratic school reform begun in 1946. The emphasis now placed on the school's Marxist-Leninist orientation became cemented with the 'Law on the socialist development of the school system' of 2 December 1959. Inevitably, the

⁹⁶ Gibas, *Propaganda*, 47.

⁹⁷ Quoted in '7. Entwurf der "Grundsätze und Aufgaben der sozialistischen Erziehung im Kindergarten"', (27.8.1959), BArch DR2/5626.

⁹⁸ M. Honecker, *Zur Bildungspolitik und Pädagogik in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik. Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften* (Berlin, 1986), 53.

extension of compulsory schooling from eight to ten years caused another shortage of classrooms and teachers. It also drew criticism particularly from rural parents, who would often be already waiting for their children, especially the sons, to finish school and help on the farm.⁹⁹ This particular problem somewhat diminished with the collectivisation of the countryside after the ‘Socialist Spring’ in 1960. Parents from the ‘true working class’ however continued to write petitions to the MfV up until the 1970s. The requests for early release at age fourteen were substantiated with social and financial difficulties, and arguments such as ‘It is very difficult to get an apprenticeship place with bad year 10 results’, or ‘If my son would get released after year 8, he could make his manpower available to the People’s economy two years earlier.’¹⁰⁰ In 1963, the MfV came to the conclusion that some parents were guided by ‘old habits, wrong beliefs and financial considerations’. The principal argument was that for the trades that these pupils wanted to learn, ‘there is no need for secondary education.’ Parents could also prove that companies wanted to recruit them. The MfV noted: ‘There is not yet a consistent approach to this question by the elements of state and economy.’¹⁰¹ This short statement is illustrative of my contention that though the SED had totalitarian ambitions, it failed to achieve a level of control that would merit the label ‘totalitarian’.

Nasty surprises and vacillating policies: the 1960s

‘A new age in the history of the German people has begun: the age of socialism’, declared the Party programme of the 6th SED Party Congress in January 1963. The transitional period from capitalism to socialism had officially ended. The foundations for building full-scale socialism had been laid, exemplified by recent achievements such as the enforcement of collective agriculture and the building of the Berlin Wall. Although an inhumane idea and deeply tragic for the population, the Wall had a stabilising effect on the GDR in two respects: firstly, it stopped refugees streaming into West Berlin, making domestic and economic policies less problematic. And secondly, it raised the GDR’s international profile, forcing the world to take it seriously. The country seemed there to stay; hence it forced the rethinking of western politicians and was the beginning of the road towards international recognition.

In his welcome address, Ulbricht explained that in the centre of the state stood ‘the human beings, their life, thinking, feeling and acting’, and that the freedom of

⁹⁹ Interview with Alfons G. (6.6.2003).

¹⁰⁰ ‘Eingabenanalyse 2. Halbjahr 1972’ (27.2.1973), BAarch DR2/8103.

¹⁰¹ ‘Eingaben an das MfV im 2. Quartal 1963’ (6.9.1963), BAarch DR2/7783.

personality in particular was protected by the state. The patriarchal nature of the state was brought into the open by this declaration:

We do not conceal the fact that the freedom of the personality is different in the various stages of the state's development. At the time of the strongest attacks by West German imperialism, certain freedoms were confined. Now the societal circumstances are thus far developed and strengthened, the freedom of the personality gains a more profound meaning.¹⁰²

Yet despite the rhetoric about more personal freedom and also the actual phase of liberalisation between 1963 and the 11th Plenum in 1965, the party leadership, as Hanke has pointed out, had no doubt that the fulfilment of the norms of the socialist *Menschenbild* should reinforce the leading role of the party.¹⁰³

At the 6th SED party congress, Margot Honecker was made a member of the SED central committee and promoted to the position of Education Minister, a post she held until 1989. She understood the work of her ministry as 'front line service in the class war,'¹⁰⁴ and consequently gave to GDR education more than an air of militarism. The new party programme introduced at this congress presented as the aim of socialist education the 'all-round developed human being, who consciously shapes societal life and changes nature'.¹⁰⁵ This aim appeared in a more refined version in the Act on the Integrated Socialist Education System [*Gesetz über das einheitliche sozialistische Bildungssystem*], which was passed on 25 February 1965 and remained in force until 1989. The Education Act laid down moral and idealistic demands as well as the tasks and functions of all state-run educational institutions. The much-quoted definition of the desired socialist personality was stated in the first paragraph:

The aim of the integrated socialist education system is a high education of the whole people, the education and socialisation of all-round and harmoniously developed socialist personalities, who consciously shape societal life, change nature and lead a fulfilled, happy, humanely dignified life.¹⁰⁶

The preamble stated three decisive factors for the development of the new characteristic traits of the new personality: firstly, the requirements of science and technical revolution; secondly, the conscious application of the economic laws of socialism and thirdly, the shaping of socialist society, democracy and culture.¹⁰⁷ These tasks were not so much aimed at the young citizens still in the education system, but at the most valued

¹⁰² Quoted in Hanke in *Deutschland Archiv*, 503.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 503f.

¹⁰⁴ M. Judt, (ed.), *DDR-Geschichte in Dokumenten. Beschlüsse, Berichte, interne Materialien und Alltagszeugnisse* (Berlin, 1997), 229.

¹⁰⁵ A. Karutz, 'Erziehung in staatlichen Kinderkrippen und Kindergärten der DDR' in Benz, *Deutschland*, 48.

¹⁰⁶ *Bildungsgesetz*, 88.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

part of the population, the young workers and professionals who were needed to carry through the 'scientific-technical revolution' (i.e. the introduction and use of automation and nuclear power for instance). The goal to increase work and production figures by binding people morally to *their* state is also reflected in a number of popular scientific articles and books which were published in the 1960s concomitantly with the various new proclamations on the nature of the 'new human being' by Party congresses.¹⁰⁸

The term '*sozialistische Menschengemeinschaft*' [socialist human community], originally coined by Johannes R. Becher, was first publicly applied to GDR society by Ulbricht in a toast to the country during its 18th birthday celebrations in 1967.¹⁰⁹ However, Ulbricht had practically proclaimed this state of affairs already in 1960 in an address to the People's Chamber, saying that 'there exists no contradiction between our democratic state and its policies and the interests of the citizens'.¹¹⁰

With the 7th SED Party Congress in April 1967, policy on the socialist personality did not undergo radical changes. The demands in a nutshell were to advance political, professional and cultural education; to heighten the effectiveness of the political and ideological work; and especially to instil the willingness for qualification in the workforce.¹¹¹

The 1968 GDR constitution listed parents' obligations thus: to educate their children to become 'healthy and fond of life, capable and all-round educated people and responsible citizens';¹¹² a definition very similar to that given in the *Familiengesetzbuch* [family law] of 1965. There, the aim of children's education was stated as 'bringing them up to be intellectually and morally superior and physically healthy personalities, who consciously help shaping the societal development;' as well as obliging parents to educate their children to have a socialist attitude to learning and working, to respect the working people, to comply with the rules of socialist coexistence, to solidarity, to socialist patriotism and internationalism.¹¹³

As these various definitions show, the thinking behind the socialist idea of a human being was in the 1960s more that he or she should be a tool, moulding society

¹⁰⁸ [my emphasis] See for example E. Faber, E. John, *Das sozialistische Menschenbild. Weg und Wirklichkeit* (Leipzig, 1967); W. Eichhorn, *Von der Entwicklung des sozialistischen Menschen* (Berlin, 1964); R. Miller, *Vom Werden des sozialistischen Menschen* (Berlin, 1960).

¹⁰⁹ Hanke in *Deutschland Archiv*, 508.

¹¹⁰ 'Volkskammersitzung' (4.10.1960). *Berliner Debatte INITIAL* 9 (2/3, 1998), see <<http://www.berlinerdebatte.de/initial/heft2-3-98/ddrjug2a.doc>> [accessed 30.6.2002] (page 9).

¹¹¹ See Hanke in *Deutschland Archiv*, 505. See also 'Frauenförderungsplan des Ministeriums für Volksbildung 1967' (1967), BArch DR2/6901.

¹¹² Art 20, para 4. Quoted in G. Helwig, *Jugend und Familie in der DDR. Leitbild und Alltag im Widerspruch* (Cologne, 1984), 107.

¹¹³ Part III, para 42, clause 2. See also para 3. *Familiengesetzbuch*, 20 and 57f.

into the required socialist shape, rather than the paragon of socialist morality as had been the case in the 1950s.

New course under new leadership: the 1970s

Already during the 1960s, notably after the seismic events of the building of the Wall in 1961, the clampdown in 1965 and the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968, discrepancies between the vision and the reality of the state and of its citizens' lives were evident. Therefore, the utopian rhetoric was deliberately toned down at the beginning of the 1970s – in the wake of the changes at the highest echelon. In 1971, the man responsible for ideological questions in the Politburo, Kurt Hager, said that Ulbricht's term '*sozialistische Menschengemeinschaft*' was 'scientifically not exact for the current period in the GDR, because it obscures still existing class differences and exaggerates the level of equality so far achieved.'¹¹⁴ Consequently, the focus moved away from community and social order (the term '*Menschengemeinschaft*' was no longer considered appropriate) to the 'socialist way of life' [*sozialistische Lebensweise*] led by 'socialist personalities,' whose main attribute was now regarded to be the socialist awareness. After his ascension to power in 1971, Erich Honecker's concentration on the 'unity of social and economic policies' may be regarded as quite a step down in the party's association of the 'lawfulness of historical development,' because the creation of a material basis for the development of socialist personalities should be, to come back to Marx, the one prerequisite for it.

At the 8th SED Party Congress in 1971, Erich Honecker named the formation of the socialist personality as the party's main task of shaping societal order. He gave a much-quoted new point of view of this creature:

One of the noblest aims
And one of the greatest achievements
Of socialist society
Is the all-round developed socialist personality.¹¹⁵

This statement presented, despite its almost poetic appearance, a major problem. It had the inherent defect of describing the 'socialist personality twofold': firstly, as an achievement that had already been obtained in socialist society; and secondly, as an educational aim to which all members of society still had to be led. Certainly, Honecker was not known for his rhetorical brilliance, so it might be assumed that this utterance was just a case of a badly prepared script. But if we look at it seriously, then this

¹¹⁴ Müller, *Zwischen Ritual und Alltag*, 33.

¹¹⁵ 'Ergebnisse und Probleme bei der weiteren Durchführung der schulpolitischen Beschlüsse des VIII. Parteitag' (March 1975), SAPMO-BArch DY30/TVB2/9.05/60.

ambiguity, mixing future result with present attainment, is characteristic of the presentation and reception of policies in the 1970s. Proclamations were made in such an elusive manner, that action by those at whom they were aimed seemed hardly possible. An example to underline this is a paper from 1971 by a 'transmission belt' of the party's policies, the *Deutsche Lehrerzeitung* (DLZ) on how to translate the new requirements in education into practice via teaching:

[For this] it is necessary that each pedagogue profoundly perceives his work to be a contribution to the strengthening of the Republic and hence to the worldwide international class conflict; [...] and that he comprehends why, in the time to come, the leading role of the Party will grow according to the laws [of history].¹¹⁶

The unquestioned acceptance of vague demands was part of everyday life for functionaries as well as the rest of the population, as was the Party's inviolability. The MfV's own FDJ-group for example thought they were making a contribution to the demands of the 8th Party Congress by pledging that 'all members will vote for the candidates of the *Nationale Front* on 14 November 1971, because the course is correct and the perspective clear.'¹¹⁷

When a new era of communication began between the two Germanies in the wake of *Ostpolitik* at the beginning of the 1970s, the wish for differentiation on the side of the GDR increased. In order to mark out its own identity and convey feelings of a socialist fatherland to its people, the SED avoided the use of the word 'Germany' for either of the two states. From 1970 onwards, all goods for export were labelled 'Made in GDR' or 'Made in DDR'¹¹⁸ instead of 'Made in Germany', and East German cars now bore 'DDR' stickers instead of the famous '*Kennzeichen D*'.¹¹⁹

By the mid-1970s it was proclaimed that East Germans had by now developed socialist lifestyles and requirements. Maria E. Müller listed characteristic attitudes and values such as the special attitude towards one's work, collectivity, congruity of interests between society, social group and individual as well as the change from the attitude 'this does not concern me' to the new principle 'I am responsible for everything'.¹²⁰ East German philosophers and sociologists loyal to the party line worked out that old-fashioned personality traits created by capitalism (e.g. individualism, egoism, political indifference) would in due course be replaced by socialist ones such as

¹¹⁶ 'Vorbereitung des Parteitages durch DLZ – Diskussionsgrundlage' (12.3.1971), BArch DR2/A6978.

¹¹⁷ 'Rechenschaftsbericht der FDJ-Grundorganisation des MfV' (27.10.1971), BArch DR2/6899.

¹¹⁸ DDR: *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*.

¹¹⁹ '*Kennzeichen D*' is not only the country symbol for 'Deutschland', but was also the name of a well-known West German TV programme on inner-German relations first shown in 1971.

¹²⁰ Müller, *Zwischen Ritual und Alltag*, 35.

willingness to make sacrifices, sense of collectivity, solidarity, and sticking to one's principles.¹²¹

In 1976, the SED 'invented communist education, although up until then everyone had been content trying to achieve socialist education,' as Horst Dohle has remarked.¹²² The new Party programme presented at the 9th Party Congress of this year paved the way for the ideological conditioning of the young generation. For despite the perpetual proclamations of the development of a socialist conscience, the SED was well aware that this was not yet sufficiently true. Although party-internal surveys conducted by the ZIJ in the 1970s suggested that there was loyalty amongst the majority of the population, and to a lesser extent the acceptance of certain ideological patterns,¹²³ the SED did not slacken the reins; on the contrary. Fearing negative consequences arising out of *détente* policies, the Party programme demanded the preparation of the youth for the future and the great aim of achieving *communist* society via *communist* education.¹²⁴ This area was to play a prominent role in the 'gradual transition to communism', which meant that here, indoctrination was reinforced. In a debriefing of the Party congress in the MfV, this became already obvious. A directive for schools demanded a more scientific approach, partisanship and connection with real life as well as the detailed analysis of both the 9th SED Party Congress and the 25th CPSU Congress, in order to 'convey insights of Marxism-Leninism even more effectively [*überzeugungswirksamer*] and to strengthen [the children's] connection to the Party',¹²⁵ so that that the young generation would actively participate in the further shaping of socialist society.

The introduction of compulsory military education lessons (WKU)¹²⁶ for all fifteen and sixteen-year olds as of 1 September 1978 may also be seen in this light of reinforced indoctrination and as an attempt to mark a distinction between socialist society in East Germany and its increasingly less frightening counterpart in the West. This step, the only significant innovation in the education system after the introduction of the 1965 Education Act until the fall of the regime, and taken at a time of rapprochement between East and West, provoked an unusually broad reaction by pupils,

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹²² Dohle, who worked at the State Secretariat for Church Questions, during a discussion at the conference 'Das ambivalente Erbe des Staat-Kirche-Gesprächs am 6. März 1978 in der DDR', organised by the Evangelische Akademie Berlin (4.3.2003).

¹²³ See for example 'Expertise zur klassenmäßigen Erziehung unserer Jugend (Jugendgesetz)' (1973) BArch-Library FDJ B 6314; 'Die Herausbildung der sozialistischen Lebensweise bei Schülern in der Freizeit und ihr Einfluß auf die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung' (1977) BArch DC4/366; 'Neue Ergebnisse der Jugendforschung' (1979) BArch DC4/205.

¹²⁴ [my emphasis] Gibas, *Propaganda*, 67f.

¹²⁵ 'Direktive zur Auswertung des IX. Parteitages der SED im Unterricht der allgemeinbildenden Schulen' (22.5.1976) BArch DR2/8202.

¹²⁶ WKU: *Wehrkundeunterricht*.

parents and also teachers who, mainly on grounds of their religious beliefs, urged those responsible to rethink this measure and pleaded for a school free of hatred and weapons. However, their protests, coupled with those of the churches remained unsuccessful.¹²⁷

The 8th Pedagogical Congress of the same year likewise declared communist education to be the societal assignment. It was characterised by the ever-increasing pressure by the state on teachers and educators to become propagandists of the regime. The then leader of the FDJ, Egon Krenz, told delegates that ‘Love for life includes hatred of the imperialist system’, and Gerhard Holtz-Baumert, vice president of the GDR writers association and author of much-loved children’s books such as *Alfons Zitterbacke*, went as far as saying ‘With my books I want to activate a healthy anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist hatred.’¹²⁸

‘Quiet partnership with the West’: 1979-1989

The focus on ideology within education continued into the fourth and last decade of the GDR. Behind a façade of official détente and international recognition, the atmosphere inside the country was one of increasing stagnation, and the inner stability of the regime began slowly to crumble unnoticed.¹²⁹ The 10th SED Party Congress in 1981 focused on the next Five-Year Plan and brought no new impetus for the field of education; likewise to the 11th and last SED Party Congress in 1986, when a ‘wind of change’ was already perceptible in the person of Mikhail Gorbachev, who called upon delegates to exercise self-criticism.

Like the belated drive to introduce new technology, notably computerisation, into production and the economy, the education system was in the 1980s characterised by the attempt to ‘optimise’ [*Optimierung* - a favourite 1980s word] its ideological ‘effectiveness’ and to equip the next generation for the approaching communist future. As the years progressed and the gap between the ‘superior socialist camp’ and the ‘doomed-to-fail capitalist world’ widened (in the wrong direction), notably as far as economic success and living standards were concerned, it became ever harder for the propagandists of the regime to mould young people into the desired socialist shape. The regime vacillated between generously allowing the young generation to show outwardly

¹²⁷ See ch. 5.

¹²⁸ *FAZ* (21.10.1978), BStU MfS ZAIG 8820/2.

¹²⁹ Peter Ruben used the term ‘quiet partnership with the Federal Republic’ to describe the politics of the GDR in the 1980s: ‘5. Juglar Juli 1980 - August 1989 - Die stille Partnerschaft mit der Bundesrepublik’. *Berliner Debatte INITIAL* 9 (2/3, 1998), see <<http://www.berlinerdebatte.de/initial/heft2-3-98/zeittafel.htm>> [accessed 30.6.2002] (page 1).

their preference for western television, fashion or music, and infiltrating and clamping down on those who they perceived to be a threat to the state by 'thinking differently'.

In 1974, Gerhart Neuner had declared that 'Wishful thinking of any kind is alien to Marxism-Leninism. The method of dialectical materialism demands a *concrete analysis of the actual societal processes*, which determine today's personality development.'¹³⁰ Wishful thinking however was exactly what the regime was doing: giving the outward impression that society's development was going to plan, whilst the numerous commissioned 'concrete analyses' in MfS reports told a different story. The rigidity of the old guard and the ossified state apparatus meant that the necessary conclusions were not drawn from the reports.

Five months before the fall of the Wall, the 9th Pedagogical Congress had nothing new to suggest on the achievement of the 'socialist personality' and the education system. It reaffirmed the previous line and underlined the importance of an ideological education as that of a guarantor of East German socialism. During the staged celebrations on the occasion of the GDR's 40th anniversary in October 1989, the party leadership's insistence on the fact that everything was going well in the country was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Had the great dream of the 'socialist personality' that had directed the country's policies ever since it was forced into existence turned out to be a pipe dream? The following chapters will explore in detail the extent to which the SED succeeded in 'the making of the socialist personality' in order to answer this question.

¹³⁰ [emphasis in the original] Eichler in Badstübner, *Befremdlich anders*, 568.

Chapter 3. 'Learn, Work and Struggle': Developing the 'intellectual' personality

This chapter deals with the making of the intellect. It examines curricular goals and their implementation in six different areas: crèche, kindergarten, POS, EOS, special and denominational schools. Hitherto, the GDR's pre-school institutions have not been given much attention in the English-speaking literature on education in the GDR, despite the fact that they had the same serious attention of East German educationalists as the school; with numerous curricula, development plans, and manpower devoted to the intellectual education of young children. Tracing the developments within the SED's education policy over time will highlight the differences between the Ulbricht and Honecker era. I wish to emphasise the importance of a pupil's social and regional background with regard to opportunities to further his or her intellect as well as point to the influence of teachers and parents within the education system.

Not just planned potty training: the crèches

The East German crèche [*Kinderkrippe*] system, which became the most extensive in per capita terms in the world, had its origins in the economic goals of the first Five Year Plan of 1948 as well as legislation dating from 1950: the Law on the Protection of Mother and Child and the Law on the Rights of Women.¹ In 1949, there were places for only 0.8% of infants; but this number had risen to 18.7% by 1965; 50.8% by 1978; 72.7% by 1985; and 80.2% by 1989.² There were regional imbalances in the provision of crèches, with rural areas being somewhat disadvantaged. Thanks to the crèche system, mothers were able to pursue their studies, careers and full-time jobs in return for a relatively small fee to cover the cost of catering. Apart from enabling mothers to offer their much-needed work-power to the economy, crèches also facilitated an early introduction to socialist community spirit. All-day care (6am to 6pm) was available from the age of twenty weeks up to three years old in the hands of trained baby nurses assisted by untrained helpers. From 1974 onwards, nursery teachers followed a three-year degree course at a medical college. Crèches were under the control of the Ministry of Health, as their main concern was to provide welfare, care for the infants' health and

¹ On the history of crèches in the GDR, see I. Nentwig-Gesemann, *Krippenerziehung in der DDR. Alltagspraxis und Orientierungen von Erzieherinnen im Wandel* (Opladen, 1999); B. Küchler, 'Zur gesellschaftlichen Rolle der Kinderkrippen in der DDR' in *Neue Erziehung im Kindergarten*, 12/1979.

² Nentwig-Gesemann, *Krippenerziehung*, 18ff.

train basic habits; this explains the enduring stress on nursing and hygiene. The focus on potty training, nutrition and daily routine was in line with older German traditions. The unanimous opinion was that a strict routine was character building, especially for secondary virtues such as orderliness, punctuality and a sense of duty.³ In these early stages, an optimal development of the infant was equated with an optimal state of health.⁴

In the early years there was also a proportionally large number of weekly crèches used by parents working shifts who would leave their children in institutional care from Monday to Friday. Then there were 'seasonal' crèches, which would function like weekly ones during harvest time. The latter two options became increasingly unpopular as extensive studies in the 1960s showed instances of developmental retardation in children, so the state concentrated on the expansion of the day nursery system. These studies did not help to dispel the reservations about crèches in general that many parents still harboured at the time. Objections to collective care on medical grounds were the lack of proper artificial infant nutrition, insufficiently effective measures against infectious diseases, and unsatisfactory protection provided by vaccination. Even in the 1970s, when health provision had improved, parents still held 'a certain conservatism in their ideas and values', which, as Brigitte Kückler wrote in 1979, 'can only be overcome by the gradual change in living conditions, the systematic ideological impact of the people and especially by an improvement in work with the children.'⁵

The second parental objection was to the crèches' official role as a coequal agency to the family, instead of being only a supportive institution to their children's upbringing. In this respect, the oft-promulgated 'objective accordance between societal and personal interests' was taken for granted by the decision makers. Iris Nentwig-Gesemann has described the claimed 'trusting cooperation between crèche and family' as a 'euphemistic flowery phrase.'⁶ For in reality, the way things were done in the crèche were intended as a benchmark to parents on how to care for their children. The

³ A heated discussion broke out in 1999 following remarks by Christian Pfeiffer, a West German criminologist, that regimented education practices such as adhering to strict potty times ('regimented potty training') in GDR crèches were the root-cause for right-wing violence of young people in East Germany; that 'authoritative group socialisation' was the cause of East Germans' 'ego weakness'. Cf. C. Pfeiffer, 'Anleitung zum Haß', in *Der Spiegel* (12/1999), 60-3. His hypothesis remained contentious amongst pedagogical scientists and was viewed very sceptically by many former crèche children. Cf. U. Fuhrer, 'Ostdeutsche Jugendgewalt – rasche gesellschaftliche Individualisierung als Risiko. Eine Antwort zur These von Christian Pfeiffer' in M. Puhle *et al.*, "...daß der Mensch was lernen muß." *Bildung und Erziehung in DDR-Schulen. Vorgaben, Wirklichkeiten, Ansichten* (Magdeburg, 1999), 9-13.

⁴ Karutz in Benz, *Deutschland*, 46-50.

⁵ Kückler in *Neue Erziehung*, 6.

⁶ Nentwig-Gesemann, *Krippenerziehung*, 22.

daily routine, eating and sleeping patterns, and hygiene rules practiced in the crèches were to be copied at home. Since the crèches took over parental tasks such as medical care in the form of crèche doctors, regular examinations and vaccinations as well as collaborating with the advice centres for young mothers [*Mütterberatungsstellen* set up in 1950], they inevitably became ‘the’ authority, whose proposals parents could scarcely ignore. With the end of this system following unification, many parents encountered difficulties simply because they had not been used to dealing with the medical problems of their children, which illustrates just how much parents relied on the crèches.

In the 1950s, there were hardly any discussions on the benefits of collective education of infants. Until the early 1960s, most guidebooks on education stated that education within the family was irreplaceable, as the individual needs of the child could be sufficiently addressed only in this way. In 1961 in Berlin, there even existed a ‘Rent-a-Granny-Service’ [*Omaausleihstation*] modelled on a system in Prague, for working mothers who either did not want to place their child into a crèche, or did not get a place.⁷ With the official integration into the unified socialist education system via the Education Law of 1965, crèche pedagogy was increasingly and continuously brought into line with the aims and demands of socialism in the GDR. These demands arose from the assumption that ‘active, constructive and all-round educated socialists can only be brought up if the complicated process of education and socialisation is organised in an integrated and continuous manner from the very first day until far into adulthood.’⁸ Now, official opinion on collective education changed. It was decided that it had a negative effect on the infants’ personality development if they were exposed to different styles and influences of education in their families.⁹

In 1960, the Education Minister Alfred Lemnitz described the main tasks of the pre-school institutions of crèche and kindergarten and the ‘paths to the all-round development of personality’ thus:

Their work must be organised in a way so that the development of intellectual *and* physical skills takes place. In crèches, the focus must not be exclusively on physical care. [...] We need to avoid onesidedness. [...] We need to form the children’s volition and to encourage them to work for the community.¹⁰

⁷ ‘Erfahrungen aus der Arbeit im Kindergarten’ (1960/61), BArch DR2/2947.

⁸ E. Schmidt-Kolmer, *Pädagogische Aufgaben und Arbeitsweise der Krippen* (Berlin, 1976), 6th ed., 19.

⁹ Karutz in Benz, *Deutschland*, 49.

¹⁰ ‘Festansprachen und Referate des Ministers für Volksbildung Lemnitz. Ausspracheabend im Haus der Deutsch-Sowjetischen Freundschaft mit Eltern der Öffentlichkeit. Thema: Wie erziehen wir unsere Kinder zu allseitig entwickelten Persönlichkeiten?’ (7.4.1960), BArch DR2/5681.

A child's development began to be talked about in the same terms as the economy: plans had to be fulfilled. In 1957, the first small compendium on pedagogical work in the crèches was issued, followed by a draft for an education programme in 1968 and, only in 1985, the final programme.¹¹ Its demands were to a large extent borrowed from kindergarten education, and were rather exacting. With regards to the development of the intellectual capacities of the 'all-round developed personality', crèches aimed to train the children to become active, to teach them to play, to lay the foundations for independence, to execute small tasks, to develop their physical, linguistic and musical abilities, to acquaint them with their social environment and with the beauty of nature. The teachers were required to tick a box on an A3 sheet which served as a 'development monitor' for each child every three months, for example whether the child drinks out of a cup (aged 10-12 months), manages to stand on tip toes (aged 13-15 months) or speaks in three-word sentences (aged 25-30 months).¹² Naturally, children do not develop at exactly the same speed, so even this early in life there were divergences between the ideal 'socialist personality' and the real thing. Another reason why these goals were difficult to achieve was that whilst, theoretically, a nursery teacher should have looked after five or six children, an average of nine children was more usual.¹³ It is highly unlikely that under these circumstances the required intellectual tasks could be practised satisfactorily.

The most important scientific findings from studies over a period of thirty years however showed that crèche education provided three main benefits to a child's intellectual development: first, going to crèche accelerated the development of the child's abilities (at least those that were measured); second, they became independent earlier than if they were educated solely within the family; and third, children learned early to integrate into a group and to orientate their actions on societal norms.¹⁴ It is important to remember in this respect that, although the pedagogical work in the crèches was subject to many official demands, for the most part crèches did not resemble regimented institutions in reality thanks largely to the nursery teachers, who did their

¹¹ Ministerrat, MfV, *Programm für die Bildungs- und Erziehungsarbeit im Kindergarten* (Berlin, 1985); E. Schmidt-Kolmer, *Pädagogische Aufgaben und Arbeitsweise der Krippen* (Berlin, 1968); E. Schmidt-Kolmer, *Leitfaden für die Erziehung in Krippen und Heimen* (Berlin, 1957).

¹² See the 'Entwicklungsbogen', supplement in Schmidt-Kolmer, *Pädagogische Aufgaben* (1976).

¹³ Nentwig-Gesemann, *Krippenerziehung*, 24.

¹⁴ Karutz in Benz, *Deutschland*, 51f. NB: These benefits are currently being rediscovered. A recent study on the subject of crèches advocates the idea that mothers who wish to pursue their careers after having a baby should have no qualms despite the very common conviction in Germany that a child belongs with its mother. See E. Homburg, *Zurück in den Job. So meistern Mütter ihr berufliches Comeback* (Frankfurt, 2005).

work responsibly and strove to make the crèche a place of happiness and learning for the children.

The kindergarten as a place of play, learning, and activity

With numerous 19th century progressive ‘bourgeois’ pedagogues, amongst them Friedrich Fröbel (the father of the *Kindergarten*, literally ‘children’s garden’), Adolph Diesterweg and Karl F. W. Wander, Germany had a long tradition of demanding an integrated national education system. But, in the SED-approved version of events, this was something ‘capitalist exploitative society was unable to offer’,¹⁵ and a century would elapse before the young Soviet Union led the way in making kindergarten an integral part of the system. In fact, German kindergartens had been thriving ever since the 1830s,¹⁶ but it is true that in the Soviet Union this institution gained for the first time full state support. Nadeshda Krupskaya was an ardent advocate of developing a child’s potential with the help of a kindergarten education and said ‘without societal pre-school education, there is no communist education; and without communist education today, there will be no communist society tomorrow,’ whilst her husband referred to kindergartens as ‘the germs of communism.’¹⁷

GDR pedagogy followed closely in the footsteps of the Soviet model by starting the process of socialist education in early childhood, since ‘the feelings, qualities, abilities, skills, behaviour and habits which develop in infancy are of cardinal significance for the formation of the socialist personality’.¹⁸ Kindergartens were genuine educational pre-school institutions, admitting children aged three to six. From the very beginning, they had two remits: pedagogical and sociopolitical. The goal was to ‘prepare children for school, introduce them to socialist life and acquaint them with the productive work of the people,’¹⁹ in other words to prepare them for life and work in the socialist society. At the same time, by providing virtually free all-day care,²⁰ kindergartens enabled the mothers to work full time, with long opening hours usually from 6am to 5.30pm. Similar to the crèches, kindergartens also cared for children’s medical wellbeing by providing regular surveys and check-ups; not only by physicians

¹⁵ M. Kreckler, I. Launer, *Die Aufgaben des Kindergartens im System der Volksbildung der DDR. Wesen und Funktion des Kindergartens* (Berlin, 1962), 4.

¹⁶ On the history of the kindergarten, see W. Grossmann, *Kindergarten. Eine historisch-systematische Einführung in seine Entwicklung und Pädagogik* (Weinheim, 1994).

¹⁷ Cf. Kreckler and Launer, *Die Aufgaben*, 13-6.

¹⁸ ‘7. Entwurf der Grundsätze und Aufgaben der sozialistischen Erziehung im Kindergarten’ (27.8.1959), BArch DR2/5626.

¹⁹ *Bildungsgesetz*, part 3, § 11, section 1, 94.

²⁰ Childcare fees were met from the state budget; all that parents had to pay was a small fee for the midday meal.

but also by dentists, psychologists and speech therapists in order to ensure that they were ready to be enrolled in school.

The kindergarten constituted the second level of the education system after the crèche. Apart from normal kindergartens, there existed three deviations from the norm: firstly, the peculiarity of confessional kindergartens; secondly, bilingual kindergartens in the small Sorbian-speaking area in the east of the country; and thirdly, institutions for the children of GDR diplomats abroad.²¹ Although the level of provision rose continually until 1989, there were always shortages. Especially in the 1960s, but also in the 1970s, insufficient kindergarten places formed a constant reason for petitions [*Eingaben*] to the MfV.²² In 1950, there were places for only 20.5% of all children.²³ By 1962, every second child went to kindergarten;²⁴ in 1974, 80%;²⁵ and in 1986, 89% of all children.²⁶ In contrast to the crèches, kindergartens enjoyed a much higher level of acceptance amongst parents. On the one hand, this was due to the general opinion that children of kindergarten age thrive in the company of other children; on the other hand though, the cooperation between kindergartens and parents was much better organised. Parents were more involved in helping to achieve educational goals by means of thematic parents' evenings, house calls, and the teacher's work with the '*Elternaktiv*'.²⁷ Another factor was that by the early 1970s, about 80% of women were working. Whilst previous generations had looked after their children's offspring, these days the considerably younger grandparents themselves were working and hence, there were hardly any playmates left for those children who did not go to kindergarten.

In kindergarten pedagogy, the notion of the child as a ductile object was particularly prevalent. The kindergarten teacher was seen as a gardener who would sow the seeds of desired characteristics, nurturing the good ones whilst weeding out any bad ones.²⁸ The formation of the all-round socialist personality was at the centre of all endeavours. The top priorities of central planning bodies such as the MfV and the APW were that education and socialisation of the youngest generation must be 'scientific, partisan and methodical as well as closely connected to socialist life;' and that the child

²¹ This topic would merit further investigation within a study on GDR elites. See for example BArch DR2/8151, BArch DR2/6443, BArch DR2/2957.

²² See for example BArch DR2/7830, BArch DR2/7882, BArch DR2/7639.

²³ Karutz in Benz, *Deutschland*, 45.

²⁴ 'Rede Prof. Lemnitz vor dem Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt' (24.10.1962), BArch DR2/6312.

²⁵ 'Dienstbesprechung beim Minister' (22.1.1974), BArch DR2/8126.

²⁶ Karutz in Benz, *Deutschland*, 57.

²⁷ The *Elternaktiv* was a group of about six societally active or simply interested parents, who were elected by the other parents to represent their views and function as a liaison between the institution and the home.

²⁸ Cf. D. Höltershinken *et al.*, *Kindergarten und Kindergärtnerin in der DDR*, vol. 1 and 2 (Neuwied, 1997), 37.

would develop by ‘actively acquiring the necessary societal experiences under guidance of the pedagogue.’²⁹ Following Soviet pedagogy, which pronounced that children needed active engagement with their societal, cultural and natural environment to develop properly; play, learning and activity constituted the three main areas of kindergarten education. Aims and tasks of kindergarten pedagogy to this effect were devised in plans and programmes from 1952 onwards,³⁰ but became binding only in 1968. These plans consisted mainly of guidelines as to which goals should be reached within each three-month development stage of the child, similar to the plans for crèches. With respect to the intellectual side of the personality, the development of thought and speech of the children, and their cognitive, physical and musical abilities were to the fore. Since most of the kindergarten day was taken up by playtime, eating and sleeping, key pieces for intellectual development were the so-called *Beschäftigungen* [activities], two daily time slots of between fifteen to twenty minutes devoted to learning. Whilst in the first two decades of the GDR, playtime took up most of the children’s day, increasing ‘scientificness’ [*Wissenschaftlichkeit*] of kindergarten pedagogy from the 1960s onwards resulted in an ever greater focus on *Beschäftigung*. Here, the kindergarten teacher trained the children’s linguistic abilities via speech practices, reading stories, and singing; practised some basic maths and taught them how to read the clock; introduced the children to various artistic activities such as painting, singing, or doing handicrafts. In addition to this, gymnastics, dancing and outdoor activities such as taking exercise and ‘getting to know nature and societal life’ via explorations of the children’s village or town and visits to zoos or museums, were part of the plan.

The extent to which the demands of the plan to mould socialist personalities were translated into practice depended very much on the conscientiousness, commitment and creativity of the kindergarten teachers through whom they were filtered, and also on the kindergarten’s environment. Education was not as consistent as envisaged in the plans. Many ideological demands were not fulfilled in kindergartens which did not have SED-members amongst the nursery teachers or where the team did not hanker after accolades such as ‘Collective of socialist work’;³¹ although from the mid-1970s onwards, the SED aimed to fill management vacancies with party members or ‘young, developable colleagues whose outlook on life is politically and ideologically

²⁹ ‘Sitzungsprotokoll, Minister für Volksbildung’ (9.1.1973), BArch DR2/7647.

³⁰ R. Pfütz, O. Schroeter, *Bildungs- und Erziehungsplan für den Kindergarten* (Berlin, 1967); DPZI (ed.), *Ziele und Aufgaben der vorschulischen Erziehung* (Berlin, 1952).

³¹ Cf. Karutz in Benz, *Deutschland*, 59.

sound'.³² However, the political demands of the plans aside, they became rather popular amongst kindergarten teachers because they gave a level of certainty, a framework by which the teacher could prepare her daily work and measure success. This was particularly the case for the 1980s, when a new generation of teachers began their work using the memories of their own education in GDR kindergartens, and hence were familiar with 'how things were done'. Ulla Schmidt argued along the same lines: 'Young teachers were more inclined to "work through" the proposed goals and tasks due to their lack of pedagogical and life experiences than older and more experienced teachers who would often approach their work more pragmatically.'³³ Asked for any examples from the GDR education system that she thought would have been worth retaining, a representative of the young generation, Monika F., a nursery teacher born in 1951 and still working in a kindergarten in Magdeburg, replied 'I still find it important to draw up rules and norms and to stick to them.'³⁴ There were however others who would feel constrained in their independence by the many guidelines; but even then it was usually possible to find a way for fitting in individual creativity.

Each kindergarten's principal had to send regular updates on the progress of the children in her institution's care to her superiors.³⁵ Constant evaluation of these reports, especially from the mid-1960s onwards, showed that children leaving kindergartens were usually better prepared for school than those who had stayed at home. They were better equipped to deal with other children's whims, germs and everyday problems such as small fights over a favourite toy. Attendance at crèche and kindergarten was not compulsory, although it was strongly desired that a child who had not attended either of the two institutions, would spend the year that preceded school with peers in a kindergarten.

Nevertheless, advantages of kindergartens must be accompanied by a certain amount of criticism. Val D. Rust, otherwise an admirer of the high standards of GDR kindergartens, noted in the 1980s with regard to the training of the intellect that 'there seems, however, less free expression, less uncontrolled experimentation in painting than, say, in English nursery schools.'³⁶ In order to glide effortlessly from kindergarten into school education, sometimes the development plan was too strictly adhered to, not allowing for individual needs and differences among the children. The aim was that

³² 'Kadermäßige Bedingungen im Bereich Vorschulerziehung bis 1980' (25.3.1976), BArch DR2/8197.

³³ U. Schmidt, 'Kollektives Verhalten als soziales Training. Gedanken zur Vorschulerziehung in der DDR' in Puhle, *Daß der Mensch*, 112.

³⁴ Monika F., questionnaire (21.4.2004).

³⁵ The female form is used here as there were practically no men holding this post.

³⁶ Rust, *Education*, 34.

children should already be acquainted with the future norms of school life, where creativity and play very much took a back seat compared to learning and obeying the rules. However, the regime's attempts to create 'Stepford children' were not something unique to the GDR. In Britain, for example, where children start primary school as young as four years old, the demands placed on them regarding intellectual tasks such as reading and writing and basic maths and the pressure to succeed in view of competition for places at 'good' schools are much higher than they were in East Germany and may also be seen as an example of middle-class perfectionism.³⁷ The kindergarten memories of my interviewees with regard to intellectual stimulation were positive throughout. Jan S.*, who was born in 1959 and grew up in Bad Salzungen, said that kindergartens 'enjoyed great popularity even with non-working mothers, for they provided preparation for school and the learning of social behaviour.'³⁸

Alternative establishments I: Denominational kindergartens

At the end of the 1960s, a six-year old girl was asked in her pre-enrolment assessment 'What things do you know that can fly?'. She listed birds, bees, bumblebees, bats, and kites. Yet her examiners were not quite satisfied. And lo and behold, after a few moments of intense cogitation the girl had an inspiration: 'Angels'! Alas, she had got it wrong again. Apparently, the examiners expected a child who grew up in the GDR of the 1960s to answer '*Sputnik*'.³⁹ The little girl's father, writer Günter de Bruyn, felt exposed by her answer. To put an angel in place of the *Sputnik* told the authorities that in his family there prevailed a different kind of thinking than the one that was desired by the state. 'The candidate, who had not experienced state kindergarten or television, was unfamiliar with the space craze encouraged by propaganda.'⁴⁰ Thus far, the parents had educated the child as if the state did not exist, had not prepared her for life 'outside'. However, at the age of six or seven, this sheltered upbringing came to an end and the state became a competing educator, often propelling Christian parents into an uneasy relationship with the school. The following section explores the ways in which denominational kindergartens deviated from socialist norms in comparison with the state kindergartens described above.

³⁷ Children across Germany were and still are not expected to write on entering school at six or seven years old.

³⁸ Jan S.* questionnaire (3.2.2004). NB: The names of my interviewees who wished to remain anonymous have been changed and are marked with an asterisk.

³⁹ *Sputnik* was the name of the world's first artificial satellite, launched successfully into space by the Soviet Union in 1957.

⁴⁰ G. de Bruyn, 'Ostdeutsche Irritationen. Ein Vortrag' in A. W. Mytze (ed.), *Europäische Ideen. Sonderheft* (London, 1995), 1.

Independent kindergartens in the GDR existed only under the auspices of the Protestant and Catholic Churches. They were tolerated though shunned by the state and received no financial support.⁴¹ Their existence would have been impossible without the support from the West German Churches. Each kindergarten also had a partner kindergarten in the FRG sending presents. These parcels were only to be sent to private individuals, and often did not make it to their intended recipients. They contained essentials and small luxuries such as curtains, pinafores, tights, crockery, cutlery, scissors, glue, toys, coffee, raisins, tinned food and chocolate.⁴²

The SMAD allowed denominational kindergartens to re-open in the SBZ after 1945, but put a stop to any new ones being set up; a ban that continued in the GDR.⁴³ The exact number of denominational kindergartens in the GDR is difficult to determine, as figures vary from source to source. In 1964, an MfV document proudly stated that the GDR had the highest number of kindergartens per head of population in the world: 9673 communal and company kindergartens (414,118 places) including 435 denominational kindergartens (21,026 places).⁴⁴ Other documents speak of 328 kindergartens with 17,800 places in 1976⁴⁵ and about 350 in 1978;⁴⁶ and secondary literature dating from the 1990s puts the figure between 383 and 417 establishments with 13,000 to 18,400 places (all of which is confusing as the number should have remained constant or fallen over time due to the ban on new openings).⁴⁷ The district of Erfurt had the highest number of church kindergartens of all 14 districts plus Berlin: 94 with 4796 places in 1973⁴⁸ and still 70 in 1989,⁴⁹ due to the fact that the Catholic area of the Eichsfeld was part of this district.

⁴¹ In some localities however, denominational kindergartens applied successfully for an allowance of 25 pfennigs towards the cost of food (total cost 60 pfennigs per day), as was the case of the 16 Catholic kindergartens in Kreis Heiligenstadt. Cf. 'Kirchliche Ausbildungsstätten' (1971), KA L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG 1011.

⁴² Cf. 'Genosse Mückenberger an Paul Verner' (18.12.1978), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/2.036/39.

⁴³ On the history of denominational kindergartens in the GDR, see U. Hartmann, C.-M. Rahner, 'Zur Situation der konfessionellen Kindergärten in der DDR' in M. Müller-Rieger (ed.), *Wenn Mutti früh zur Arbeit geht...* "Zur Geschichte des Kindergartens in der DDR" (Dresden, 1997), 89-101.

⁴⁴ Cf. 'Stand der Bildungs- und Erziehungsarbeit in den Einrichtungen der Vorschulerziehung' (23.2.1965), BArch DR2/7579.

⁴⁵ Cf. 'Erich Honecker an alle 1. Sekretäre der Bezirksleitungen, Anlage' (15.9.1976), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/2.036/47.

⁴⁶ Cf. 'Genosse Mückenberger an Paul Verner' (18.12.1978), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/2.036/39.

⁴⁷ The number of 417 kindergartens (275 Protestant and 142 Catholic) with 13,113 places is quoted by Hartmann and Rahner in Müller-Rieger, *Wenn Mutti*, 92; compared to 383 institutions with 15,963 places quoted in I. Schneider, 'Kinder aus christlichen Familien in der DDR' in Deutsches Jugendinstitut (ed.), *Was für Kinder. Aufwachsen in Deutschland* (Munich, 1993), 318. The number of 401 kindergartens with 18,400 places is given by Döbert, *Bildungswesen*, 96.

⁴⁸ Cf. 'Einschätzung der politisch-ideologischen und pädagogischen Arbeit in den Kindergärten des Bezirkes Erfurt' (1973), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, Nr. 013826.

⁴⁹ Cf. Hartmann and Rahner in Müller-Rieger, *Wenn Mutti*, 90.

Information on denominational kindergartens rarely features in the files, which speaks for their surprising autonomy. The only instance where the MfV got involved was to check their compliance with hygienic standards. Denominational kindergartens were run by either the local parish or the Protestant *Diakonie* and *Innere Mission* or the Catholic *Caritas*. The training and assignment of teachers was the responsibility of those three Church agencies.⁵⁰ Whereas in the immediate post-war years and the 1950s, many kindergartens were headed and staffed by deaconesses and nuns; in the 1960s and 1970s, they were increasingly replaced by children's deaconesses [*Kinderdiakoninnen*] and teachers, qualified following four years in the churches' own training institutions. At all times there was also a large number of unskilled personnel, mostly Christian women and, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, women from families who were living with the uncertainty resulting from having asked for 'permission to leave the country'.⁵¹ Staff were paid only the minimum wage, about 460 Mark per month;⁵² and parents paid 35 pfennigs per day for meals (the same as in state-run kindergartens) plus about 40 Mark per month for care.

Despite this substantial financial burden, the kindergartens were not only very popular with Christian parents, but also with non-Christians, including teachers and members of the SED and the People's Police. Waiting lists were up to three years long, so that sometimes Christian parents would not get a place for their children, as was the case for Annemarie W.*, whose two girls went to the police kindergarten in Weimar in the late 1970s instead.⁵³ Ingrid A.*, born in 1951 and a teacher from Mühlhausen, said she never saw the necessity to deny her Christian identity: 'On the contrary, my daughter went to the Protestant kindergarten. Of course I had to put up with remarks and hostilities by some colleagues: "Are you not ashamed to send your child there?"'.⁵⁴ The reasons why atheist parents were keen on sending their children there were manifold: for some it might have been simply a question of proximity; for others the often superior endowment with toys, books and arts and crafts materials such as crayons, construction paper, plasticine, and some foodstuffs hailing from the FRG. This was not just the case in later years. A report on pre-school education in Kreis Worbis from 1951 states that denominational kindergartens there had considerably more

⁵⁰ Cf. 'Plan der politisch-ideologischen und organisatorischen Arbeit des Rates des Kreises auf kirchenpolitischem Gebiet' (29.7.1970), KA L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG 317. On training and qualification of personnel in denominational kindergartens, see Hartmann and Rahner in Müller-Rieger, *Wenn Mutti*, 97-101.

⁵¹ Cf. 'Genosse Mückenberger an Paul Verner' (18.12.1978), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/2.036/39.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Annemarie W.* questionnaire (23.2.2004).

⁵⁴ Ingrid A.* questionnaire (10.2.2004).

material at their disposal than communal and company kindergartens. 'Parents realise this and have their children going to where there are better premises and more toys. Neither should the effect of special feeding and presents via the *Caritas* be underestimated. Communal kindergartens of course cannot entertain the children with cocoa and such like.'⁵⁵ However, in the same way that there were state-run kindergartens of varying standards, there were also denominational kindergartens with drawbacks such as unsuitable premises and bad equipment.⁵⁶

Henning S. hails from a Christian home and attended a Protestant kindergarten in Dessau in the early 1970s. He remembered it as 'probably not being much different from those today: singing, playing, being outdoors. Whether we were in any way prepared for school I can't say. If so, then it must have been done quite subtly. We didn't learn any letters for example. Sometimes we would prepare the church service.'⁵⁷ Denominational kindergartens were not subject to any input by the state; the national plans and guidelines for kindergartens were not used. Both Churches devised in central advisory boards and in cooperation with West German Christian pedagogues their own conceptions for kindergarten work from the 1960s onwards.⁵⁸

The key difference to GDR pre-school pedagogy was the view that the child already constituted a ready-made personality. Instead of seeing children as unfinished adults whom it was necessary to mould into a particular shape,⁵⁹ here the focus lay on every child's individuality and its right to self-determination instead of on the value of the collective. The children enjoyed more freedom to engage in playing when and with what they wanted. Children who went to a Church kindergarten lived in a different, sometimes insular world compared to those going to a normal kindergarten. The children were introduced to Christian teachings, customs, and symbols; and Christian parents saw their children's time in the kindergarten as 'the first step into the congregation'.⁶⁰ The children would learn prayers, hymns, and folksongs, listen to stories from the Bible, paint, draw, and also rehearse small sketches for special church services. The fact that children from non-Christian backgrounds would be exposed to Christian teachings in the kindergarten environment sometimes led to confusion at

⁵⁵ 'Bericht über Vorschulerziehung im Kreis Worbis' (8.6.1951), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/9.05/102.

⁵⁶ A report from the Eichsfeld noted that in some localities parents were keen to place their children in state-run kindergartens. 'This results on the one hand from the quality of the work there and on the other from the financial demands of the denominational kindergartens.' Cf. 'Statistische Meldungen' (1971), KA L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG 3597.

⁵⁷ Henning S. questionnaire (25.3.2004).

⁵⁸ Cf. Hartmann and Rahner in Müller-Rieger, *Wenn Mutti*, 95ff. and 176f.

⁵⁹ Cf. H.-D. Schmidt, 'Das Bild des Kindes – eine Norm und ihre Wirkungen' in: *neue deutsche literatur* (10/1982), 74 and 79.

⁶⁰ Schneider in Dt. Jugendinstitut, *Was für Kinder*, 318.

home; in a way a mirror-image of what could happen to Christian children when they first entered the socialist school. Some denominational kindergartens recognised this problem and would make sure that biblical stories would be told in full before the children went home on Fridays, so as to avoid the situation where atheist parents would not know how to answer any questions the children might have on the story.⁶¹

An important factor for many parents was the absence of military toys and of course military education. Instead of visiting soldiers at their swearing-in ceremony, the children might visit the denominational nursing home and serenade the elderly. Instead of the *Republikgeburtstag*, denominational kindergartens celebrated the harvest festival. With some major characteristics and experiences of a small socialist personality evidently lacking, how did these children cope with the passage to school? Teachers asserted that children coming from denominational kindergartens were well prepared for school, as ‘they had developed their creativity in many ways’.⁶² As most six-year olds are keen to learn new things, being faced with an alien environment and getting to know an exciting second world with different songs and stories featuring heroes from the workers’ movements instead of Moses or David, did not present such a problem for them. It may be argued that entering school was not so much a conflict of Christian children versus socialist school, but rather children versus their parents, whose worldview suddenly became challenged by a rivalling agency. A nice victory for the SED, one may think at this point, but the success was mostly limited to an acceptance of the existence of a different *Weltanschauung* by the children, not to a heartfelt change of conviction.

‘For life we are learning!’ – Learning in the POS

School should make pupils ‘think, feel, and act socialist’.⁶³ As the POS was the only institution that all children had to attend, it was in the forefront of the ideological battle. According to the 1959 School Law, there should be five guiding principles: the unity of education and socialisation; the bond of education and socialisation with real life; the connection between theory and practice; the link of learning and productive work; and the all-roundedness of education and socialisation. In 1968, theorists at the DPZI reinforced the ideological demands. The three main functions of the POS were: to turn pupils into socialist personalities; to prepare pupils for ‘constructive productive work in

⁶¹ Hartmann and Rahner in Müller-Rieger, *Wenn Mutti*, 94.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 93.

⁶³ Tristichic soundbites such as ‘sozialistisch zu denken, zu fühlen und zu handeln’ were very popular in SED language. Cf. ‘Prof. Lemnitz zum Festakt am 8.2.1960’, BArch DR2/5688.

the interest of society'; and to educate pupils to become 'aware socialist citizens, politically committed, and acting for the good of our socialist GDR.'⁶⁴

The first extensive curriculum was only introduced in 1959. In 1966, in the wake of the 1965 Education Act, the curriculum was revised to include more stringent ideological demands, such as pupils' conviction of the victory of socialism, the perception of the GDR as a home of progress and friendship with the Soviet Union.⁶⁵ During the first two stages of school development, the 'antifascist-democratic school reform' from 1945 to 1949, and the 'construction of the socialist school' from 1949 to 1961, many of the changes and innovations undertaken followed developments in the Soviet model. The didactic methods so typical in the GDR, such as viewing teaching mainly as transmission of knowledge without much creative input on the side of the pupils, stemmed from 1950s Soviet teachings. Only with reform attempts in various areas of social and economic life, and a cautious emancipation from the USSR under Ulbricht in the 1960s, did GDR pedagogy begin to acquire 'its own profile'.⁶⁶ With regard to the above mentioned stages of school development until 1961, it is interesting to note that Oskar Anweiler, a West German educationalist, stated in 1988 that the third stage, the 'formation of the integrative socialist education system' started in 1961 and that 'it is not so far clearly apparent when this last and longest period will be designated finished and be replaced by a new, fourth one.'⁶⁷ This statement, with its outlook to the future, is indicative of how well established the education system, and the whole GDR, seemed even in the later 1980s.

The ten years of the POS were divided into three stages: *Unterstufe* [lower grade 1-3], *Mittelstufe* [intermediate grade 4-6] and *Oberstufe* [upper grade 7-10]. In the *Unterstufe*, the curriculum consisted of elementary subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic, music, drawing, and physical education, plus a general studies subject called *Heimatkunde* (see the next chapter) as well as handicrafts, gardening and voluntary needlework.⁶⁸ On the next level, these subjects were developed, except for the last two, and complemented by natural sciences (biology and physics), social sciences (history

⁶⁴ C. Griese, H. Marburger, *Zwischen Internationalismus und Patriotismus: Konzepte des Umgangs mit Fremden und Fremdheit in den Schulen der DDR* (Frankfurt/Main, 1995), 17.

⁶⁵ 'Erfassung der ideologischen Leitlinien in den Lehrplänen' (11.2.1969), Salzmannschule Schularchiv/Protokolle Pädagogischer Rat [henceforth SArch/PPR]. NB: The *Pädagogischer Rat* was a plenum of the headteacher and all teaching staff of a school, as well as the *Pionierleiter* [pioneer leader] and a representative of the *Patenbetrieb* [the school's official partner in the working world, a local factory for instance]. Cf. 'Verordnung über die Sicherung einer festen Ordnung an den allgemeinbildenden Schulen – Schulordnung – vom 20.10.1967', § 24, KA L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG 2682.

⁶⁶ Waterkamp, *Lehrplanreform*, 229.

⁶⁷ Anweiler, *Schulpolitik*, 19.

⁶⁸ *Bildungsgesetz*, part 4, § 14.

and geography) and Russian as the compulsory first foreign language.⁶⁹ The curriculum in the upper stage continued with all these subjects and was extended by civic education (see the next chapter), chemistry, astronomy, a second, voluntary foreign language, and polytechnic instruction.⁷⁰ The proportion of the subjects was distributed as follows: about 41.4 % social sciences, German, and the arts; 29.8 % maths and science; 10.6% polytechnic education; 10.6% languages; and 7.9% PE.⁷¹

An examination of archival material with regard to the intellectual demands made by the MfV showed that the oft-quoted principle of the unity of ‘high scientific education’ and ‘class-conscious political-ideological education’ was omnipresent, at least on the theoretical level. This unity of socialist knowledge and socialist conviction is exemplified by a decree on the presentation of various subjects issued by the MfV in the wake of increased political pressure on the schools after the building of the Wall in 1961. In history and *Staatsbürgerkunde* [civic education], the ‘lessons of 13 August are to be conveyed thoroughly and convincingly.’ Pupils should recognise that the balance of power ‘has come down in favour of Socialism both internationally and in Germany,’ and that the GDR is a ‘haven of peace and of Socialism in the whole of Germany.’ It went on to say that lessons in these subjects fulfilled their educational task only if they awakened the will [in children] to allow personal actions to be directed by the ‘correct insight’ [*Erkenntnis*].⁷² Other subjects had their role to play as well, such as German literature (through suitable reading material, an ‘ever increasing convergence between personal and societal interests shall develop in pupils’), music (patriotic education emotionally deepened and through suitable songs), drawing (themes such as ‘border police with dog’; flags; ‘a visit to our soldiers’) and even astronomy (‘Only in communism lies the bright future of all men – only the socialist social order creates successes such as man in space.’).⁷³

The conveyance of facts was to be more closely tied to indoctrination. This was not limited to the highly charged months after the building of the Wall, but it embraced the whole lifespan of the GDR. The realities of knowledge transfer were such that although from the 1960s onwards this indivisible bond between factual knowledge and political indoctrination became a normal part of school life, there were many teachers who did not care too much about it, as is testified by numerous accounts withing MfV

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, § 15.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, § 16.

⁷¹ These are figures from 1977, but the percentages did not differ significantly at other times. Cf. *Wilhelmi, Jugend in der DDR*, 40.

⁷² ‘Anweisung zur Gestaltung des Unterrichts in den Schulen’ (September 1961), BAArch DR2/6942.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

and MfS files. Teachers were often reprimanded for remaining ‘professional’ [*fachlich*] or ‘passive’ towards questions of the politico-ideological education of pupils, and some would refuse to deal with political topics, or to organise ‘societal tasks’ on the grounds that ‘the most important things in school are a good professional education and high learning results.’⁷⁴ Gerfried Fuhlbrügge, who came as a teacher to the *Salzmannschule* in the late 1970s, noted that ‘the multidisciplinary aspect of the supreme Marxist-Leninist *Weltanschauung* constituted such a large part of the curriculum and didactics, that it overran and smothered the professional side of education.’⁷⁵

In contrast to the federal system in the FRG, the highly centralised system in the East with its standardised curricula and textbooks contributed to the creation of a ‘standard’ biography for all children, whether they went to an inner-city school in Rostock or to a small country school in the Erz Mountains. The intellectual demands made of children were the same everywhere; the execution of these demands varied quite considerably however. The president of the APW, Gerhart Neuner, wrote in an article for the East German weekly *Sonntag* in 1981:

The pupil of a ten-year POS undergoes more than ten thousand lessons. This enormous study time can lay the foundations for an interesting life, make him efficient, form revolutionary attitudes, but it can also numb him, produce calluses in the wrong places – to put it bluntly – can destroy his spirit [*lebendigen Geistes erschlagen*].⁷⁶

How much socialist indoctrination seeped through to pupils depended on the zeal of the teachers themselves: whether they pressed home the ideological message to the extent that was intended by the SED and claimed by critics in the West. Teachers certainly could not ignore it completely, but they found ways around it. ‘Our history teacher was not at all a force feeder. Luckily he was much more interested in history before 1945 than after. One of his favourite topics was the Peasants’ Wars, which he knew a lot about and with which he bored us.’ recalled Katja Lange-Müller.⁷⁷ Gerhard Hieke, a former teacher of Jürgen Fuchs,⁷⁸ wrote that he simply took the liberty of including poems by Reiner Kunze into his classes. ‘This was possible thanks to generally

⁷⁴ ‘Einige Hinweise zur Lage an den Universitäten und Oberschulen’ (1.12.1961), BStU MfS ZAIG Z 508. See also the comments on a group of teachers ‘who wanted to be teachers only and who were hesitant to do extracurricular activities’ in H.-J. Häcker, *Die Befähigung und der Einsatz der IM/ GMS aus dem Bereich Volksbildung/ Schulen zur aktiven Bekämpfung und Zurückdrängung von Wirkungserscheinungen der politisch-ideologischen Diversion* (1977), BStU MfS JHS MF VVS 777/77, 28.

⁷⁵ Fuhlbrügge in Kemper, *Menschenbild*, 186.

⁷⁶ Quoted in C. Dieckmann, preface in V. Döring, *Fröhlich sein und singen. Schule vor der Wende* (Berlin, 1996), 8.

⁷⁷ K. Lange-Müller, ‘Wir interessierten uns mehr für den ersten Koitus als für Ulbricht ablösende Honeckers’ in Felsmann, *Beim kleinen Trompeter*, 130f.

⁷⁸ Jürgen Fuchs (1950-1999) was a dissident writer.

widespread ignorance [...] Well, I did not have to write the author's name into the register, I just wrote "modern lyric – interpretation exercise."⁷⁹

Compliance with curricula was constantly monitored by the school's headteacher and checked by expert advisors [*Fachberater*] from the regional or district branch of the MfV. Teachers and pupils alike experienced these inspections as somewhat similar to visits by a distant relative, an occasion on which it is necessary to dress up and behave well. Christa H., born in 1948 and a teacher since 1971, remembered that teachers 'tried to present a political education when someone was sitting in on classes'.⁸⁰ But one hour's model teaching could not always mask the lapses in pupils' knowledge, and the *Fachberater* would particularly look for the correct transmission of political-ideological knowledge, as shown in a report from 1960 on a history class in Cottbus. It noted that 'common terms were not always correctly comprehended and hence used as empty phrases,' an indicator of just how much of the overt political messages failed to hit the mark. On the other hand, bad performance need not necessarily have been due to disinclination towards politics, but simple lack of knowledge:

Confident factual knowledge is non-existent. Pupils answered that Marx was born in 1818, but claimed his Communist Manifesto had already appeared in 1794. Another set Marx's life dates to 1673-1760, answered no other question, but has 2 as his half-term mark.⁸¹

A cross section of my interviewees' feelings about the shaping of their intellectual personality in the POS can be summarised in three points. First, most of them felt that they had enjoyed a high standard of general education in purely formal terms, with special emphasis on and above average knowledge of science (in comparison to the narrowness of subjects in the West German or British model). This is linked to the second point, that humanist knowledge, i.e. languages, literature and the arts took second place. Many interviewees saw their insufficient linguistic abilities, due to the inadequate teaching at school, as one of the main points of criticism. The third point was the recognition that pupils were practically equipped for vocational training thanks to the various polytechnic subjects – if that was what they had in mind for their own future. Viola S., born in 1954, said with the self-confidence of a Berliner: 'Since I knew already at the age of six that I wanted to be an actress, there were subjects that I felt

⁷⁹ Fuchs and Hieke, *Dumm geschult*, 69.

⁸⁰ Christa H. questionnaire (8.3.2004).

⁸¹ 'Überprüfung des Geschichts-Unterrichts im Bezirk Cottbus' (30.3.1960), BAArch DR2/6799 [age of pupils not known]. NB: The GDR marking system went from 1 to 5, 1 being the best possible grade.

were completely useless for my later job. Hence I failed to see that I should do equally well in all subjects.’⁸²

This bottom line is not very surprising. School life in the GDR with respect to ‘pure’ learning was the same as it was (and still is) all over the globe. Ulla M., a kindergarten teacher from Eisenach, born in 1950, could equally well have grown up in West Germany: ‘I loved school when my favourite subjects were taught and I loathed it when maths was on the timetable.’;⁸³ as could have Viola S.: ‘Often it depended on the teacher whether I learned something or enjoyed class.’⁸⁴ And whilst the state’s aim of developing each pupil’s intellect to the fullest left some behind; for others the syllabus of the integrated school did not offer enough intellectual stimulation. Petra R.* for example, born in 1960 and a graphic designer from Berlin, thought her POS education was not rigorous enough. ‘I had the impression that I was stuck at this average level. My personal strengths were not developed and promoted. Too much time was invested in questions of discipline, and conformist behaviour was important.’⁸⁵ She intentionally referred only to her POS education. Intellectual stimulation finally did come when she entered the EOS.

Russian: A case of love and hate

A brief case study of the teaching of Russian illustrates how intellectual demands were experienced at the grassroots, since this was the subject more than any other that was imposed on the curriculum from ‘above’ and not always welcomed ‘below’. For a start, it is important to remember that with the introduction of a compulsory foreign language in 1947, the hitherto elitist character of foreign language teaching at school had been removed.⁸⁶ The choice of Russian reflects the political situation at the time, and the SED was confident that Russian would serve as a common tongue in the growing socialist camp of countries around the world.

The first obstacle the regime encountered was that the imposition of ‘the language of our friends’, as Russian was officially known, made many parents and children uneasy. Memories of the Russian troops’ behaviour in the closing stages of the war were still fresh in the mind, and the years of Nazi propaganda, portraying them as

⁸² Viola S. questionnaire (9.3.2004).

⁸³ Ulla M. questionnaire (22.2.2004).

⁸⁴ Viola S. questionnaire.

⁸⁵ Petra R.* questionnaire (23.4.2004).

⁸⁶ Cf. J. Kreinberger, ‘Kommunikation nur im Klassenzimmer. Zum Russischunterricht in der DDR’ in Puhle, *Daß der Mensch*, 59.

‘subhuman beings from the East’ must have had an effect.⁸⁷ The ill-will felt towards the language for these reasons diminished as the years passed, but there were a number of other factors at play as well. Until the late 1960s, when the experimental phase in education ended and Russian had become accepted as an unchangeable part of the curriculum, parents sent numerous petitions to the MfV asking for their children to be relieved from the obligatory classes.⁸⁸ An analysis of petitions from the early 1960s saw the causes for this as ‘confusion concerning the necessity of a high education for socialist human beings and the significance of Russian classes. Concerning the latter, the frequent bad quality of teaching detracts from the significance and value of the ideological message.’⁸⁹ With the increasing predominance of English in youth culture from the late 1950s onwards, the ‘uncool’ and difficult language became even less popular with young people. All pupils, even the lowest achievers who had difficulties reading and writing German properly, were made to learn Russian from year 5 to year 10 or 12. Nevertheless, children tended to enjoy the first two years of lessons; but once the novelty of the exotic letters and sounds wore off, they often became unwilling to put in the hard work necessary for scholarly success. For many older pupils in years 7 to 10, Russian was seen as irrelevant and there was very little motivation for learning it.⁹⁰ This especially applied to under-achieving boys who would save up their worst behaviour for the lessons.

There were of course, as always, exceptions to the rule. In some cases up to the early 1960s, pupils wrote petitions to the MfV, complaining that their schools still did not offer Russian classes.⁹¹ The following letter was addressed to Walter Ulbricht and Nikita Khrushchev on the eve of the 6th SED Party Congress in 1963:

My name is Angelika T., year 8, from Lanz. We live near the national border. In the past, Count Mellendorf ruled this area. The workers and peasants threw him out for good. Lenin and the Bolsheviks showed how this should be done 45 years ago. Today, the Mellendorfs squat on the other side and cannot come back. We are now building the socialist village. [...] We have always done well in the Russian Olympics. In our pioneer theatre *Drushba* we staged the play ‘Aurora’ in Russian. Our parents were jolly surprised! Some parents now also want to learn Russian. The pioneers from year 4 did not want to wait any longer either. They begged Mr. Leder, our Russian teacher, until he

⁸⁷ See N. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation 1945-1949* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, 1995); Hertzsch, *Sag meinen Kindern*, 56f.

⁸⁸ ‘Eingaben und Beschwerden zu Fragen des Unterrichts in den Gesellschaftswissenschaften und Fremdsprachen’ (June 1961-February 1962), BArch DR2/2952.

⁸⁹ ‘Eingabenanalyse 15.10.1961-15.1.1962’ (17.1.1962), BArch DR2/6829.

⁹⁰ Kreinberger in Puhle, *Daß der Mensch*, 60.

⁹¹ See for example ‘Eingabe der Thälmannpioniere der POS Funkenhagen, Kreis Templin’ (25.11.1961), BArch DR2/6819.

taught them Russian, too. Now there are already in year 4 some pioneers who can recite a poem in Russian. We think that not only Comrade Lemnitz will be pleased with that.⁹²

My interviewees remembered their practical use of Russian as being rather limited; mostly involving official encounters with Soviet soldiers or pen pal friendships with young Larissa and Oleg from Leningrad. On these occasions, one particular shortcoming became apparent: didactically, Russian was taught in a way similar to a 'theoretical' language like Latin, and vocabulary for practical use came second behind political and historical themes. There was even a small book entitled *Briefe an Freunde* [Letters to friends], from which children could copy what they wanted to communicate to their Soviet pen friends on topics such as school life or their local industries.⁹³ After 1966, when the option of a second foreign language was introduced in year 7,⁹⁴ the orientation to the West and to English in particular increased because of the politicisation of Russian. It was not regarded as a normal foreign language option, said Christa H., who has taught Russian in Thuringia since 1971, but 'as the language of the Soviet Union. [...] Added to that, one was able to use the language very rarely, because there was limited opportunity to travel. Therefore it seemed like theory without practical applications.'⁹⁵ It is important to remember, though, that it was not completely useless, because in international holiday camps and independent trips to Eastern European countries, school Russian did sometimes serve as a lingua franca. But its use abroad was also often disliked and English much preferred by young Poles and Czechs.

Higher education for the few: how to get into the EOS?

The 1965 Education Act guaranteed the same basic education for every citizen, and also the possibility for everybody to develop their aptitudes and talents within the highest educational institutions.⁹⁶ As so often in the GDR, the reality was different from the theory. From 1959, most pupils left school after the year 10 examinations at the POS. Only a small minority (one or two pupils per form) would be sent after year 8, at age fourteen or fifteen, by their form teacher and the school headteacher to enter the EOS in the nearest *Kreisstadt*. The main reason for limiting the number of pupils going to an EOS was economic, since the great majority of young people were needed in jobs

⁹² 'Berichte von Pionieren an die Delegierten des VI. Parteitages' (January 1963), SAPMO-Barch DY30/IVA2/9.05/60.

⁹³ H. Hellmich *et al.*, *Briefe an Freunde. Arbeitsmittel für den russischsprachigen Schülerbriefwechsel* (Berlin, 1963). This book was very much in use right until 1989.

⁹⁴ English or French were by far the most common, but in some schools, Czech, Polish or even Swedish were offered. Cf. Anweiler, *Schulsystem*, 93.

⁹⁵ Christa H. questionnaire.

⁹⁶ *Bildungsgesetz*, part 1, § 2, section 4, 89.

within industry and agriculture for which further education was not required. The highly advanced and common system of further training [*Weiterbildung*] once in employment that existed in the GDR may be seen as a concession by the state to satisfy people's desire for higher qualifications. Up until 1982, the EOS comprised four years, of which years 9 and 10 counted as preparation years [*Vorbereitungsklassen*] for the last two years; later it incorporated only years 11 and 12.⁹⁷ Pupils left the EOS equipped with the *Abitur* [equivalent to British A-level]. Another possibility to qualify for university was to do a three-year vocational educational programme, ending with the *Abitur* [*Berufsausbildung mit Abitur*, BmA].

SED-guidelines as to who was worthy of being sent to the EOS were designed to favour those considered, at any particular time, to be working class. This varied over the years. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, children of 'production workers, cooperative farmers, members of the intelligentsia, and members of the production cooperatives of trade' were to be preferentially accepted so that the social composition of pupils would be in accordance 'with the class structure in our Republic'.⁹⁸ Selection committees also looked for those pupils who 'actively participated in the building of socialism in the GDR, had good school performances and had an immaculate record of conduct'.⁹⁹ The inclusion of the intelligentsia in the group of workers and peasants surprised, for example, a group of teachers from Bezirk Magdeburg, who in 1963 petitioned the MfV to 'issue without delay a new guideline which defines who belongs to the workers' and peasants' children today, as there is great uncertainty in this respect'.¹⁰⁰ In the 1970s and 1980s, attempts at definition became even more convoluted. 'Apart from those working in large-scale production and research, [this class] equally includes the cadres of the working class who work for the organs of the SED, the state and economy as well as mass organisations in responsible positions and leading functions.'¹⁰¹ It is likely that the new generation of SED-functionaries, who might have had an original working-class background, did not want their children to forfeit the privileges associated with it. So, scientists working in the MfV justified the enlarged definition of the working class (as early as 1969) by saying that the circumstances in the GDR were such that workers' and peasants' children [*Arbeiter-und-Bauernkinder*, commonly abbreviated *AuB-*

⁹⁷ Cf. Judt, *DDR-Geschichte*, 228.

⁹⁸ 'Anordnung über Aufnahme, Förderung und Entlassung von Schülern der EOS' (7.2.1959), BArch DR2/5123.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ 'Eingabendiskussion' (24.9.1963), BArch DR2/7786.

¹⁰¹ H. Kahra *et al.*, 'Förderung der Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Kinder unter den Bedingungen der Gestaltung des entwickelten gesellschaftlichen Systems des Sozialismus' in *Pädagogik* 25 (1970), 1019.

Kinder] did not require special promotion anymore.¹⁰² So although *AuB-Kinder* were officially given preference, a closer look reveals that the parents were also required to have the right political stance: ‘A child of workers with a “questionable” political background would have it much harder than a child of parents from the intelligentsia with a membership-booklet.’, said Dietrich E., a pastor’s son born in 1961 in Guben.¹⁰³ Jan S.*, who went to EOS in a small Thuringian town in the late 1970s, noted that the social origin ‘in principle gained in importance’, but that ‘in practice this issue was a farce’:

In my year at the EOS we were 22 pupils, of which 18 were ‘*AuB-Kinder*’. But these so-called *AuB-Kinder* had only two fathers who were proper workers, i.e. who made parts somewhere in factories. The others belonged almost invariably to the upper functionary caste. [...] Even the daughter of the district school inspector traded under the name ‘*Arbeiterkind*’!¹⁰⁴

This example is corroborated by an analysis of all EOS in Bezirk Potsdam from 1977, which showed that of all applications for a place, 60% came from parents belonging to the intelligentsia, compared to only 34% of the (almost all-encompassing) ‘working class’,¹⁰⁵ and by the actual school attendance figures of all EOS in Bezirk Rostock from 1979, which stated ‘a further decline of the proportion of children of ‘real’ production workers and collective farmers (47.2%), and a continuous increase in the share of the intelligentsia (31.5%)’.¹⁰⁶ A representative of this new class that was increasingly populating the EOS in the last two decades of the GDR would be Bernd, a thirteen-year old pupil in 1979, who was recorded as having said:

I imagine my life to be like this: first I’m going to the EOS. Then I’ll study at Humboldt University in Berlin, because I want to become a lawyer. Later I’ll get married and I’ll have my own law office. I’ll have my own car, one child and a one-family house. I’ll have a boathouse at the *Schweriner See*.¹⁰⁷

Since the numbers of EOS pupils were planned to ensure that every school-leaver would normally get a place at university, it was necessary for pupils to specify what they wanted to do after EOS on applying. Many gifted pupils did not get a place because the statistics were not in their favour.¹⁰⁸ To ensure an even boy-girl ratio, girls with very good marks often got rejected in favour of boys with less good marks. ‘Therefore, many

¹⁰² ‘Dienstbesprechung beim Minister’ (1.7.1969), BArch DR2/7979.

¹⁰³ Dietrich E. questionnaire (22.5.2004).

¹⁰⁴ Jan S.* questionnaire.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Dienstbesprechung beim Minister’ (26.4.1977), BArch DR2/A5888.

¹⁰⁶ Rat des Bezirkes Rostock, Abt. Volksbildung, ‘Information über die Aufnahme von Schülern in die V-Klassen’ (15.3.1979), BArch DR2/A.528 (Bd. 1).

¹⁰⁷ K. Pieper (ed.), *Um 6 Uhr steh ich auf* (Berlin, 1979), 87.

¹⁰⁸ For example with regard to their social background. For an overview of the social origin of students from 1954 to 1989, see Schulze, *DDR-Jugend*, 115.

parents and female pupils question the equality and fairness.’¹⁰⁹ Another reason for failure to be accepted, regardless of gender or religious conviction, was if one wished to go on to study an ‘over-subscribed’ (e.g. medicine) or ‘fancy’ degree (e.g. geology, fine arts, or journalism).¹¹⁰ Officially, an EOS candidate needed to be a brilliant pupil, show a strong commitment to the GDR, be societally active, and come from a suitable background.

In the 1970s, many district school inspectors made it a prerequisite for male applicants to pre-engage to join the National People’s Army (NVA)¹¹¹ for at least three years instead of the obligatory eighteen months after the *Abitur*;¹¹² even though this practice was contrary to an understanding between the MfV and the Ministry of National Defence (MfNV) of 1973,¹¹³ of which functionaries at the grass-roots might not have been aware. Unofficially though, there was one exception to the otherwise rigid selection process: boys were almost sure to secure a place if they committed themselves to a career as army officers or ‘soldiers *sine die*’ [*Soldat auf Zeit*].¹¹⁴ Although there are reports that ‘in some districts, the MfV was able to intercept the excessive measures taken in recruiting new candidates for a military career by averting that boys were chosen who did not meet all demands of an EOS pupil’,¹¹⁵ selection boards often turned a blind eye to their academic results and admitted them even if their marks averaged only 2 or even 3, which would later often lead to problems for their teachers who were expected to carry them through despite their limited intellectual ability.¹¹⁶

The denial of higher education on religious grounds was one of the biggest worries for Christian pupils, since in addition to outstanding academic performance and an impeccable record of societal activity, EOS candidates needed to prove their commitment to the socialist fatherland, verifiable by membership of the pioneers and the FDJ and participation in the *Jugendweihe*, all of which became almost a prerequisite in the 1970s and 1980s. A Christian disposition did not automatically block access to the EOS and higher education, although in many cases it did. The accounts collected in Christoph Kleßmann’s book *Kinder der Opposition* illustrate the diversity in this matter:

¹⁰⁹ ‘Eingabenanalyse 1. Halbjahr 1978’ (26.9.1978), BArch DR2/A6273.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ NVA: *Nationale Volksarmee*.

¹¹² ‘Dienstbesprechung beim Minister’ (26.9.1972), BArch DR2/8087.

¹¹³ MfNV: *Ministerium für Nationale Verteidigung*. Cf. ‘Eingabenanalyse 2. Halbjahr 1973’ (26.2.1974), BArch DR2/8129.

¹¹⁴ Walter S. interview (10.3.2003).

¹¹⁵ Cf. ‘Eingabenanalyse 1. Halbjahr 1975’ (19.8.1975), BArch DR2/8180.

¹¹⁶ Walter S. interview. NB: 2.0 was the second-best mark in the GDR system, but usually the average of those going to an EOS was better than 1.5.

in many pastors' families there existed a high social continuity and it was a tradition for children to attend an EOS with a special class for classical languages and then to go on to study theology,¹¹⁷ for others the EOS was out of reach due to the long-running resistance of school functionaries.¹¹⁸ As has been said above, statistics on this subject are virtually non-existent, so one has to rely on the number of petitions in the files and accounts of contemporary witnesses.

Local school functionaries tended to adopt more of a hard line than the teaching staff. This is only natural, since for a functionary a pupil's application for the EOS was only a file, whereas teachers knew pupils and their abilities. Documents found in the MfV are full of examples where functionaries acted 'formally and bureaucratically'. The regional school council in Aue in 1962 categorically refused EOS applications from all pupils who had been confirmed rather than participated in the *Jugendweihe*, on the grounds that with these pupils 'the union of education and socialisation was not assured' even though they had been members of the young pioneers and the FDJ, were high achievers and had the explicit recommendation of their schools. The father of one pupil contacted his local CDU party secretary who stood up for the boy and wrote to the MfV in Berlin, which led to Aue council being reprimanded by Berlin and the acceptance of this particular boy for the EOS.¹¹⁹ This case mirrors that of Heidrun K. She was only admitted to the EOS after her father, a pastor and CDU member, had marched up to the regional council with the local CDU chairman in tow and made a fuss. She also mentioned the formal, bureaucratic intransigence of local functionaries: 'Between 1958 and 1960, everyone who was a member of the *Junge Gemeinde* in Weida got the boot from the EOS.'¹²⁰

Petition analyses undertaken by the MfV in the 1970s regularly lamented the fact that action on petitions by Christian parents was often delayed by the 'local organs' who would give 'awkward and false grounds'.¹²¹ Petition analysts remarked time and again on the fact that 'a high concentration'¹²² of petitions asking for a reversal of the

¹¹⁷ Cf. Kleßmann, *Kinder*, 15.

¹¹⁸ The formal refusal of vicars' children by some authorities is illustrated by a case which stretched from 1960 to 1962, in which a vicar was fighting for both of his sons to go to the EOS, but to no avail. His second son, who excelled in all subject and was societally very active, was refused because the number of available places was 'exhausted', to which his father replied: 'If there is no place for the best pupil, I really don't know why we bother with marks at all'. Cf. 'Pfarrer Siegfried S., Leipzig, an Johannes Dieckmann, Präsident der Volkskammer' (10.4.1960-16.3.1962), BArch DR2/6414.

¹¹⁹ Cf. 'Sandberg, CDU-Parteisekretär an Kollege Fröhlich, MfV' (29.1.1962), BArch DR2/6414.

¹²⁰ Heidrun K. questionnaire (7.5.2004).

¹²¹ Cf. 'Eingabenanalyse II. und III. Quartal 1970' (24.11.1970), BArch DR2/8029. Two particularly diligent reports on petitions by Christian parents stem from 1972: 'Eingabenanalyse I. Halbjahr 1972' (26.9.1972), BArch DR2/8087; 'Eingabenanalyse II. Halbjahr 1972' (27.2.1973), BArch DR2/8103.

¹²² Cf. 'Eingabenanalyse IV. Quartal 1971' (15.2.1972), BArch DR2/7639.

EOS refusal arrived steadily throughout the period under investigation, but they did not collate the information systematically.¹²³ We do know that 61 out of a total of 1187 petitions in the first half of 1974 and 65 petitions out of 1307 in the second half of 1977 were on the subject of EOS refusal, though there is no clue as to how many were by Christians.¹²⁴ Amongst these general figures must have been many disappointed young lives and dashed hopes for the future.

One of the most common grounds for rejection were alleged ‘defects in character’ [*Mängel in charakterlicher Hinsicht*], which shows that moral qualities desired in a socialist personality attending the EOS were overwhelmingly more important than academic excellence. But deciding who had the correct character was far from simple and it underlines the black and white thinking of most local functionaries that they considered Christian faith tantamount to a negative attitude towards the GDR. Many pupils managed to stay true to their Christian identity *and* to endorse socialist values so far as they did not conflict with their faith. A case from 1969 illustrates this point, when a mother (successfully) petitioned against her daughter’s refusal for an EOS place on the grounds that as a Catholic she had not participated in the *Jugendweihe*. The headteacher had told the girl that those who abstain fail to pledge open allegiance to the state and that it ‘is simply not worthwhile submitting oneself to the disadvantages associated with non-participation in the *Jugendweihe*’. The mother wrote: ‘We object strongly to this importunate propaganda for the *Jugendweihe*, which, coupled with the threat of disadvantages, borders on coercion, and especially to the insinuation that we are not for the state!’¹²⁵

If challenged by parents and pupils, grass-root functionaries were to rebuff complaints about denied access to the EOS thus: ‘What an individual human being is and how far he or she can develop to become a constructive personality does not primarily depend on his or her wishes and wants, but on the objective social, economic, and political circumstances under which he or she lives’.¹²⁶ That Christian pupils only had a chance to get a place if they conformed to what was expected of a socialist personality was spelt out clearly:

¹²³ In most cases, only the overall number of petitions was noted, which included many on issues such as teachers’ wages, permissions to travel to the West, suggestions for the curriculum, and housing problems.

¹²⁴ Cf. ‘Eingabenanalyse I. Halbjahr 1974’ (20.8.1974), BArch DR2/8145 and ‘Eingabenanalyse II. Halbjahr 1977’ (28.2.1978), BArch DR2/A6273.

¹²⁵ Cf. ‘Eingabe einer Mutter an Rat des Bezirkes Schwerin’ (7.2.1969), BArch DR2/D1695.

¹²⁶ ‘Information Nr. 7/69’, Argumentationshilfe zur Thematik: “Der allseitig gebildete und harmonisch entwickelte sozialistische Mensch – der Erbauer des entwickelten gesellschaftlichen Systems des Sozialismus, der bewußte Schöpfer seiner eigenen Geschichte“ (1.8.1969), BArch DO4/392.

It is thus perfectly understandable that in decisions on admissions to the EOS or university not only the academic achievements are evaluated: apart from very good academic accomplishments we expect positive characteristics, an exemplary civic attitude, and societal activity.¹²⁷

In a document dating from the early 1970s, the SED argued that in view of EOS pupils taking up ‘important functions and responsible assignments in various areas of our societal life’ after their studies, the choice of pupils must be based not only on academic qualities, but also on their willingness to ‘actively defend and consciously advocate the interests of our state.’¹²⁸ Especially for future leading cadres it would be absolutely necessary to acquire ‘important characteristics of socialist personalities through their active collaboration in the FDJ, i.e. in the politically organised pupils’ collectives’. The document ended thus:

We regard it as perfectly normal and justifiable that we attach great importance to the active membership of the socialist youth organisation [...] and that it is quite normal that part of the applications from all strata of the population – including the clergy who make relatively many applications – cannot be considered.¹²⁹

An option that was used by many Christian pupils, but also those who failed to get into the EOS on purely numerical grounds, was the second-chance education in form of *Berufsausbildung mit Abitur* (BmA). Petra R.* had a highly gifted classmate who, ‘because his father was a vicar in Köpenick, couldn’t go to the EOS. We then did our BmA together.’¹³⁰ Brigitte F., born in 1954, remembered two particularly intelligent pupils from her school in Eisenach who had not been in any organisation nor participated in the *Jugendweihe*. Despite their academic strength they were rejected for the EOS and their parents thereupon applied for permission to leave the GDR.¹³¹ Thus, the possibilities for high-achieving Christian pupils whose hopes for the EOS were dashed were various, though not always practicable and rarely satisfactory: they could go on to do BmA, get a job as an un- or semi-skilled worker, enter the protected world of the Church, drop out and become a projectionist or grave digger, apply for permission to leave the country, or go on to do a special ‘Church *Abitur*’ in a small number of peculiar alternative establishments called denominational training institutions [*kirchliche Ausbildungsstätten*].

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ ‘Argumentation zur kirchlichen Polemik in Fragen der Bildung und Erziehung’ (ca. 1973), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/2.036/34.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Petra R.* questionnaire.

¹³¹ Brigitte F. questionnaire (8.3.2004).

A pupil's application needed the support of various people – the form teacher, the headteacher, the regional school councilor – any of whom could pave or get in the way, so the procedures were down to the subjective judgement of these people. Even if a pupil did not belong to the FDJ, a well-meaning teacher could put down some proof of societal activity, such as participating in cultural programmes or being a particularly ardent wastepaper collector. Yet although the reports of many Christian pupils combined these pseudo-political activities with strong academic achievements, they would often get a rejection without any explanation or, in some cases, on obviously threadbare grounds. Had parents then filed a protest, it would have been very difficult indeed for the authorities to uphold their position. Regrettably, Gerhard Hieke's assessment of this situation is in my opinion correct: 'If Christian young people did not get admitted to the EOS, the blame not only falls upon the system, but also upon anxious stooges [*Erfüllungsgehilfen*].'¹³² Surely, it would be absurd to make parents responsible for the system's discrimination. But parents' attitude of anticipatory inaction was sadly all too common. It may be a characteristic of the East German identity and a success of the state's moulding of this particular trait of people's personality, shown in this account by a father in the early 1980s:

Thomas always had an A in maths and physics and achievements which should have taken him to the EOS or got him an apprenticeship with *Abitur*. Perhaps it didn't happen because he did not participate in the *Jugendweihe*. [...] I don't find that dramatic. Thomas will do his *Abitur* in Dresden at evening school and still be able to study electronics. He gets his way anyway and has the advantage of having had a good practical education.¹³³

If the parents of a rejected pupil dared to write a complaint, convinced that the decision was based on unjust grounds, the petitions were taken very seriously by the authorities and to a surprisingly large extent allowed. In order to react in such a manner (or at all), a decent amount of moral courage was needed. As Alfons G., born in 1938 and a Catholic teacher at the Salzmannschule, said:

I know several cases where children from Christian backgrounds were rejected purely for this reason. If they or their parents had the courage to go to the school councillor, saying 'If this is the justification, I'd like to have it in writing, please', in the vast majority of cases they were accepted for the EOS. As an official justification, this reason was never given to anybody.¹³⁴

¹³² Fuchs and Hieke, *Dumm geschult*, 107.

¹³³ Cf. Wolfgang's account in G. Eckart, *So sehe ick die Sache. Protokolle aus der DDR. Leben im Havelländischen Obstanbaugesbiet* (Cologne, 1984), 52f. Klaus-Peter Hertzsch displayed the same thinking: 'I didn't as feel my son's rejection was such a tragedy, for there were still other possibilities to get the *Abitur*'. Cf. Hertzsch, *Sag meinen Kindern*, 119.

¹³⁴ Alfons G. interview.

It is very difficult to pinpoint a statistic in this respect, but the general feeling gained from the files is that the great majority of parents and their children, both Christians and non-Christians, lowered their sights prematurely. ‘Anticipatory inaction’ [*vorausseilendes Zurückstecken*], as opposed to the ‘anticipatory obedience’ often applied to people’s attitude in the Third Reich, would be a fitting leitmotiv not only for this particular instance, but generally for the attitude citizens displayed towards state power, progressively so after the shocking displays of its potency in 1953, 1961 and 1968. The perception of the situation as a ‘David against Goliath’ constellation by ‘the small people’ would often lead straight to resignation without challenging the status quo.

Inside the EOS: in pursuit of excellence

Once the complex impediments of being admitted to the EOS were overcome, pupils entered an institution that was a great challenge and of a quality that was often miles better than they knew from their old POS. The teachers were better trained and able to concentrate more on their teaching because discipline in class was not an issue. The intellectual demands made of EOS pupils were steep. All subjects of the curriculum were carried on from the POS. In the same way as in the POS, curriculum and ideology were intertwined. Striking evidence of this are reports on *Abitur* examinations, such as this one from 1962 about a school in Bezirk Erfurt, where the topic for a pupil’s biology examination was ‘infectious diseases’. He was reproached that ‘although the purely factual analysis was absolutely correct, no connection was made to the use of bacteria in the Korean War, polio in West Germany or the timely measures of our government in the fight against dysentery’.¹³⁵ Pupils’ and teachers’ performance was closely connected, with teachers being held responsible for doing a bad job if pupils did not do well enough: ‘Since chemistry is the subject with the lowest class average, the headmaster will talk things out with the two chemistry teachers.’¹³⁶ Pupils were encouraged to work more on their own initiative, and in the upper years the atmosphere of teaching and learning would sometimes be more reminiscent of a university than a school.¹³⁷ There were fewer classmates, all of roughly equal intelligence. In the 1960s, the pupils might not have perceived themselves as an elite to the same extent to which they were told that they were in later years. Comments such as ‘form 11A is totally

¹³⁵ ‘Bericht über die mündliche Reifeprüfung an der Geschwister-Scholl-Oberschule Apolda’ (7.6.1962), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, V135.

¹³⁶ SArch/PPR (10.3.1961).

¹³⁷ SArch/PPR (14.12.1966).

uninterested in maths', or 'a large part of the bad results in Russian are due to the laziness of the pupils, which makes the work in Russian very hard',¹³⁸ no longer appear in files of later years. Sometimes the EOS was a more political place than the POS, sometimes less so. Archival sources, interviews and questionnaire answers showed that in reality the EOS was by no means the 'red fortress' which it was often portrayed as being, but rather it was populated by a variegated mix of people: ideologically sound pupils and teachers as well as, to a lesser extent, but all the same, some who were more reserved. Up until the early 1970s, one would also find a surprisingly large number of teachers who had been members of the NSDAP concentrated in the EOS.¹³⁹

Archival information from the central files in Berlin on everyday life at the EOS is sparse, except for when the authorities came across abnormalities or provocations, be they real or imaginary. In September 1961, an entire class of year 12 pupils in Anklam came to school wearing black jumpers as a sign of mourning. They said they were 'bearing their future to the grave', as the GDR parliament had passed a new defence law the previous day which made military service compulsory for all young men. This open display of dissent came to be known as '*der Fall Anklam*' [the Anklam Incident].¹⁴⁰ Although it was by no means the dangerous provocation that it was made out to be, 'Anklam' surprised the authorities in such a way that it set a huge machine of checks and controls running within the MfV and the MfS.¹⁴¹ As a result, all EOS in the GDR were subjected to inspections, which in turn led to many pages of reports.¹⁴² The review showed some important shortcomings in the work of grass-root functionaries. 'Party resolutions, in particular the demands of the 5th Party Congress, are disregarded or completely buried in oblivion.'¹⁴³ It was discovered that in almost all EOS, there were small but influential clusters of teachers who were characterised as 'liberal and

¹³⁸ SArch/PPR (22.1.1963).

¹³⁹ In Kreis Hagenow, Bezirk Schwerin for example, 18% of all teachers were ex-NSDAP members (including the headmasters of the two only EOS). Cf. 'Bericht der kaderpolitischen Überprüfung' (8.2.1962), BArch DR2/6307. Only six out of 23 EOS in Bezirk Erfurt had no ex-NSDAP teachers in 1971. Cf. Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, 'Zu einigen Problemen der Kaderentwicklung an den EOS' (24.3.1971), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, Nr. 038253.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Fulbrook, *Anatomy*, 1f. For a detailed account of the '*Fall Anklam*', see U. Herrmann (ed.) *Protestierende Jugend. Jugendopposition und politischer Protest in der deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte* (Weinheim, 2002).

¹⁴¹ Cf. 'Einzelinformation über die provokatorischen Vorkommnisse an der "Geschwister-Scholl-Oberschule" in Anklam/ Neubrandenburg' (12.10.1961), BStU MfS ZAIG 485; 'Bericht über den Stand der eingeleiteten Maßnahmen zur Verbesserung der sozialistischen Erziehung der Oberschüler' (ca. 1961/62), BArch DR2/6978.

¹⁴² The reverberations of the 'Beschluss des Sekretariats des ZK der SED über die Vorkommnisse an der EOS Anklam' vom 13.10.1961 were still perceptible many months later. See for example 'Maßnahmen zur Durchsetzung des "Anklamer Beschlusses"' (9.4.1963), BArch DR2/7765.

¹⁴³ 'Probleme aus den Tätigkeitsberichten im September' (19.10.1961), SAPMO-BArch DR30/IV2/9.05/14.

presumptuous', and their classes held 'objectivist, pacifist and other bourgeois', sometimes even 'adversarial ideologies'.¹⁴⁴ Functionaries at district and regional level would primarily look at formal qualifications, which abetted the 'intrusion and operation of class-alien [*klassenfremd*] and careerist elements into the EOS'.¹⁴⁵ Especially in the subjects German, art and classical languages, teachers were not representing the 'correct' political-ideological keynotes. One arts teacher began his class with the words 'Today we are constrained to draw NVA soldiers', and remarked at the end 'Well, I would say we have managed to carry off a fine warrior there.'¹⁴⁶ Another discussed Corinthian pillars instead of contemporary artists as was demanded by the syllabus, on the grounds that he did not know anything about Hans and Lea Grundig.¹⁴⁷ Alfons G., who came to the Salzmannschule in 1961 as a teacher of English and art, remembered that there were possibilities for some freedom within the syllabus, but that this strongly depended on the subject. When ancient Egyptian art was on the agenda, he tried his best by pointing to the 'participation of the lower class, the peasants, but I could not do much more.' English however was different. Based on the textbook character of Willi Neubert, an engineer from the Carl-Zeiss factory in Jena, he was able to develop practical exercises such as Mr. Neubert having the opportunity to visit London, and even the USA by virtue of his job, which gave the teacher room to talk about London's or San Francisco's monuments. 'But otherwise it was always about the Communist Party, or the Young Communist League (YCL); and in our textbooks and surely also by us the YCL was portrayed as if it had been such a big force! And when I asked some English people about it, they didn't even know such a thing existed.'¹⁴⁸ Just as in the case of the POS, lessons were meant to combine the professional side of every subject with political-ideological lore. Whereas geography, for example, enumerated the various economic and scientific success stories of the Soviet Union; English and French would highlight the struggle of the working class and the problems of unemployment in Great Britain and France. One task of the English *Abitur* for pupils of the *Salzmannschule* in 1974 was: 'Speak about the British coal miners' situation. Think of the energy crisis and its effects on capitalist countries.' Another one, which is noteworthy because of the absence of any Cold War-mongering,

¹⁴⁴ 'Dienstberatung beim Minister' (16.4.1962), BArch DR2/7525.

¹⁴⁵ 'Probleme aus den Tätigkeitsberichten im September' (19.10.1961), SAPMO-BArch DR30/IV2/9.05/14.

¹⁴⁶ 'Bericht über die Ergebnisse der Arbeit an den EOS' (16.4.1962), BArch DR2/7525.

¹⁴⁷ Both Hans (1901-1958) and Lea Grundig (1906-1977) were painters, illustrators, and members of the KPD. Cf. 'Dienstberatung beim Minister' (16.4.1962), BArch DR2/7525.

¹⁴⁸ Alfons G. interview.

was: 'Say that the USSR is the biggest trading partner of the GDR, but that the GDR is also interested in trade relations with capitalist countries.'¹⁴⁹

In most cases, the teachers got away with straying from the syllabus without any further consequences. In some instances though, if the school's headteacher for example was especially keen to prove that his or her school was adhering to the guidelines, it could happen that teachers lost their job or were 'degraded' to working in a POS for a misdemeanour such as playing Bach's 'Christmas Oratorio' and telling the story of the Nativity.¹⁵⁰ Relocation to a POS equalled a public slap in the face, since jobs in the EOS were coveted and presupposed special training. Annemarie W.*, who graduated from her EOS in Weimar in 1969, said:

I was fortunate to have almost only good teachers in my EOS. My basic general education stems from these four years. I had teachers dating from 'the very old time' of the genteel old lecturer [*Studienrat*] type in maths, Latin and arts, as well as others who were quite modern and 'non-red' [*unrot*] in German, chemistry and biology.¹⁵¹

Files dating from the 1970s are characterised by a general lack of information on the curriculum content of the EOS. Apart from reactions to the introduction of military education lessons,¹⁵² the EOS were mostly mentioned in connection with an increasing amount of parental petitioning concerning the non-admission of their children. At the same time, petitions also lamented the 'formal and heartless working methods of school functionaries',¹⁵³ and the 'callousness and scant pedagogical handling in evaluating and marking'.¹⁵⁴ Officials noted that, increasingly, petitions were directly addressed to the Education Minister, Margot Honecker. 'The multiplicity of these petitions reveals that citizens hoped for more effective help from the central elements [*zentrale Organe*], although clarification of individual cases is only possible at local level.'¹⁵⁵ This is a phenomenon which started already in the mid-1960s and stretched through to the 1980s. Many parents thought writing directly to the Ministry would have a downward knock-on effect, rather than the other way round, and therefore would help their plea to become more successful. This strategy did work in some cases, given that some authorities at the local level tried to be stricter than necessary. Writing directly to the top level had the definite advantage that petitions were dealt with more rapidly. Most of the petitions addressed to the MfV came from teachers and dealt with administrative

¹⁴⁹ SArch/Abitur, 'Reifeprüfung 1973/74, Englisch'.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Fuchs and Hieke, *Dumm geschult*, 6.

¹⁵¹ Annemarie W.* questionnaire.

¹⁵² This subject was introduced to the EOS only in 1981 (to POS in 1978) and will be explored in ch. 5.

¹⁵³ 'Eingabenanalyse MfV 2. Halbjahr 1976' (15.2.1977), BArch DR2/A 5888.

¹⁵⁴ 'Dienstbesprechung beim Minister' (24.11.1970), BArch DR2/8029.

¹⁵⁵ 'Eingabenanalyse 3. Quartal 1971' (9.11.1971), BArch DR2/8057.

questions such as wage issues, postings, and housing. Sometimes, teachers also used the channel of petitions to let off steam about chagrin with superior authorities. In one example from 1960, a teacher from the provincial town of Schneeberg, Kreis Aue, complained about the new annual plan, which exacted more than an above-average commitment of teachers' time to the planning of classes. In his letter, the teacher held the then Education Minister Alfred Lemnitz directly responsible for this situation:

With bureaucratic means such as this plan, the teachers' work won't be ameliorated. The teacher is forced to do useless things, becomes listless (something that most teachers are already), and only does his or her daily grind. [...] With time we become jaded and indifferent. Do you know that we teachers claim the title 'doormat of society' for ourselves? The prospect of seeing spineless jellyfish as teachers in our country in the future instead of cheerful individuals who are taken up with their profession, makes me feel quite uneasy.¹⁵⁶

From Lemnitz's comments it becomes clear that he appreciated the frankness with which he was thus informed about the situation at the grass roots. And sure enough, an ensuing investigation showed that the local authorities had made arbitrary, exaggerated demands of the teachers, which resulted in a dressing-down from the Ministry and a meek statement by the district education council, putting the demands back onto the right level.

Overall the archival evidence suggests that after the trial-and-error period of the 1960s, by the early 1970s, the education system, with regard to the school curriculum, had become a well-oiled machine. Jan S. *, who became a physician, summed up the making of his intellectual personality in a nutshell:

I have enjoyed an excellent education, in the POS as well as in the EOS, deficient though regarding sophistication [*Weltläufigkeit*] and foreign languages. But I know that this wasn't the rule. With regard to a scientific approach, we were – especially in the EOS – taught very freely and focussed on results, with a lot of self-responsibility. Neither was there any unhealthy competitiveness, but this only became clear with hindsight. However, all this only functioned if one stuck to certain rules with regard to politics, thus also lied or kept silent, if necessary.¹⁵⁷

This description of general and EOS education seems to me not so much an exception to the rule, but a common experience, listing the principal strong and weak points of intellectual education in the GDR. The crucial issues of politics and keeping quiet raised in the last sentence of the quote will be addressed in chapters 4 and 5.

¹⁵⁶ 'Eingabe Eberhard H. an Minister Lemnitz' (6.3.1960), BArch DR2/2194.

¹⁵⁷ Jan S.* questionnaire.

'Every human being is gifted': Special schools and classes

By the early 1950s, the problem of how to develop elite pupils within the uniform school system began to be addressed. The EOS already produced a broadly educated elite, but for the elite of the elite, special classes and special schools were the answer. This option constituted a clear departure from the uniform school system.

The aim of the special sports schools [*Kinder- und Jugendsportschulen*, KJS] was to create the 'socialist sporting personality'; following the Roman principle of *'Mens sana in corpore sano'*. The first four KJS were created in 1952. Their number had risen to 17 by 1954; and in 1989 there were 25 with just over 10,000 pupils,¹⁵⁸ specialising in a wide range of sports. Since 1965, yearly competitions, the *Kinder- und Jugendspartakiaden*, were organised for all 6 to 18-year olds on school and Kreis level (bi-annually on Bezirk and countrywide level), helping to select sporting talents for the KJS.¹⁵⁹ Those pupils who excelled not only in sports, but who also came from a 'progressive' home, had good marks and were members of the youth organisation were accepted. The age of entry depended on their chosen sport and varied over the decades, ranging from six years for figure skaters to fourteen for cyclists or footballers; and the majority of pupils left school at age sixteen; but the option to do the *Abitur* with an extended year existed as well. The intensified sports education and training was grafted on to the normal curriculum, demanding great stamina and dedication from pupils. For example, every pupil was obliged to learn a second foreign language from 1967, on the grounds that 'an all-round developed personality must master more than one foreign language. East German cadres abroad should not have to depend on interpreters, and the absence of linguistic ability of this group tarnishes the standing of our Republic.'¹⁶⁰ KJS were always boarding schools; so not only their sporting and intellectual, but also their moral development was under close observation. The moral requirements made of them in the 1960s did not differ much from those made a decade later. In 1960, pupils should distinguish themselves by fairness, modesty, discipline and a 'high fighting morale for the honour of the school and the GDR'.¹⁶¹ In 1971, the candidates for the Munich Olympics of the following year were to display the same values, but with stronger emphasis on a patriotic attitude: they should 'live, work, train and fight as socialist

¹⁵⁸ W. P. Knecht, 'Die schwierige Wandlung der KJS zu Eliteschulen des Sports' in *Deutschland Archiv* (1/1999), 74.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. M. Thomas, 'Von kollektiver Disziplinierung zur Förderung der Individualität? Zur Geschichte des Schulsports in der DDR' in Puhle, *Daß der Mensch*, 83.

¹⁶⁰ 'Arbeitsmaterial zur Einführung der 2. Fremdsprache ab 7.Klasse' (18.7.1967), BArch DR2/6504.

¹⁶¹ 'Richtlinien für die Auswahl, Aufnahme und Umschulung von Schülern der KJS' (September 1960), BArch DR2/5625.

patriots', 'concentrate all their capabilities on maximum performance and use them to achieve best-possible Olympic competition results', and be aware that 'the objective societal demands are fully congruent with their personal interests and wishes'.¹⁶²

Archival evidence such as that above illustrates that the demands made of pupils were extremely high; and although it was considered to be an honour to be a KJS pupil, the dropout rate was also high. In 1970, for example, the dropouts and the pupils' whose limits in their physical or psychological capacities prevented them from obtaining the necessary level for competition on an international level, combined to make up 25% of all KJS pupils being sent back to their old POS.¹⁶³ This, especially after several years at a KJS, was akin to a public degradation and taken badly by many.¹⁶⁴ However, the KJS undoubtedly contributed to the GDR's rise to become one of the top three sporting nations worldwide, from the first national team sent to the Olympic Games in 1968 until 1989, when it was ranked below the USSR and USA.¹⁶⁵ The significance of GDR sports for East German national identity and for the country's international reputation was underlined by the overwhelming number of my interviewees who, when asked in which context they had a feeling of pride for the GDR, mentioned sports as *the* single area, as, for example, Regine H., born in 1951 in Dresden: 'When GDR athletes won somewhere, a wave of a good feeling came rising up in me, because in other respects we often felt so inferior.'¹⁶⁶ The importance attached by the SED leadership to the KJS as an institution for manufacturing Olympic gold medallists is apparent from the vast financial resources they received: around 80 million DDR-marks in the 1980s; as much as for all other special schools together,¹⁶⁷ to which we will now turn.

Although the sports schools and special classes with extended Russian lessons, the so-called '*R-Klassen*', were set up in the early 1950s; and plans for establishing other special schools appear in the files as early as 1958,¹⁶⁸ the hot-housing of highly gifted children was primarily an issue of the 1960s and the 1980s.¹⁶⁹ Education under

¹⁶² 'Programm zur sozialistischen Erziehung der Olympiakandidaten der DDR' (30.4.1971), BArch DR2/6502.

¹⁶³ 'Dienstbesprechung beim Minister, TOP3: Grundlinie der Entwicklung der KJS bis 1980' (6.1.1970), BArch DR2/8001.

¹⁶⁴ On the sporting and moral demands made of KJS pupils, see the story of 16-year old gymnastics prodigy Andrea told in H.-G. Krack's novel *Zu wem gehst du, Andrea?* (Berlin, 1963).

¹⁶⁵ Cf. T. Fetzer, 'Die gesellschaftliche Akzeptanz des Leistungssportsystems' in H.-J. Teichler (ed.), *Sport in der DDR. Eigensinn, Konflikte, Trends* (Bonn, 2003), 283. NB: This success was however related to the (often unwitting) use of drugs by top athletes. Cf. H.-J. Seppelt, H. Schück (eds), *Anklage: Kinderdoping. Das Erbe des DDR-Sports* (Berlin, 1999).

¹⁶⁶ Regine H. questionnaire (14.2.2004).

¹⁶⁷ G. Hartmann, *Goldkinder. Die DDR im Spiegel ihres Spitzensports* (Leipzig, 1997), 126.

¹⁶⁸ 'Einrichtung von Spezialoberschulen' (30.9.1958).

¹⁶⁹ For a detailed account, see G. Schreier, *Förderung und Auslese im Einheitsschulsystem. Debatten und Weichenstellungen in der SBZ/DDR 1946 bis 1989* (Cologne, 1996).

Ulbricht was characterised by courageous experiment, and aimed at a multi-faceted school system with a strong polytechnic and scientific direction, including the promotion of individual talent. This so-called ‘education euphoria’¹⁷⁰ of the 1960s was brought to an end with the displacement of Ulbricht in 1971. Margot Honecker was always strongly in favour of a uniform school system modelled on that of the Soviet Union,¹⁷¹ and the debate on specialist education ceased during the 1970s. Only in the early 1980s was it picked up again when it became clear that the East German economy suffered from ‘chronic shortages, technological backwardness and innovation deficits’.¹⁷² Going back to the 1960s however, in the wake of economic reform and the ambitious goals of the NÖS, an intensive education of future specialists who would lead the ‘scientific-technical revolution’ was called for. Thus, the busy year of 1963 was also when the first special schools with a scientific orientation (maths, physics, biology, chemistry) were established.¹⁷³ Until the end of the decade, further special schools and special classes, the latter tagged on to the normal EOS, were set up which were orientated towards arts, music, and languages, and served to develop a corps of highly successful specialists in the appropriate fields at no costs to the parents apart from a small contribution towards boarding.¹⁷⁴ Pupils usually transferred from a POS after year 8 at about fourteen. The great majority of pupils saw the *Abitur* as the end of their school life, but this was not necessarily the case for those being groomed towards sporting or artistic glory. The schools were extremely selective (only 3-5% pupils of any given year),¹⁷⁵ not least in order to avoid assuming the proportions of a privileged sector, and to preserve the basic principle of uniformity.

Special classes were divided into three groups: modern languages [called *A-Zweig* or branch], maths and sciences [*B-Zweig*], and classical languages [*C-Zweig*]. The curriculum was the same as in the general schools, apart from the massive addition of extra classes within the special subjects. Pupils attending the *A-Zweig* learned in addition to Russian and either English or French from year 10 either English or French, sometimes Czech, Polish, Spanish or Swedish. In the *B-Zweig*, the focus was on existing science subjects; and in the *C-Zweig*, Latin started in year 9 and Greek in year

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 254.

¹⁷¹ Cf. M. Kaiser, *Machtwechsel von Ulbricht zu Honecker. Funktionsmechanismen der SED-Diktatur in Konfliktsituationen 1962-1972* (Berlin, 1997), 203.

¹⁷² Schreier, *Förderung*, 255.

¹⁷³ Cf. ‘Beschlüßentwurf “Bildung von Spezialschulen und Spezialklassen an den zehnklassigen und Erweiterten Oberschulen”’ (11.1.1963), BArch DR2/7538. The final directive was published on 3 July 1963.

¹⁷⁴ *Bildungsgesetz*, part 4, § 18, 101.

¹⁷⁵ Wilhelmi, *Jugend*, 38.

10.¹⁷⁶ The requirements made of pupils were exceptionally exacting: ‘Attending a special school or class makes particularly high demands on the pupils, such as consistent, respectively rising high performances and exemplary societal and moral conduct.’¹⁷⁷ Gifted pupils and potential candidates were picked out early by means such as the ‘Olympics’ in Russian, maths and chemistry, which were organised first at school, then Kreis, then Bezirk, and then Republic-wide level from the early 1960s, or the ‘Festivals of the Russian Language’ (since 1965) which helped to find those pupils who were ‘obsessed with their special subject’.¹⁷⁸

In 1970, there were nine special classes for maths and sciences, the same number as in 1964,¹⁷⁹ an indication of the above-mentioned halt to the further development of special schools and classes in the 1970s. Between 1967 and 1975, 70 special classes for modern languages and ten for classical languages were created for the whole of the GDR, their number remaining constant until 1989.¹⁸⁰ A large number of these schools were boarding schools, with the intention that pupils who did not live nearby still had access to this specialised education. However, since the existence of these schools was not publicised by any means, most pupils learned of them by word by mouth, which means that potential candidates in rural areas and some districts were disadvantaged. Gerhard Schreier calculated that regional chances for education, in relation to access to the EOS in every district from the mid-1950s until the mid-1980s, were by far the highest in Berlin, whereas the districts Frankfurt/Oder and Cottbus offered the worst odds.¹⁸¹

The SED could never quite decide whether Marxism-Leninism stipulated that every human being had the right to develop his or her intellectual personality purely on the grounds of personal fulfilment, or whether the fostering of individual talent should exclusively be seen with the good of society in mind. The 1965 Education Act itself bent both ways; by underlining that the uniformity of the education system included ‘differentiations in the upper levels corresponding to societal requirements and

¹⁷⁶ Cf. ‘Richtlinie für Klassen mit verstärktem Fremdsprachenunterricht’ (1.3.1967), BArch DR2/7909.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Diskussionsgrundlage zur Weiterentwicklung der Spezialschulen und –klassen’ (15.6.1965), BArch DR2/7846.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. ‘Rede des Genossen Minister zu Spezialschulen’ (ca. 1963), BArch DR2/7765. On *Feste der Russischen Sprache*, see ‘Aufruf und Ausschreibung der Russischolympiaden 1965/66’ (23.11.1965), BArch DR2/7863.

¹⁷⁹ Anweiler, *Schulsystem*, 92.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. ‘Vorschläge zur Entwicklung der Klassen mit verstärktem neu- und altsprachlichen Unterricht’ (21.10.1975), BArch DR2/8183.

¹⁸¹ G. Schreier, ‘Zur Entwicklung der regionalen Bildungsbeteiligung in der DDR’ in *Bildung und Erziehung* (1/1990), 84.

individual aptitudes'.¹⁸² Kurt Hager clearly supported the first option when he said at the 6th Pedagogical Congress in 1961: 'We think that the many-sided scientific, technical, artistic and other talents must be detected early on, constantly nurtured and systematically fostered.'¹⁸³ In one and the same speech of 1963, Lemnitz put forward arguments for both reasons. He referred to the 6th SED Party Congress, where Ulbricht had urged the teachers to come off the old viewpoint of 'levelling' and to promote the capabilities and talents amongst pupils more. Herein the basic principle of socialism, 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their achievement'¹⁸⁴ would be applied, which means 'to keep pupils fully occupied and continuously develop every pupil from non-proficiency to proficiency'.¹⁸⁵ These statements seem to underline the right of every individual to develop his or her intellectual personality. Later on in the speech however, Lemnitz made it clear that this right was inextricably linked to the needs of the socialist society:

This is not about the realisation of an individual's hobby. It is about the societally necessary promotion of aptitudes. [...] Talent is not made spontaneously and in the calm, but in the fight for societal progress. Therefore the development of abilities also includes the formation of characteristics of a socialist human being. Only characteristics such as willpower and endurance, interest for science and societal progress, the ability to live and work in a collective, render possible the broad development of aptitudes of every single human being for the benefit of society possible.¹⁸⁶

In the 1970s, the rhetoric became clearer. Special schools were now said to be set up not primarily with the fostering of pupils' individual talents in mind, but instead in order to furnish the state with the cadres it needed. Concerning the *C-Zweig*, the MfV stipulated in 1975: 'In order to solve tasks in the field of history and archaeology, in questions of international co-operation within the UNESCO as well as for the safekeeping of the progressive ideas of antiquity as heritage of world culture, it is expedient for a certain number of cadres to possess knowledge of classical languages.'¹⁸⁷

A special case amongst the special schools and EOS with attached special classes were the 13 traditional schools in East Germany, amongst them the

¹⁸² *Bildungsgesetz*, part 1, § 2, 88.

¹⁸³ 'Entwicklung von Spezialoberschulen in der DDR' (ca. 1964), BArch DR2/6752.

¹⁸⁴ This maxim has an interesting history. The Russian revolutionary and anarchist Michael Bakunin (1814-1876) is the first to have the saying 'From each according to his faculties, to each according to his needs' attributed to him. Cf. *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 47. Marx wrote in 1875 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs', as an ideal of Communism. *Ibid.*, 452. Lenin changed this to the above version and applied it to socialism. Cf. Lenin's speech at the Seventh Extraordinary Congress of the Russian Communist Party (8.3.1910), <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/7thcong/15.htm>> [accessed 28.6.2004] (part 1).

¹⁸⁵ Cf. 'Rede des Genossen Minister zu Spezialschulen' (ca. 1963), BArch DR2/7765.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Cf. 'Vorschläge zur Entwicklung der Klassen mit verstärktem neu- und altsprachlichen Unterricht' (21.10.1975), BArch DR2/8183.

Thomasschule Leipzig (founded in 1212), *Kreuzschule* Dresden (1370), *Schulpforta* near Naumburg (1543), *Francisceum* Zerbst (1526), and not to forget the *Salzmansschule* Schnepfenthal (1784). Christoph Kleßmann spoke of this handful of traditional schools as ‘niches regarding education policy’ [*bildungspolitische Nischen*].¹⁸⁸ This is insofar incorrect as the curriculum there was the same as in any other EOS. The very few examples of ‘authentic’ niches within and outside of the education system will be examined in the next section. However, these traditional schools were exceptional in that they showed a high concentration of achievement-oriented parents and pupils stemming from traditional ‘*Bildungsbürgertum*’ [educated bourgeoisie] stock, who for the most part arranged themselves within the socialist system, but who in some cases possessed critical potential, as is documented in numerous MfS files. The classical branches were often especially seen as some sort of bourgeois relic by the authorities. Certainly, an analysis of the social composition of pupils shows that children of physicians and pastors tended to dominate over *AuB-Kinder*, and that they by and large envisaged studying either medicine or theology.¹⁸⁹

A striking example of how the regime courted the educated middle class’s favour goes back to autumn 1961, when Dr Franz S. and Dr Mathilde S. wrote to the MfV on behalf of their daughter Beate, a year 12 EOS pupil from Weimar. She had previously attended a *C-Zweig* class in nearby Altenburg, and for want of this option in Weimar, had been provided by the Weimar branch of the MfV with a private tutor for three hours per week in year 11 at public expense. The complaint concerned the fact that in year 12, only one hour per week tuition was being granted, whilst the further two hours were now to be paid for by the parents. The letter ended thus: ‘This is not so much about the relatively small sum of money, but about the fact that our state should meet its obligations towards young people eager to learn. Beate has very good results in Greek as well as in all other subjects, and has long been a member of the FDJ.’ An initially frosty reply from Berlin implied that Beate could have attended an EOS with a *C-Zweig* and become a boarding pupil in either Erfurt or Gotha, adding that ‘we cannot share your opinion, if you think the duty of our workers’ and peasants’ state to offer its citizens many and varied education possibilities implies the supply of private tutoring’. But the parents did not give up so easily and clarified things in a meeting with the headteacher and a functionary from the regional MfV branch. It turned out that the generous arrangement by Weimar authorities had been against legal requirements, but

¹⁸⁸ C. Kleßmann, ‘Relikte des Bildungsbürgertums in der DDR’ in Kaelble, *Sozialgeschichte*, 261.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. ‘Dienstbesprechung beim Minister’ (21.10.1975), BArch DR2/8183. See also Kleßmann, *Kinder*, 15.

that the town council had been interested in winning Mathilde S. as a medical specialist for the care of the town's citizens, and hence this special arrangement was agreed 'in the interest of the medical intelligentsia'. In the end it was agreed that the cost of the Greek lessons should be met by the state.¹⁹⁰

This self-perpetuation of the intelligentsia is no great surprise, and in this respect the GDR's EOS were similar to the West German *Gymnasien*. Throughout the lifetime of the GDR, the SED accepted that there were exceptions to the rule in the interest of the whole society. Such a renunciation of the common practice of levelling was seen, for example, in the bosom of a socialist EOS, in the space for educating pupils to become choirboys in the world-renowned *Thomanerchor* (Leipzig) and *Kreuzchor* (Dresden), not least perhaps for the hard currency that these traditions brought into the state treasury, but also because it did not dare to touch such high-profile institutions. In 1962, on the occasion of the Thomaners' 750th anniversary, Alfred Lemnitz gave an explanation of why, in this instance, the cohabitation of tradition in socialism worked so well: 'The Thomaner regularly sing their motets and cantatas on Fridays and Saturdays and delight Christians and atheists alike. The workers' movement has always kept a close relationship with real art.'¹⁹¹

In the end, the experiment of selective education for the few begun under Ulbricht bore fruit. An analysis of desired degree subjects of KJS pupils from 1966 to 1975 showed that most of them aimed for elite subjects such as sports medicine, architecture, philosophy, psychology and law, which suggests that the emphasis on training had not diminished their intellectual education.¹⁹² A ZIJ case study of former maths and physics aces from 1983 concluded that in order to achieve top results, 'it is necessary to recognise special talents early and to further them systematically and purposefully'.¹⁹³ The majority of those highly gifted pupils who had enjoyed special promotion by the state turned out also to be students with top-rate performances.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ 'Eingaben und Beschwerden' (November 1961-January 1962), BArch DR2/2952. NB: The procedure of granting members of the intelligentsia (physicians in particular) special clauses in their 'individual contracts' [*Einzelverträge*] which guaranteed all their children a place at an EOS continued through the following decades, as is exemplified by this report: 'Christian was accepted for the EOS because of the *Einzelvertrag* of his father, who is the director of the Institute for Microbiology at Halle University and non-party member. There it is stated: assurance of desired training opportunities of the children. So far, three of the seven children of the family (the mother is also a physician) were accepted for the EOS.' Cf. 'Relegierung von Schülern: Christian O., Halle, EOS "Thomas Müntzer", Klasse 11' (May 1978), BArch DR2/A7361/5.

¹⁹¹ 'Festrede Prof. Lemnitz zur Feier des 750-jährigen Bestehens der Thomasschule zu Leipzig' (1962), BArch DR2/6312.

¹⁹² 'Studienwünsche von Abiturienten in den EOS-Teilen der KJS' (1966-1975), BArch DR2/6474.

¹⁹³ Cf. 'Zum Entwicklungsweg ehemaliger erfolgreicher Teilnehmer von Mathematikolympiaden und Physikwettbewerben im Studium und Beruf' (December 1983), BArch FDJ B 5973, 3.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

Attending a special school was also shown to have had an influence on their societal commitment, which was quite remarkable: of the over 600 participants in the study, 83% of those who attended a special school or class had had a leading function in their local FDJ group.¹⁹⁵ The amplified intellectual stimulus they received at school also proved to have a long-term influence in form of their preference for staying on in academia with nearly 50% graduating with a doctorate.¹⁹⁶ This obvious evidence that special schools and classes had earned an important place within the socialist education system leaves open the question whether, had the GDR not collapsed in 1989, the authorities would have gradually introduced a more extensive selection of gifted pupils and thus on the one hand, eroded the founding fathers' claim of universal education for all, but on the other obtained a greater number of highly-qualified cadres to bring forward the so badly needed 'scientific-technical revolution'.

Alternative establishments II: Denominational schools

The Church could not offer any alternative for Christian children to the ten years spent in the socialist education system, in the POS. But for those who were refused a place at an EOS there was a chink of light at the end of the tunnel in the form of denominational schools. The existence of these schools was virtually unknown amongst the broad public and even Christians, and to this day this rare bird in the field of education in the GDR has not been the subject of detailed research and is not to be spotted in much of the relevant literature apart from short sentences¹⁹⁷ or articles,¹⁹⁸ bar one book about the Norbertuswerk.¹⁹⁹ Even the former Thuringian bishop Werner Leich told me that 'After having consulted all literature at my disposal, I did not find anything on denominational schools in the GDR.'²⁰⁰

There were only a handful of such schools educating towards a 'Church *Abitur*' [*kirchliches Abitur*] for the whole of the GDR: within the Protestant Church there were the *Kirchliches Oberseminar* Hermannswerder near Potsdam and the *Kirchliches Proseminar* Naumburg; within the Catholic Church the *Norbertuswerk* in

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Kleßmann, *Kinder*, 15; H. Döbert, *Das Bildungswesen der DDR in Stichworten. Inhaltliche und administrative Sachverhalte und ihre Rechtsgrundlagen* (Neuwied, 1995), 96; Ohse, *Jugend*, 227.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. P. Pasternack (ed.), *Hochschule & Kirche. Theologie & Politik. Besichtigung eines Beziehungsgflechts in der DDR* (Berlin, 1996).

¹⁹⁹ C. Brodkorb, D. Müller, *Finale Norbertuswerk. Lebendige Erinnerungen an 47 Jahre Norbertuswerk* (Leipzig, 1999).

²⁰⁰ Bishop emeritus Dr Werner Leich in a letter to the author (22.5.2004).

Madgeburg.²⁰¹ There also existed the *Vorschule für den kirchlichen Dienst* Moritzburg near Dresden and the preparatory course at the *Theologisches Seminar* Leipzig, which prepared young people in two years (Moritzburg) or one year (Leipzig) for the study of theology. The different names seem bewildering, but were necessary in acting as a pseudonym for 'school' in order to avoid trouble with the SED's claim for sole representation. The Churches also avoided the term *Abitur* in public. The schools served two purposes: to ensure new blood for the Churches and to provide Christian children who had been refused a place at the EOS with a loophole to still gain an *Abitur*, albeit not one recognised by the state, but valid for the study of theology at the Churches' own *Sprachenkonvikt* Berlin, *Kathechetisches Oberseminar* Naumburg, and *Theologisches Seminar* Leipzig.²⁰² After a so-called *Sonderreifeprüfung* it was also possible to study theology at normal GDR universities, but all other programmes of study were barred. In an ironic twist however it was recognised by the FRG and thus had a notable advantage over the GDR *Abitur* for some pupils: it meant delayed gratification for young people who had been rejected by the EOS and whose families had asked for permission to leave the country. After graduating, most pupils stayed within the bosom of the Church and studied theology and Church music, trained as deacons and Sunday school teachers, and took up employment within the clerical administration or in Church hospitals or kindergartens.

A prerequisite for admission to the schools was a successful year 10 POS examination, and most pupils arrived aged sixteen for a period of three years; but candidates for a theology degree were also accepted after having done their vocational training. The imparting of a Christian worldview, paired with knowledge of the humanist heritage that was neglected in the socialist school, was the cornerstone on which education in these schools was built. Curricula were individual to every school, and classes were based on either hectographed teaching material²⁰³ or textbooks of varying provenience: 'Our completely unpolitical English book came from Prague, the Latin books from the GDR, books for German came from everywhere, the DTV History Atlas many pupils procured from the West, otherwise we simply took notes.'²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ In a report from 1959, the incredible number of 120 denominational schools supposedly existing in the GDR is mentioned, 'where predominantly pupils who were relegated from our schools and institutions are learning'. No proof of this figure is mentioned nor does it turn up in any other source, so I assume that it is fantasy. Cf. 'Aktennotiz über eine Beratung beim Staatssekretär für Kirchenfragen' (1.8.1959), SAPMO-BArch DY25/1137.

²⁰² Werner Leich letter.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ DTV : *Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag* [a West German publishing house]. Dietrich E. questionnaire.

The school in Hermannswerder was founded in 1901 as a school for orphaned girls and sat in splendid isolation on an island in the river Havel near Potsdam. It existed as the *Kirchliches Oberseminar* (KOS) from 1950 until 1990, and is today a Protestant grammar school. Entrance examinations for the KOS were six months prior to starting and included an essay, a maths exam and interviews, plus a tough probation period of three months. It was Dietrich E.'s alma mater in the 1970s. His parents, a Protestant pastor and his wife, had come from West Germany to Guben in the early 1950s out of a sense of missionary duty. He said that 'the grading was strict, the regime too. My average mark A* was gone, a B was an excellent mark, and our maths teacher used to say "You can learn a lot from an F" – this mark was then also heavily distributed.' Subjects were the 'normal' subjects with, in contrast to the EOS, only a little bit of geography, biology and physics, and no chemistry. Additionally there was a choice of ancient and modern languages and a subject called *Glaubenskunde* [faith lore], some philosophy, and at lunchtime on Saturdays in the so-called *Wochenschluß* [end of the week] lectures for everyone on particular topics. 'The teaching content was as far as I know compiled in complete freedom and orientated somewhat by concepts from North Rhine-Westphalia. But the corset wasn't tight and the teachers enjoyed considerable free space.' In Hermannswerder, art, music, choral singing and the opportunity to learn a musical instrument played an important role. Dietrich E. remembered reading Hemingway's *In Another Country* and 'of course *Romeo and Juliet*. With great enthusiasm we borrowed extracts from it for our everyday locutions, especially – we were 18 or 19 – Shakespeare's "you kiss by the book"!' For him, learning in Hermannswerder was akin to stepping out of the fetters of prescribed learning in the POS: 'For the first time in our lives we wrote essays in complete freedom, re-learned history right from the beginning, and enjoyed the freedom of mind on the island.' He recalled his teachers of whom 'most had somehow got into difficulties with the system or were simply old fogies. Many had a humane quality I had never seen before.' Asked whether the state had made itself noticed in any way, he said: 'The authorities surely observed our doings critically. The state had no influence whatsoever. But certainly the Stasi had their people there.' The history teacher and boarding school master was revealed as an IM after the *Wende*, 'a catastrophe for us, as he'd been one of the most esteemed teachers'.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ All *ibid*.

The *Kirchliches Proseminar* Naumburg (KPS) existed from 1952 until 1990.²⁰⁶ It was a relatively small boarding school of between forty to sixty pupils, teachers, and other staff. The school was very academic, and already the exam and probationary first three months demanded great dedication from the pupils. During three years, pupils had lessons for six hours a day for six days a week in German, Greek, Latin, English, history, geography, maths, physics, biology, music and *Christenlehre*,²⁰⁷ plus a monthly study day during which they worked on a topic chosen by themselves. Textbooks for Latin, Greek, and sciences hailed from the GDR, but in the latter case they were complemented by worksheets compiled by the teachers (who were called *Dozenten*, thus underlining the college-like character of the school). In the other subjects, worksheets were the main basis for lessons. Much emphasis was placed on German language and literature, including the learning of numerous poems. Literature coming from ‘the West’ was only available to the teachers, for fear of possible house searches (which incidentally never happened). All teachers were university-trained pedagogues or theologians and regularly attended further training courses with colleagues from Hermannswerder. The *Abitur* consisted of written papers in German, maths, Greek, and Latin, as well as a number of oral exams. There was no influence by the state on the work of the school; the sole responsible body was the Protestant Church in Saxony. There were however a number of Stasi moles at the KPS, but this was a known fact. When they first joined the school, pupils were informed that these people might try to recruit them and were advised by the headteacher to report such requests immediately to defuse the situation.

Almuth Noetzel wrote a highly interesting paper during her theology degree on the KPS and its pupils.²⁰⁸ She wanted to investigate ‘whether the KPS was really only a safe haven, a “blessed island” for *Pfarrerskinder* disappointed by the world, or a last chance of obtaining a solid education, or an “elite school” with raised standards’.²⁰⁹ In fact, it was a mixture of all of these plus much more. The reasons why pupils came to the KPS were manifold: some had been relegated from an EOS, others had had their applications rejected on religious and other grounds; some felt unhappy in the socialist school system, others attended because their parents wanted them to, and some simply

²⁰⁶ I am very grateful to Rev. Almut Noetzel for answering my questions on this school in great detail. Unless indicated otherwise, all information in this paragraph is based on her letter of 21 February 2005. She was a pupil at the KPS from 1966 until 1969, and acted as house mistress and teacher of religious studies from 1975 until 1980.

²⁰⁷ See the section on church youth work, ch. 6.

²⁰⁸ A. Noetzel, *Kirchliches Proseminar und kirchlicher Beruf im Bezugfeld des sozialistischen Bildungssystems* (unpublished paper, Greifswald, 1976).

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

thought ‘better a KPS *Abitur* than none’.²¹⁰ Although the school was primarily intended for future theologians, it was only from 1958 that pupils were expected to go on to study theology.²¹¹ Of the 386 pupils (225 male and 161 female) who were pupils at the KPS between 1952 and 1976, 217 (58.8%) successfully graduated. Of those, 187 (86.2%) began a theology degree (slightly more men than women) and 22 (10.1%) took a job or further training within the Church.²¹² These numbers may give the impression that it was a straight road from the decision to attend the KPS to becoming a minister of religion; a survey conducted with the 42 pupils learning there in 1976 revealed however that when they had joined the school, almost a quarter had had a career other than theology in mind.²¹³

What was the secret of the KPS’s success? The key must have lain in the school’s principal conception. The former rector Wilhelm Bischoff explained the foundation of denominational schools in the GDR as a reaction to the increasing politicisation and pedagogical impoverishment of state education, which had turned into an instrument of class struggle in the early 1950s.²¹⁴ People’s Education had become an ‘*Einübung in das Notwendige*’ [adaptation to what is required], the requirements being conservation, strengthening, and building of socialism under the leadership of the SED. Burdened with this task, education in the socialist school had been reduced to ‘instruction’ [*Schulung*]. The denominational schools stood in conscious contrast to this conception: their formula was ‘*Einübung in das Mögliche*’ [practise of what is feasible]. True learning is an open process; what results from having opportunities largely depends on the self-determination and self-discovery of the learner. Seen in this light, the denominational schools probably did more to foster an all-round developed personality – albeit not a socialist one – than the socialist schools.

A slightly different institution of the Catholic Church was the *Norbertuswerk*. The ‘*Werk*’ [factory] was on the one hand a fashionable term at the time, but on the other hand also a camouflage (according to Dieter Müller, outsiders often wondered ‘What does this factory produce?’), which brought some advantages such as its affiliation with the *Werksküchenversorgung* [factory canteen supply].²¹⁵ It existed from

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7f. and 10.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹⁴ Cf. W. Bischoff’s speech at the closure of the KPS on 23 November 1990 in Naumburg. Printed in a letter to KPS alumni of 3 April 1991, a copy of which was given to the author by Rev. Noetzel. NB: All further quotes in this paragraph are taken from this source.

²¹⁵ Dieter Müller (a teacher and headmaster at the *Norbertuswerk* for 38 years) in a letter to the author (3.2.2005).

1952 until 1999 and enabled Catholic young men who wanted to become priests, but who were not admitted to the EOS, to obtain their *Abitur*, which was, according to the Prussian concordat of 1929, a prerequisite for the study of theology. According to Matthias W., born in 1964 and a pupil there in the 1980s, the Catholic Church was only interested in training potential priests for the perpetuation of the priesthood. ‘The ratios, i.e. of lay theologians, seen in West German institutions, were not wanted by the patriarchal institution.’²¹⁶ Out of a total of about 1400 pupils who attended the *Norbertuswerk* until 1989, about 32% went on to become priests.²¹⁷ The entrance exam consisted of an essay, dictation, maths test, and an interview. Initially, only pupils who had already done their eight years at school plus vocational training joined for four years, later they joined after year 10 for a period of three years. The pupils prepared a humanistic *Abitur*. The curriculum was partly concordant with the GDR curriculum and some GDR textbooks were used (maths, physics, geography, English, Latin, Greek), but diverged completely in other subjects (German, history, biology, religious education) and were taught with Western textbooks. The teachers were trained pedagogues with a GDR university education with a high humanist pathos. Two priests also worked at the school.

Matthias W. remembered: ‘The demands made were very high, and intellectually I felt this school to be an island. I felt as if I was taken out of the closed society. I could read everything, had West German textbooks, could think and argue how I wanted.’²¹⁸ The *Abitur* was taken according to the Prussian examination regulations of 1923 and orientated on the West German model. Within the GDR, the certificate entitled one only to study theology at the *Philosophisch-Theologisches Studium Erfurt* (yet another cover-up term), but it was recognised by the FRG. For the GDR education authorities, the *Norbertuswerk* did not exist and was regarded by the state as a purely church-internal institution. Dieter Müller said that ‘of course the state kept a sharp eye on us via the IM (also amongst pupils), but restricted itself to observation and did not interfere’.²¹⁹ But since, by its very existence, it infringed upon the state’s monopoly of education, caution was on the agenda:

²¹⁶ Matthias W. questionnaire (19.4.2004). He went on to study Catholic theology in Erfurt and became a theologian.

²¹⁷ Hans-Joachim Marchio (a teacher and rector for over 20 years), text: *Der Weg entwirft sich im Gehen...Stationen eines Weges – das Norbertuswerk in und nach der Wende* (1992) in a letter to the author (31.1.2005).

²¹⁸ Matthias W. questionnaire.

²¹⁹ Dieter Müller letter.

For example, when I demonstrated physics experiments in the early morning and the lights in the classroom were on, the rector told me to draw the blinds so that one could not see from the nearby railway line that there was a physics lesson going on. This prudence was perhaps somewhat exaggerated, but this is how we felt at the time.²²⁰

An example of how it was possible to combine Christian conviction with living in the GDR was the *Theresienschule*, a school in East Berlin founded in 1894. It had been closed under the Nazis, but the ingenious Sister Maria Julie of the Order of the Sisters of Notre Dame reopened the school in June 1945 and remained headmistress until her retirement in 1981. Based on a decree issued by the Allies in February 1946, which authorised the continuation of private schools founded prior to this date, and thanks to the unfaltering support of the Catholic Church, especially the bishopric of Berlin, and the diplomatic skill of its headmistress, the school managed to perform the unbelievable balancing act of being the only Catholic private girls' (three very unusual adjectives) school *within* the socialist education system whose pupils obtained a regular GDR-*Abitur*. It involved, however, a continuous struggle for existence throughout the lifetime of the GDR and was threatened by closure several times.²²¹ Attendance fell from 345 in 1949 to 92 in 1969 and 45 in 1974.²²² Pupils paid a school fee of 20 Marks per month, but there were also reductions. One heard of the school's existence only via friends and family.

Textbooks and the curriculum were the same as in a normal EOS, including Russian, civic education and polytechnic education lessons. Additionally there was one weekly hour of religious education split into a Catholic and a Protestant group, which was however not marked or included in school reports.²²³ Furthermore there was optional French and Latin in years 11 and 12 and a weekly Church Service on Saturdays. In the mid-1960s, the *Theresienschule* also participated in the experimental combination of training its pupils for the *Abitur* and a vocation (described in chapter 6). In 1965 for example, graduates were certified stenotypists, nurses, mechanics, postal workers, and seamstresses.²²⁴ What was special about the school was that although the facts of the socialist curriculum were transferred, teachers and pupils constituted a community where it was possible to ask honest questions and enter into discussions without encountering the brick wall of the one (Marxist) prescribed truth.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ So for example in the phase of the SED toughening its line after the Building of the Wall: 'It must be impeded that the *Theresienschule* in Berlin obtains new allocations of pupils.' Cf. 'Protokoll Arbeitsberatung' (15.8.1961), BArch DR2/7702.

²²² Cf. <<http://www.theresienschule.com/alggesch.html>> [accessed 20.12.2004] (page 1).

²²³ I am grateful to Elisabeth H., who taught at the *Theresienschule* from 1973 and was headmistress from 1982 to 1996, for furnishing me with information on the school in her letter of 10 February 2005.

²²⁴ Elisabeth H. letter.

Membership of mass organisations was demanded neither of teachers nor pupils. The school did not participate in political demonstrations on occasions such as May Day.²²⁵ A single MfV inspection report in 1971 noted that there existed neither a union nor FDJ group, nor were there any members of the SED working at the school.²²⁶ Of 87 pupils 18 were FDJ members, but they were not registered by the school and paid their membership fees in their old schools. It was noted that ‘neither they nor their classmates knew the current ‘*FDJ-Auftrag*’ [mission]. ‘The headmistress was of the opinion that she and the teachers had nothing to do with that. She said they did their political work within the framework of the DSF.’²²⁷ Following the inspection, the school’s first small FDJ group was formed in 1971,²²⁸ but ‘it played no role whatsoever in the everyday life of the school’.²²⁹ Although the ‘concrete political work’ at the school was ‘underdeveloped’, and in political discussions ‘general humanist reflections, manifested for example in the rejection of the Vietnam war, stand to the fore,’ the work of the eight teachers (‘no political qualifications’) and the girls was judged positively:

In connection with the subject matter in civic education, history, geography, and German, discussions on current affairs and fundamental political questions of our time are being held. The majority of pupils are partisan advocates of socialism and the GDR. Their attitude reflects the successful education work of the previous eight school years.²³⁰

Of the 24 girls who obtained their *Abitur* in 1971, nineteen applied for a place at university and eight were admitted, which indicates that there was no across the board discrimination against the school’s alumni on the part of the higher education authorities. The MfV’s projects for the *Theresienschule* after this report were limited to the creation of after-school clubs and more regular controls.²³¹ Elisabeth H. described the school’s particular characteristics as ‘straightforwardness, outstanding academic achievements, consequent ethical action, and working for the common good.’²³² This was also demonstrated by the fact that WKU did not form part of the curriculum. Instead, the girls completed a training course as Red Cross helpers. Thanks to this combination of unfaltering conviction and the willingness to compromise up to a point, the *Theresienschule* managed to survive, coped with the *Wende* and still exists today as a popular *Gymnasium* for Catholic girls (and boys).

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ ‘Bericht über die an der Theresienschule durchgeführte Kontrolle’ (5.4.1971), BArch DR2/A1970.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Cf. <<http://www.theresienschule.com/alggesch.html>> [accessed 20.12.2004] (page 1).

²²⁹ Elisabeth H. letter.

²³⁰ ‘Bericht über die an der Theresienschule durchgeführte Kontrolle’ (5.4.1971), BArch DR2/A1970.

²³¹ I did not find any further reports in MfV files, however.

²³² Elisabeth H. letter.

Conclusion

During the whole lifespan of the GDR, the making of the intellectual personality was inextricably linked to a wider aim than just providing children and young people with academic knowledge. Societal needs played a crucial part in deciding what was to be learned, and also by whom. From pre-school education to the EOS, curriculum and politicisation went hand in hand. By the end of the experimental phase in education policy in the late 1960s, this had become a normal state of affairs. Political aspects, found in parts of the syllabus where they did not belong, were however significantly diluted or omitted by individual teachers.

The state's aspirations to develop children's intellectual personality were to a large extent laudable. The 1950s were a decade marked by genuine concern and success in opening up education to the formerly disadvantaged social classes by introducing a free, unitary school system that was not contingent upon parental wealth or geography. Less laudable, however, was that, contrary to ideological pretence, the system began to reproduce a new class from the mid-1960s onwards, that of the socialist intelligentsia. Although this did not affect learning in the POS, it led to problems with regard to further education in the EOS. It was not so much the rigorous selection that posed a problem, but the question of which criteria were applied. The individual's rights to personal fulfilment via education were curtailed by the state's insistence on equipping only as many pupils with higher education as were needed in economic terms. This was inconsistent with the state's claim to want the intellect of the socialist personality to be developed as fully as possible. With regard to access to the EOS, large-scale discrimination against Christian pupils was common throughout the lifetime of the GDR. Only a minority of parents, both Christian and non-Christian, found the courage to protest against such perceived unjust rejections of their children, often acting in a way that may be described as 'anticipatory inaction'.

Pupils left both POS and EOS with sound general knowledge. The fact that the curriculum was low on conveying humanist knowledge was intended by the SED. Its focus lay on educating young skilled workers in order to advance the scientific-technical revolution, not 'penniless artists' [*brotlose Hungerkünstler*]. The GDR's literal 'walling-off' negatively affected the education system insofar as the curriculum increasingly focused inward on the socialist camp, which resulted in a biased education in history and geography, as well as limited possibilities for the study of foreign languages other than Russian. Another important long-term result was the widespread inability of pupils to freely and clearly express their opinion: 'The self-confident and

matter-of-course expression of one's opinion, which even the simplest FRG citizen can do in front of a camera, I didn't learn in the GDR school.'²³³ This was due in parts to the perpetual guard that pupils had learned to keep on what they said, but was also due to the way in which lessons were structured: frontal teaching, stress on taking notes instead of absorbing knowledge, no tradition of training rhetorical abilities by giving papers, and when one did, sticking to a preformulated script.

The standardised curricular system, despite inherent disadvantages regarding the development of personal interests, contributed to creating common ground amongst all pupils, regardless of which school in which ever corner of the GDR they attended. All had been exposed to more or less the same syllabus, which resulted in a common basic knowledge. With hindsight, this common experience had a share in the, perhaps unwitting, creation of a specific homogeneous East German (I dare not say socialist) identity. The state's endeavours to achieve exactly that, albeit under different auspices, are investigated in the following chapters.

²³³ Petra R.* questionnaire.

Chapter 4. The formation of political convictions: civic values

Before we come to the contents of chapter 4, a small word of introduction to the next three chapters, which all deal with values and morals. They explore the state's attempts to form children and young people growing up in the GDR; the conveyance of its notion of good and evil; and also the ways in which the state's visions were implemented and received. They argue two main points. First, the success of the SED's efforts was limited in instilling only some of the envisaged socialist values. This has often been interpreted as an outright failure of the education system when in fact quite a number of socialist characteristics *did* become engrained in young people as time went on. Second, by coercing young people into conforming to the prescribed morals, the Party succeeded in producing young generations who were characterised by double standards regarding ideological values, a fact which helps to explain the sudden collapse of a regime that lacked true support of its people.

Both the German word *Moral* and the English *morality* can have several meanings, primarily the following five: the quality of being moral; that which renders an action right or wrong; virtue; the doctrine of actions as right or wrong; and ethics.¹ The aspects that were seen as forming the moral aspect of a socialist personality were similarly wide-ranging. Of the three developed sides (intellectual, moral, and physical) to a socialist personality, the moral side was the most crucial. In contrast to intellectual and physical faculties, which it was possible to teach and to train, socialist moral values not only required being taught to children, but were supposed to be internalised by them and thus a deeply engrained part of their personality. The moral values that the SED sought to instil all held one thing in common: they were all obligations. This was *the* central characteristic of moral education in the GDR. Children were taught that they owed everything in their lives to the sacrifices made by the antifascist elders (those demigods who had died in the battle against National Socialism and those still alive and carrying the torch, i.e. the current Party leaders). Mark Fenemore captured this complex issue in a nutshell: 'Through the development of moral claims, the SED sought to develop a lasting debt of loyalty and obedience among youth.'² For the sake of clarity it is helpful to divide the *moral* values into three categories which the chapters in this second part of the thesis explore: civic values, moral (meaning virtue in this context) values and societal values.

¹ Cf. 'morality' in *The Chambers Dictionary*, 1048.

² Fenemore, *Nonconformity*, 38.

Chapter 4 looks at two main questions: How did the education system try to convey principal civic, or in SED parlance, ‘political-ideological’, obligations to young people? And how did the recipients react to this inculcation? The first section gives an overview of the principal civic obligations, followed by the examination of how these were presented in state-run kindergartens. The third section focuses on the three subjects at school with the highest potential for indoctrination: local studies, history and civic education lessons. Then follows an analysis of the diverse types of civics teachers that existed in the GDR, whilst the fifth section discusses the issue of teachers and pupils leaving for West Germany. The sixth section deals with antifascist values as the cornerstone of civic education. The last section highlights the situation of Christian children in the value system of the socialist school.

Principal civic values

In 1945, the aim of educationalists in the SBZ was ‘to educate a new human being, not a party-political orientated human being, but a human being who is a conscious bearer of the new Germany we aim to create.’³ The course of events however showed that as early as the late 1940s, the ideology of the new leading party became inextricably linked to the making of the new generations. The ideological aims were laid down in every important SED document, from Party programmes, resolutions at Party and Pedagogical Congresses, Education and Youth laws to specific ‘*Aufgabenstellungen für die staatsbürgerliche Erziehung*’.⁴ The core contents underwent no significant changes during the four decades of the GDR’s existence. Civic education was the principal contributor to the formation of the morals in a socialist personality by conveying the tenets of Marxism-Leninism. The aim was for young people to be immersed in the socialist *Weltanschauung* and to develop socialist awareness as defined by various convictions. For example, the conviction of the historical mission of the working class, the conviction that the future for all humanity was socialism and not capitalism, the belief in the objective character of the development of nature and society, and the belief in the leading role of the Soviet Union.⁵ Relating to East Germany, there was the conviction that the GDR was the only legitimate German state; the conviction that the communist future was only possible under the guidance of the vanguard Marxist-Leninist Party; and the conviction that its youth was the architect of its own fortune by

³ Schneider, *Weltanschauliche Erziehung*, 29.

⁴ Cf. ch. 2. On the subject of ideology within pedagogical science, see B. John, *Ideologie und Pädagogik: Zur Geschichte der vergleichenden Pädagogik in der DDR* (Cologne, 1998).

⁵ Cf. ‘Aufgabenstellung des Ministeriums für Volksbildung und des Zentralrates der FDJ zur weiteren Entwicklung der staatsbürgerlichen Erziehung der Schuljugend der DDR’ (1969), BArch DR2/7986.

consciously exercising their rights and fulfilling their obligations towards socialist society.

Another civic demand was for the love of peace. It stemmed from the experience of the bloody first half of the 20th century, especially the Second World War, but was also fed by ensuing conflicts, and was connected to another obligation, that of antifascism. The concept of antifascism was one of the pillars of education in the GDR and pervaded classroom instruction and extracurricular activities in the youth organisation at all levels. Further civic obligations were pride in the achievements of the working people in the GDR and connected to this, from the late 1950s and becoming an official obligation in 1962 with the introduction of compulsory military service, the willingness of young men to defend these achievements in the ranks of the NVA.

Gerhart Neuner, the GDR's chief pedagogue, explained the need for a political-ideological education by the fact that there were, on the one hand, intellectually very capable people who, for want of socialist convictions, lacked readiness to make sacrifices and to work for the common good; on the other hand there were convinced socialists who lacked the necessary abilities and skills to master the upcoming tasks.⁶ The fact that he made this observation in 1978, the final year under investigation in this thesis, and after almost thirty years of the GDR's existence, suggests that the socialist personality, i.e. an all-round educated human being who combines political conviction with intellectual abilities, was still largely an ideal.

Seeing the world through Bummi's eyes: civic education in the kindergarten

Children should arrive at 'objectively correct' convictions, values and attitudes as early in life as possible; so political-ideological education started in kindergarten. As already discussed in chapter 3, the amount of ideology to which children were exposed depended on various factors, such as whether the kindergarten was located in a rural area or a busy industrial town, the number of children influencing the degree to which teachers could give them individual attention, and most importantly on the individual kindergarten directors and teachers, whom the SED saw as 'sculptors'⁷ whose task it was to sculpt the children according to its ideas. However, of this sculpting 'army'⁸ of ca. 52,500 pedagogues working in kindergartens in 1976, only 11.5% were members or

⁶ Neuner, *Sozialistische Persönlichkeit*, 106-11.

⁷ The notion of pedagogues as 'Bildhauer' dates back to Friedrich Fröbel and was used by both the National Socialists and the socialists. Cf. Höltershinken., *Kindergarten*, vol. 1, 37f.

⁸ Margot Honecker used the term 'Armee' to describe the body of kindergarten teachers in: "Mit Optimismus erfüllen wir unseren Auftrag" – Schlußwort auf der Konferenz der Vorschulerziehung der DDR in Neubrandenburg (18.11.1977) in Honecker, *Zur Bildungspolitik*, 507.

candidates of the SED. They were unevenly distributed over the whole country, Bezirk Potsdam being classified as 'good' and Bezirk Cottbus as 'bad'.⁹ Whether they were Party members or not, kindergarten heads had to attend a seminar on political-ideological questions [*Parteilehrjahr*] once a month. When looking at the questions discussed there in the mid-1970s, for example 'Why is the alliance with the USSR indispensable to life?' or 'Why did the Soviet Union's victory in the Second World War conform to the laws of history?', it is striking how little direct reference they had to children's education. Even questions that do mention children, such as 'Why are we educating the children's personality qualities according to the demands made in the plan?',¹⁰ were more related to Marxist-Leninist theory than practical advice on how to achieve the goals. Assessments of the teachers' work underlined this problem, giving the general impression that kindergarten teachers 'made great endeavours to penetrate into the works of the classics and Party materials', but found themselves in a dilemma as to how 'to draw conclusions from them for their everyday work'.¹¹ Whilst most teachers had no doubts about the evilness of the US regime, stated a report on the situation in Bezirk Erfurt from 1973, there was lack of clarity surrounding the question of the 'misanthropy of imperialism in the FRG', which they thought could not be so bad, 'since they are also Germans'.¹² This underlines the fact that functionaries of the state in the form of teachers were also 'normal' GDR citizens with their reservations and queries about certain aspects of the regime's ideology.

The civic obligations demanded of kindergarten children were kept quite simple and were formulated in the Education Act:

The children are to be educated to love their socialist homeland and to love peace. Friendship amongst the children of all nations, mutual readiness to help, team spirit, truthfulness and love and respect for their parents and all other working people are to be developed.¹³

A section entitled 'familiarisation with societal life', found in various education plans, specified that children should be introduced to their home towns and villages and the cultural and leisure facilities available to every citizen, the employment opportunities of the local industry, and the work of the local party functionaries. The success of factory visits, for example, was reflected in changes to the children's games where 'children

⁹ 'Kadermäßige Bedingungen im Bereich Vorschulerziehung bis 1980' (25.3.1976), BArch DR2/8197.

¹⁰ 'Zu Ergebnissen und Problemen der Führung der Vorschulerziehung' (14.4.1975), BArch DR2/A.528 (folder I).

¹¹ 'Einschätzung der politisch-ideologischen und pädagogischen Arbeit in den Kindergärten des Bezirkes Erfurt' (1973), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, Nr. 013826.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Bildungsgesetz*, part II, § 11, 94.

identify to an increasing degree with exemplary workers and collective farmers'.¹⁴ They learned to be proud of the GDR's achievements and that the fact that everybody had a job, a nice new flat,¹⁵ could go to school and to hospital for free. They got to know about communist working class heroes such as Ernst Thälmann and learned that in the GDR there were no exploiters or old fascists, 'like there were for example in the FRG'.¹⁶ The role of the Red Army and the Soviet Union in Germany's liberation from the Nazis and the necessity of having the NVA to protect peace in the GDR was illustrated through picture books, personal contacts with soldiers and by giving 'up-to-date examples that there are enemies who threaten peace and people's lives'.¹⁷

Learning all these facts about their socialist fatherland and its protagonists could place excessive demands on young children. In 1961 for example, during a *Beschäftigung* on the subject 'Labour Day', the children of a Berlin kindergarten answered the question of which people had been marching in the parade by saying 'factories, sailors, soldiers, and tanks'. Asked to describe *Marx-Engels-Platz* where the parade was held, they said 'It's a Christmas market' (which indeed it was during the weeks leading up to Christmas). The kindergarten teacher then asked whom they had seen on the rostrum. As nobody could answer, they guessed 'Walter Ulbricht'. Asked who he was, the children said 'a man, Wilhelm Pieck, a worker'. Finally, with the help of their teacher, they settled for 'a worker for peace'.¹⁸ A more successful approach was made by a kindergarten teacher who, in 1962, introduced the children to socialist life via a visit to their village piggery. It made them 'acquainted with and proud of the collective farmers' [i.e. their parents, AB] work'. The children increased their vocabulary with words such as 'feeding trough', 'snout' and 'grunt', and learned of the pig's usefulness in the form of bacon, brushes and handbags. During feeding time, the teacher told them that the parents working in the LPG's¹⁹ fields, growing plants such as sweet corn and nettles, were helping the pigs to get fat and ensuring that all the people in town and countryside had enough to eat.²⁰ This conformed to the principles of socialist education formulated in 1959, demanding that the country kindergartens allow

¹⁴ 'Information zum Stand und zu Problemen der Vorschulerziehung im Bezirk Erfurt' (3.3.1971), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, Nr. 013826.

¹⁵ Children's literature also took up the subject of changing urban landscapes and people leaving their cold and damp houses behind for a brighter future in newly built towerblock flats, for example H. Hüttner, E. Binder, *Familie Siebenzahl zieht um* (Berlin, 1977); but there were also more critical narrations such as Benno Pludra's, *Insel der Schwäne* (Berlin, 1980).

¹⁶ Cf. Ministerrat, MfV, *Programm* (1985), 218.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 222.

¹⁸ 'Bericht über Hospitation am 3. und 5. Mai 1961 im Kinderheim "Hildegard Jadamowitz" in Berlin-Friedrichshain' (1961), BArch DR2/6425.

¹⁹ LPG: *Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft* [agricultural collective].

²⁰ 'Wir spielen unsere LPG. Bericht aus Wust, Kreis Havelberg' (ca. 1962), BArch DR2/6425.

for the specific conditions of the socialist development of the village and should awaken children's joy and interest in agricultural workings.²¹

As these two examples illustrate, the way in which civic education was presented was crucial to how successful indoctrination attempts were. The term indoctrination should however be qualified because although it is correct for much of what is listed above (i.e. the portrayal of non-socialist states as enemies), it does seem too strong for some aspects (i.e. knowing the country's leading politicians) which were simply about introducing children to their societal environment, and would be as relevant in a dictatorship as in a democracy. Sometimes the SED managed to catch children's attention and to instil patriotic feelings by means that were appropriate for young children. An example would be one high point of the year's festive calendar, the *Republikgeburtstag* [birthday of the Republic] in honour of its foundation on 7 October 1949. With street parties held all over the country, featuring attractions like painting and handicraft stalls, scooter races, candyfloss and live music, it was easy to convey to children a feeling of love for the personified home country as the generous organiser of this big birthday party. Another idea of knitting the band of friendship to the socialist fatherland even closer was to give special attention to those children whose birthday also fell on 7 October by being personally congratulated by the heads of kindergartens and schools.²² International Women's Day [*Frauentag*] on 8 March was another opportunity for furthering children's socialist awareness. It was the big day on which women were officially honoured for their hard work, and the children would be busy making small presents for their mothers and kindergarten teachers weeks in advance. Events like this enhanced the feeling of cohesion and participation amongst the children, with everyone being involved in their preparation and realisation, be it by making streamers for the decoration or singing in the choir on stage.

Pre-school children in the GDR even had their own fortnightly magazine called *Bummi-Heft*. The editors' aim was to help 'educate our children to become stalwart citizens of our state'.²³ Since 1957, the yellow teddy bear Bummi and his friends introduced the young readers to their socialist fatherland, its inhabitants and customs. Parents and kindergarten teachers would read them the stories, poems and songs, and

²¹ 'Entwurf der "Grundsätze und Aufgaben der sozialistischen Erziehung im Kindergarten"' (27.8.1959), BArch DR2/5626.

²² Cf. 'An alle Schulen und Kindergärten des Kreises Gotha, betrifft Geburtstagskinder am 7.10.1969' (29.9.1969), KArch Gotha 2A/2209.

²³ *Neue Erziehung im Kindergarten*, 2/1968, 22. Quoted in C. Lorenz, "'Bummi" und der Weg ins Leben. Erziehung zur Gesellschaft in einer Kinderzeitschrift' in: Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR (ed.), *Fortschritt, Norm und Eigensinn. Erkundungen im Alltag der DDR* (Berlin, 1999), 211.

the children could engage with the rich illustrations, cartoons, colouring pages and brain-teasers. The topics of the magazine were largely determined by the GDR's festive calendar, comprising traditional holidays and festivities such as Christmas and carnival, as well as Labour Day and Liberation Day. Until the early 1970s, the leading article of each issue was mostly devoted to the subject of work, and the innumerable profession-specific holidays that existed in the GDR throughout the year meant that, over the years, *Bummi* encountered 'fishermen, *Konsum* vendors, combine harvester drivers, machinists, printers, tank soldiers, doctors, a shipyard and a sugar refinery'.²⁴ From then onwards, however, the attention began to focus more and more on *Heimat*,²⁵ a development which must be seen in connection with the GDR's desire to dissociate itself from the FRG at a time of nascent détente. *Bummi* also served to prepare the older children for school and their admission to the *Junge Pioniere*; the latter topic featured so frequently that, as Christa Lorenz commented, *Bummi* readers must have gained the impression that 'life would only start properly with enrolment in the pioneers'.²⁶ From the mid-1970s onwards, *Bummi* began increasingly to address parents and to devote more space in its pages to advice on child education and agony columns.²⁷

Despite these examples of political-ideological education, if one assesses kindergarten education only by looking at the SED's programmes and plans, the full reality will remain obscured; just as it would if one relied on the highly publicised post-1989 criticism of the pre-school system portraying it as authoritative and dogmatic;²⁸ even though it doubtless was in some individual cases. Under closer scrutiny, much of daily life at kindergarten was not political at all. Children appreciated the wide range of activities offered. Most children enjoyed being with other children, making friends, playing and learning together about their world by means of literature, music and art. They liked to come regularly and did not want to miss anything. 'Our children love to do handicrafts. We had cut out eyes and mouth for a kite and wanted to finish it the next day. So Matthias could not go to the zoo in Leipzig, his parents had to postpone the visit.'²⁹

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 228. NB: *Konsum* was the name of the state-owned food stores.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Lorenz in Dokumentationszentrum, *Fortschritt*, 216.

²⁷ The *Bummi* formula as a medium tailored for three to six-year olds proved enduring and managed to avoid the fate of most ex-GDR print media in the early 1990s. *Bummi* continued with its seasoned mix of richly illustrated stories, interesting ideas for games and handicrafts, and also its educational advice pages for parents. Today, the world of *Bummi* and girlfriend Bine stretches as far afield as Florida where they visit dolphins, and the magazine sells well both in Eastern and Western Germany.

²⁸ For example Pfeiffer's 'Potty controversy'; Maatz, *Gefühlsstau*; Klier, *Lüg Vaterland*.

²⁹ 'Bericht aus Kindergarten Zedtlitz' (26.10.1960), BArch DR2/4685.

An illuminating publication reflecting the reality of kindergarten life is the book which was a standard work for kindergarten teachers from its first imprint in 1968 onwards, the anthology *Reime, Gedichte, Geschichten für den Kindergarten*, whose 'rhymes, poems and stories' were used on a daily basis for all different age groups. The preface stated that the book featured verses from folk and bourgeois poetry, which, 'although having originated in different societal circumstances', could still be useful to children growing up in the GDR because their concerns were humanistic, their subject matters meaningful, and they did not stand in opposition to the socialist *Weltanschauung*.³⁰ They included traditional nursery rhymes and well-loved poems by Goethe, Heine and Morgenstern. The book also contained verses which familiarised children with life in the GDR and which were designated to make them 'take sides',³¹ by authors such as Brecht, Weinert and Hacks. Topics ranged across nature, seasons, animals, and fairy tales to stories about children and their lives in the German lands of the past, the GDR, the Soviet Union and even China. The 'taking sides' relates to getting the children to sympathise with the Good and Great, to discover positive role models who would always wash their hands, respect nature, be polite, truthful, punctual and responsible, and help their mothers with the household chores. The number of 'uncontroversial' contributions, i.e. those do not have the slightest whiff of political indoctrination about them, outnumber those with a specific reference to the GDR by about 20:1.³² The ideologically loaded contributions deal in a mild manner with topics such as the pioneers,³³ soldiers,³⁴ the strength of the collective to overcome obstacles,³⁵ and the traditional Labour Day demonstrations.³⁶ In only one instance is there a strong tone; Brecht's poem *Aberglaube*, whose last stanza

Der Storch bringt nicht die Kinder.
Die Sieben bringt kein Glück.
Und einen Teufel gibt es nicht
In unserer Republik.³⁷

ridicules superstition and, by implication, religion.

³⁰ Authors' collective, *Reime, Gedichte, Geschichten für den Kindergarten* (Berlin, 1973), 5th ed., 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² 294 against 14.

³³ *Ibid.*, H. Meyer, 'Sausewind mit dem bunten Flatterschwanz', 207-10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, W. Krumbach, 'Soldaten', 113; E. Freitag, 'Die Soldatenmütze', 113f.; L. Pantelejew, 'Das Versprechen', *ibid.*, 203f.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, R. Meine, 'Der Berg', 213f.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, U. Müller, 'Rote Fahnen, blaue Fahnen', 26; G. Otto, 'Eine Bitte zum 1. Mai', 26f.; M. Hackethal, 'Morgen ist der 1. Mai', 27f.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, B. Brecht, 'Aberglaube', 138. Freely translates as: 'The stork brings no children/ Lucky Seven's not so grand/ And you won't find a devil/ In our fatherland.'

It is difficult to determine the actual effectiveness of political-ideological education in kindergartens from the files. Can one believe the ever confident reports speaking of 'good results in the education of the children to love their socialist homeland', proved by their 'collective attitudes and the readiness to protect socialist property'?³⁸ The reality was often obscured by such phrase mongering, a state of affairs that in the early 1960s was still openly lamented by kindergarten teachers themselves, but which in latter years had become accepted as a normal state of affairs.³⁹ The following appraisal from the mid-1970s of the progress and problems of ideological education gives a convincing account of the way new patterns of thinking had emerged amongst children by that time, and also of the reality of ideological work undertaken by the teachers, namely to 'work through' the daily dose of conveying political-ideological knowledge to the children according to the plans and then just to get on with a normal routine of life as in any kindergarten:

We can estimate that the children possess extensive knowledge on societal life. On the basis of the acquired knowledge, positive attitudes towards our socialist life have developed. This manifests itself for example in the open-mindedness for solidarity actions and participation in preparing festivities and celebrations. The education of the children in the spirit of the worldview and morals of the working class is not always carried out consciously during the whole day, but is allocated to the corresponding subject areas.⁴⁰

My interviewees had predominantly positive memories of their kindergarten days. Gunter U.*, who was born in 1962 and grew up in Weimar, thought that 'children felt taken care of in kindergarten. Values and ideals from that time have stayed with me to this day, such as a sense of order, camaraderie, empathy, community spirit, friendships, collective spirit, mutual attentiveness, eating habits, and stamina.'⁴¹ Monika F. said 'From the age of three onwards I only ever knew all-day education. I was always the last kid to get picked up from kindergarten and for four years I went to the after-school *Hort*. I really liked going to all these places.'⁴² It is interesting to note that those who were critical of the GDR kindergarten system did not actually experience it themselves, but hailed from regime-critical or Christian homes. Matthias W., born into a Catholic family in 1964 in Stralsund, said: 'I was glad that I did not have to go to kindergarten

³⁸ 'Information zum Stand und zu Problemen der Vorschulerziehung im Bezirk Erfurt' (3.3.1971), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, Nr. 013826.

³⁹ See for example the letter by the head of the kindergarten in Orlishausen, Margarete Menning, written to *Neue Erziehung*, in which she found fault with the fact that in the magazine, only ever good messages, but no criticism, were published. Cf. 'Pläne und Berichte des Sektors Vorschulerziehung' (ca. 1962), BArch DR2/6425.

⁴⁰ 'Zu Ergebnissen und Problemen der Führung der Vorschulerziehung' (14.4.1975), BArch DR2/A.528 (folder I).

⁴¹ Gunter U.* questionnaire (26.2.2004).

⁴² Monika F. questionnaire.

because my mother stayed at home'.⁴³ The answer given by Protestant Annemarie W.* indicates that civic education of the youngest had greater success once the GDR had become established and the education system more professionalised. She herself went to kindergarten in Weimar in the late 1950s and for her, parental education largely outweighed the effects of political education in the kindergarten. By the time her own children went to kindergarten in the late 1970s however, its effects had evidently rubbed off on them, despite her opposition: 'My children's education in crèche and kindergarten was not taken seriously by me. My kids also wanted so badly to put little flags in the window on Labour Day, but I, uncaring mother [*Rabenmutter*] that I was, of course didn't allow that.'⁴⁴

'Ideology-intensive subjects': local studies, history and civic education

When children left kindergarten and went to school, Marxism-Leninism permeated the curriculum at all levels and disciplines, as already discussed in the previous chapter. Three subjects however were officially charged with the conveyance of civic knowledge, views and duties: 'local studies' [*Heimatkunde*], history and civics. The subject of *Heimatkunde* was, in years 1 and 2, integrated in the German classes, but had its own textbooks in years 3 and 4. The subject was divided into two main areas: firstly, introduction to societal life (which focused on the struggle of working class heroes in the past), the children's role as pupils and young pioneers, the GDR as their socialist homeland as well as basic road safety; and secondly, nature studies which involved observing animals and pressing leaves and flowers as well as learning to save resources, for example by using as little water as possible to help the country's economy.⁴⁵ Dominique Krössin's analysis of the complex concept of *Heimat* as a trinity is helpful in illustrating how the notion of '*Unsere Heimat DDR*' was conveyed to children. First, there was the 'small *Heimat*': for example parental love, the classroom and 'pioneer objects' [things for which the pioneers were responsible, e.g. a flowerbed or the school's aquarium]. Secondly, there was the 'big *Heimat*': the GDR with its natural resources, its working people who were striving to fulfil economic plans, its soldiers, antifascists, Soviet soldiers and the SED. And finally, there was the 'metaphysical *Heimat*': socialism, the Soviet Union and all socialist countries, love of peace, communism, the certainty of socialism's worldwide victory, solidarity and conquering

⁴³ Matthias W. questionnaire.

⁴⁴ Annemarie W.* questionnaire.

⁴⁵ Cf. Pritchard, *Reconstructing education*, 62.

outer space.⁴⁶ Although socialist ideology naturally pervaded the subject of local studies, the term indoctrination seems rather too strong to describe it.

From year 5 onwards, the subject of history took over the task of explaining the origins of the 'big' and the 'metaphysical' homeland. In contrast to Western European historiography which usually divides the subject into prehistory, antiquity, the Middle Ages, modern history and contemporary history; Marxist historians' arrangement of history was into primeval, feudal, bourgeois, socialist and communist periods.⁴⁷ Following the relatively cursory treatment of historical epochs up until the eighteenth century in the lower years, classes then focused on the revolutionary struggle: the French Revolution, the rise of the international working class and the October Revolution before moving on to its central theme – the origins of the GDR in the context of German national history and worldhistorical developments. 'Good' history lessons were, according to Margot Honecker, aimed at 'familiarising pupils with the tenets of history' and at 'bringing to life the hard and costly struggle of the working class for the liberation of humankind from exploitation and suppression and for the victory of socialism'.⁴⁸ Their task was to 'introduce young people to history in such a way that they recognise the laws and driving forces [*Triebkraft*] in history, that they learn what human society is based on'.⁴⁹ Pupils learned that events conformed to a 'natural law of history' and were required to make connections between past occurrences and the present stage of historical development, socialism. Failing to make these links could result in failing exams, as a report on *Abitur* examinations in the Thuringian town of Apolda from 1962 illustrates. A pupil failed in his answer to a question on the Peasant War 'to incorporate the present-day fulfilment of the peasants' century-old demands by the Land Reform and the cooperative association'.⁵⁰ It was often lamented that pupils were putting forward correct assertions which, however, they were not sufficiently proving in their comments, as in the case of one pupil who had said 'West Berlin was a source of danger'. The writer of the report noted: 'So this pupil is of the opinion that the West Berlin problem has already been solved by the measures

⁴⁶ D. Krössin, 'Sozialistisch bilden und erziehen. Heimatkunde und Vaterland' in Dokumentationszentrum, *Fortschritt*, 240.

⁴⁷ Pritchard, *Reconstructing education*, 62.

⁴⁸ M. Honecker, 'Wir lehren und leben im Geiste Lenins. Referat auf dem VII. Pädagogischen Kongreß der DDR in Berlin' (5.5.-7.5.1970) in Honecker, *Bildungspolitik*, 290.

⁴⁹ M. Honecker, *Unser sozialistisches Bildungssystem Wandlungen, Erfolge, neue Horizonte. IX. Pädagogischer Kongreß der DDR 13. bis 15. Juni 1989* (Berlin, 1989), 51.

⁵⁰ 'Bericht über die mündliche Reifeprüfung an der Geschwister-Scholl-Oberschule Apolda' (7.6.1962), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, V 135.

taken on 13 August.’⁵¹ By the late 1970s, criticism began to be heard from within the discipline’s own ranks of the ‘ideological excess’ [*ideologische Überfrachtung*] in school history. This was the phrase used by Alfried Kraus, professor of history at Greifswald University, in a *Forum* article in 1979, where he voiced his concerns about pupils’ historical knowledge showing ‘significant gaps’. In the more senior years, he said, interest in history noticeably decreased, due to ‘the high grade of agitation in the curriculum content which contained much theory, questions on strategy and tactics of the Party of the working class and its conferences and programmes’.⁵²

The main insight that pupils retained from their history lessons was that it was always ‘the working people’ who advanced history and societal progress happened only in class struggle and revolutions. Thus their view of history, seen through the SED’s looking-glass, was rather restricted. Whilst criticism of this narrow way of teaching history is wholly justified, it should be remembered that this was, and is, not peculiar to schools in socialist states. Nigel Grant pointed this out already in 1969, arguing that the treatment of history ‘need not involve distortion and falsification, merely an appropriate selection and emphasis; and in the West as well as the East school curricula are used to encourage patriotism and present the accepted ideologies of Christianity, the American way of life etcetera’.⁵³ Most of my interviewees remembered early history as being the most interesting and this agrees with an analysis of the success of history teaching in Kreis Eisenach from the early 1960s: that history teaching was most successful and most liked by pupils in the lower classes when far removed from revolutionary class struggle, when the adventures of primeval man or Mesopotamia were on the agenda: ‘Alongside the opinion of many teachers that here the subject matter is most interesting, we ascribe this to the fact that in those time periods there occur the least contradictions to the present.’⁵⁴ It was further lamented that history remained a ‘learn-and-swot subject’ [*Lern- und Fleißfach*] with pupils possessing factual knowledge, but unable to make ‘the logical connections and conclusions, especially from year 8 upwards’. ‘The teacher’, it was reasoned, ‘should not just lecture, instead he or she must convince’.⁵⁵ In 1979, the writer Günter Görlich expressed in an interview with the East Berlin weekly *Freie Welt* his misgivings about history lessons. He criticised the ‘widely harmonising view on history’ as far as the GDR was concerned, even though in reality, the struggle

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.* [emphasis in the original].

⁵² Quoted in *FAZ*, ‘Lückenhafte Geschichtskennntnisse der Schüler in der DDR’ (12.2.1979), BStU MfS ZAIG 8820/1.

⁵³ Grant, *Society*, 80.

⁵⁴ ‘Schuljahresanalyse 1960/61 Kreis Eisenach’, ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, V41/1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

and consequent reaction had taken things to the brink, as was the case with the collectivisation of agriculture. In class, the difficulties would be played down and thus the achievements of the GDR, by overcoming them, belittled. He also noted that with regard to the Second World War, the story was told 'as if the GDR and the Soviet Union had together fought against the fascists'.⁵⁶

The most 'ideology intensive subject' of the three however was civic education [*Staatsbürgerkunde*].⁵⁷ 'Citizenship studies' featured throughout curricula in Eastern European countries in varying degrees of intensity; in the ČSSR for example, it was introduced in year 6, in Bulgaria, Albania or Poland only in year 10. In the GDR, it started in year 7 in 1956. Prior to that it was called *Gegenwartskunde* [current affairs] and first became part of the curriculum in 1950. Here, pupils did not get a 'pre-civics' period, but were plunged straight into Marxist-Leninist theory. Opinions differ over whether this was one of the GDR's 'most hated' subjects,⁵⁸ or, a common view amongst pupils, the easiest subject of all, because the answers were clear even before the questions had been asked. Margot Honecker rated it 'an irreplaceable, indispensable subject in its importance for socialist education, for the conveying of our ideology'.⁵⁹ The task and aim of *Stabi*, as it was commonly known, was to impart an elementary understanding of Marxism-Leninism and the politics of the SED and to develop in pupils a steadfast class standpoint and class-based insights into fundamental societal, political and ideological realms. The desired position was of course the socialist worldview which should lead them to support the Party and, in a wider sense, the ideals of socialism so that Party leaders could rely on each young generation to carry the torch.

So much for theory. In practice, the effectiveness of civics was a different matter. Until 1961, classes were often quite lively, centring around the 'national question' and projects for the bright future, as in this example from a school in Bezirk Gera, where a lesson in March 1961 concluded that 'The means by which a unified Germany will be created is that one day, the inferior system will have to affiliate and subordinate itself to the better system'.⁶⁰ With the Berlin Wall, stagnation entered the classrooms and an ever-the-same curriculum revolving around the GDR's historic roots

⁵⁶ Quoted in *Tagesspiegel*, 'Hoher SED-Funktionär übt Kritik am Geschichtsunterricht' (29.8.1979), BStU MfS ZAIG 8820/1.

⁵⁷ This was the terminology teachers themselves used for describing these subjects, as in this example from 1975: 'Uwe showed himself very interested and actively participated in *Staatsbürgerkunde* and the other particularly ideology intense subjects [*besonders ideologieintensive Fächer*].' See 'Zentrale Relegierungskommission: Relegierungen von EOS-Schülern, Uwe W., Klasse 12, EOS Wismar' (October 1975), BArch DR2/A5568.

⁵⁸ Pritchard, *Reconstructing education*, 61.

⁵⁹ Cf. Honecker, *Unser sozialistisches Bildungssystem*, 49f.

⁶⁰ 'Unterrichtsgespräch in Klasse 10 in Gorndorf' (28.3.1961), BArch DR2/6772.

in the workers' movement and the socialist countries' cutting edge in comparison to that of the capitalist countries demanded unchanging answers.⁶¹

In a perverse way, the change is noticeable if one compares reports on the effectiveness of civics from the early 1960s with those of the late 1970s. The early reports are full of complaints about civic education bouncing off pupils, their disruptive behaviour and general ineffectiveness of the subject.⁶² Those from twenty years later, however, speak of a perfected system whereby both teachers and pupils had learned how to play the game in order to get the approval they needed: teachers showed a 'grown political maturity and authority', and pupils had a 'deeper understanding of the politics of the Party and its scientific character' and a 'penetration into the nature of the revolutionary world process and the understanding for the forces of the classes acting within it'.⁶³ Just how superficial these assessments were is shown if we look at some of those pupils who had supposedly understood the workings of the world. Regine H., speaking for the late 1960s, evaluated her civics classes in a way that summarises most of my interviewees' experiences:

From Marxism-Leninism, only very simple truths stuck: that those up there [*die da oben*], the capitalists, are always fine and that the small man always remains exploited. I don't know any pupil who has ever read any works by Marx or Lenin. For answering questions we were always given the relevant chapters whose contents we reproduced. The theories remained abstract. It was conveyed in a doctrinaire manner, i.e. never questioned as to its truth. Pupils didn't learn to deal critically with a societal hypothesis, so in the end there remained nothing except that, well, there exist some huge books by Marx and Lenin.⁶⁴

Of my thirty-seven interviewees who answered the question on how much Marxism-Leninism 'stuck with them' from their civics lessons, four said 'a lot', twenty-one 'a little bit', and twelve 'nothing'. The 'bits' that were still remembered made for a colourful potpourri. Jan S.* wrote 'I remember some passages on political economics, dialectics and revolutionary theory';⁶⁵ with Viola S. the notion 'that the Marxist world order is the most human and the more desirable one' stuck;⁶⁶ Heidi B., born in 1949 and an industrial manager from Eisenach, quoted '*Das Kapital*';⁶⁷ Harald M., born in 1940

⁶¹ 'Problembesprechung zur Weiterentwicklung des Staatsbürgerkundeunterrichts' (15.12.1972), BArch DR2/8099; 'Maßnahmeplan des MfV zur weiteren inhaltlichen Entwicklung des Volksbildungswesens im Zeitraum 1976-1980' (8.4.1976), esp. section 1.1., BArch DR2/A.4311/1.

⁶² 'Überprüfung des Geschichts- und Staatsbürgerkundeunterrichts im Bezirk Erfurt' (February 1960-April 1961), BArch DR2/6800; 'Einschätzung des Standes der Arbeit mit dem Jugendkommuniké' (12.11.1963), BArch DR2/7790.

⁶³ 'Information über einige wesentliche Entwicklungstendenzen des Staatsbürgerkundeunterrichts' (28.12.1978), BArch DR2/A 8148.

⁶⁴ Regine H.* questionnaire.

⁶⁵ Jan S.* questionnaire.

⁶⁶ Viola S. questionnaire.

⁶⁷ Heidi B. questionnaire (12.3.2004).

and a vicar from Dresden, said ‘some big general ideas and a few quotations that we found amusing’;⁶⁸ Doris P., born in 1955 and an administrator from a small village near Erfurt, remembered Lenin’s saying ‘learn, learn and learn once again’;⁶⁹ and Heidrun K., a Thuringian pastor born in 1941, had remembered ‘the big lines of the so-called development towards real-existing socialism and later communism, but none of the many over-used phrases’.⁷⁰ It is interesting that those who remembered the most had held a rather sceptical view of the GDR and so challenged the contents of the textbooks rather than to let them simply wash over them. The small sample of my interviewees suggests that the quality of teaching and the receptiveness of pupils varied considerably, and a good understanding of the subject matter was found only in more mature students and those predisposed to philosophical questions. Because of the way in which their questions were dealt with however, the regime spoilt its chances of retaining these bright pupils. Renate W., born in 1964 and a vicar’s daughter, said that ‘because of the elevation of the subject and the constant cants, my interest was taken away’.⁷¹ Interested questions were often dismissed as ‘provocative’. Gudrun, an 18-year old EOS pupil in the mid-1970s, described to Maxie Wander her angst which arose from not being able to find answers and not being listened to in such a compelling way that it merits being quoted at length:

If I could change my character I would wish never to come across as false. [...] We were given socialism without any conflicts. Fighting for it, what for? Others have done that already for us. This really poses a problem for me, that you see a great character as a paragon and that you can’t develop your own character. [...] ‘You as the future cadres’ – we hear that every day at school. We are already quite lightheaded from all that praise. But when a teacher says: ‘Are there any questions?’ then of course there aren’t any. [...] In civics one often has the impression that the teacher herself doesn’t understand it correctly. When we want to have a discussion about truth, it is said from the outset: this won’t be asked in the *Abitur*, no need to burden yourselves with that. [...] I feel silly when I ask questions. And often they are answered in such a way that you don’t feel like asking another.⁷²

In a booklet dating from the early 1970s, designed to inform sceptical English speakers on educational progress in the GDR, the authors described their visit to a model civics lesson where the teacher had achieved ‘the general objective pursued by civics instruction: stimulate thinking, recognise and understand social relationships and problems, not to store sterile theory and abstract formulas’.⁷³ By and large however,

⁶⁸ Harald M. questionnaire (17.3.2004).

⁶⁹ Doris P. questionnaire (21.3.2004).

⁷⁰ Heidrun K. questionnaire (7.5.2004).

⁷¹ Renate W. questionnaire (19.3.2004).

⁷² ‘Gudrun: Die noch kämpfen konnten’ in: M. Wander, *Guten Morgen, du Schöne* (Berlin, 1980), 110-14.

⁷³ (Author unknown), *Education for today and tomorrow* (Dresden, 1973).

sterile theory and abstract formulas were exactly what most pupils retained from their civics lessons. Evidence of pupils' boredom with the phrasemongering are found in abundance in files, contemporary literature and interviewees' answers. Dietrich E., speaking for the early 1970s, said that 'the *'Klassiker'* increasingly took a back seat in favour of the reciting [*herunterbeten*] of any Party congress decrees on the improvement of living conditions, peace, anti-imperialist solidarity and so forth.'⁷⁴ Several of my interviewees described what they got in civics as formulas [*Merksätze*], catchphrases [*Schlagworte*] and pater [*Sprüche*]. Jürgen P., born in 1942 and an engineer from Berlin, said: 'Mostly, nothing of it stuck since it didn't interest anybody. Whilst at school though, pupils needed, as in any subject, to have some facts and stock answers ready.'⁷⁵ The West German education theoretician Dietmar Waterkamp had observed this behaviour in the mid-1970s: 'The political leadership only allows its own language as a medium of political statements, thus achieving an effect of monotony and intellectual stagnation. Pupils are required to learn ideology also as a kind of language system, which manifests itself in history and civics in the form of learning, correctly applying and conferring terminology.'⁷⁶ The aquirement of this particular skill amongst young people, namely knowing when to use a particular 'second' language, is examined in chapter 5.

The role of civics teachers

The teacher's role was of course vital in conveying the ideological message. In the first ten years or so after the introduction of the subject in 1957, the MfV had great difficulty finding the right personnel. There were not many teachers like Herr B. from Deetz in Kreis Brandenburg, who in 1955 wrote to the MfV, offering to write a '*Handbuch für Staatsbürgerlehre*', i.e. a handbook on how to live [*Lebenskunde*] for all citizens, 'in a plain language that people can understand, so that it is not above the comprehension of the simple man, as is often the case these days'.⁷⁷ More often than not, the subject evoked little interest amongst teachers. The MfV noted in the mid-1960s that there were 'tendencies that teachers no longer wish to give civics lessons',⁷⁸ and often could only

⁷⁴ Dietrich E. questionnaire.

⁷⁵ Jürgen P. questionnaire (21.6.2004).

⁷⁶ Waterkamp, *Lehrplanreform*, 230.

⁷⁷ Cf. 'Vorschlag eines Lehrers zur Einführung des Faches Staatsbürgerkunde' (November 1955), BArch DR2/2525. In order to devote himself to this '*große patriotische Aufgabe*' [great patriotic task], he asked for leave of absence from teaching, relocation to Berlin or Leipzig (because of the libraries), a few members of staff and a salary. B. further demanded pupils' obligatory participation in the *Jugendweihe* and fines for parents if their children behaved unruly in class. It is unclear from the files whether or not he received a response from the MfV.

⁷⁸ 'Dienstbesprechung beim Minister' (18.10.1966), BArch DR2/7895.

fill the recruitment vacancies by granting posts to students wishing to become teachers for desirable subjects such as German or English if they agreed to combine it with civics. A major reason for this shortage was that the teaching degree for civics teachers included the rather dry and hard-to-digest 'principal laws of Marxism-Leninism, its philosophical, economic and constitutional tenets, strategy and tactics of the international workers' movement as well as the contribution of the German working class and its party in the fight for socialism'.⁷⁹ Often, young or retrained teachers found it difficult to apply their theoretical knowledge and 'steer' classroom debate:

It has been characteristic of the EOS Fürstenwalde that civics teachers go to teach their lessons badly prepared and so leave the field open to negative forces in the classes. One pupil for instance offered the opinion that there should be a party allowed in the GDR that is not directly pro-capitalism, but neither only pro-socialism. Here, clearly social-democrat type 'Third Way' notions were being expressed.⁸⁰

It is not surprising then that pupils stopped engaging with the subject and preferred to keep their own counsel if such harmless remarks as the above were condemned out of hand. As late as 1966, 90% of teachers conducting classes in this subject had not received proper training in the teaching of civics which meant that they presented pupils with 'superficial accounts and incorrect contexts'.⁸¹ Pupils themselves were aware that this problem existed. Speaking of the late 1960s, Brigitte F., the primary schoolteacher from Eisenach, said of her civic lessons: 'I found it very boring. The teacher himself couldn't deal with the subject matter very well, he was mostly reading newspaper articles to us!'⁸²

The subject matter and missionary demands made by the SED made civics a rather difficult and unrewarding subject to teach.⁸³ Civics teachers, who along with history teachers were known as 'chief ideologists' amongst pupils and colleagues,⁸⁴ were required to set an example of impeccable moral behaviour around the clock; they could not let their hair down when they went home. This demand for model behaviour extended to teacher's partners and children. In a report from 1961, Werner Neugebauer, head of the education department in the SED Central Committee, demanded an end to '*Hamsterkäufe*': 'It cannot be that teachers' wives are seen stockpiling. That is not

⁷⁹ Cf. 'Berufsbild des Fachlehrers für Staatsbürgerkunde' (ca. 1962), BArch DR2/7225.

⁸⁰ 'Bericht über die Ergebnisse der Arbeit an den EOS' (16.4.1962), BArch DR2/7525.

⁸¹ 'Dienstbesprechung beim Minister' (18.10.1966), BArch DR2/7895.

⁸² Brigitte F. questionnaire.

⁸³ For an example for the ongoing deficit of students wishing to become civics teachers, see 'Kollegiumssitzung, TOP 3: Information zum Stand der Verwirklichung der internen Weisung des Ministers für Volksbildung vom 20.12.1978 zur gezielten Auswahl, Gewinnung und Vorbereitung von Oberschülern für ein Studium zur Ausbildung als Diplomlehrer' (3.7.1979), BArch DR2/A 6696.

⁸⁴ Cf. 'Information über Fragen und Argumente der Lehrer' (7.12.1962), BArch DR2/7752.

setting a good example.’⁸⁵ Even less of an example was the blatant rejection of the state by some teachers who opted to leave the GDR for West Germany, although this problem was stemmed by the construction of the Wall (see the next section). The unease with civics persisted through to the 1980s. More often than not, lackadaisical teachers instilled apathy – created a calm rather than blowing up a storm.⁸⁶ Henning S., speaking for the early 1980s, explained why civics lessons left little impression with him: ‘This had to do with the fact that we were not really dealing with Marxist-Leninist philosophy, but with a very strange concoction of truths designed for school lessons, the sense of which the teachers did not and could not grasp themselves’.⁸⁷

Evidently, there were also teachers, albeit in the minority, who were not only convinced of what they were teaching in civics, but who were also able to bring their enthusiasm across. There were people like the civics teacher in a novel by Werner Heiduczek: ‘Mr Stengel came to us only in year 12. Civics had been mind-numbing [*todlangweilig*] until then. We were learning by rote what was demanded. To each question there was one specific answer. Before him I had had three civics teachers. I only noticed this by their names.’⁸⁸ Annemarie W.*, who was a critical GDR citizen, said that she had a civics teacher at the EOS ‘who was very intelligent, with whom surprisingly frank discussions were possible, and who never resorted to crude attempts at persuasion’ [*der niemals einfach plumpe Überzeugungsarbeit leistete*].⁸⁹ Heidrun K., who as a pastor’s daughter was no tabula rasa, remembered ‘the big impact that a history and civics teacher made who convincingly expounded the creation of socialist society’.⁹⁰ These teachers managed to arouse pupils’ interest pupils in the subject simply by doing what – theoretically – they were supposed to be doing: stimulate thinking by opening the floor to discussion.

Archival material from the Salzmannschule gives the impression that political discussion amongst the teachers was generally open and critical throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The party line tended to be provided by various headteachers who, in turn, took their cue from higher authority in central party meetings or teachers’ parliaments. Files from the school’s Party organisation [*Schulparteiorganisation*, SPO], effectively the SED members of staff, show that it mostly concerned itself with attempting to

⁸⁵ Cf. ‘Protokoll über die Beratung der Bezirksschulräte’ (18.8.1961), BArch DR2/7702.

⁸⁶ The term ‘*ideologische Windstille*’ captures the prevailing mood rather nicely. Mentioned in ‘Protokoll über die Beratung der Bezirksschulräte’ (18.8.1961), BArch DR2/7702.

⁸⁷ Henning S. questionnaire.

⁸⁸ W. Heiduczek, *Marc Aurel oder ein Semester Zärtlichkeit* (Berlin, 1971), 93.

⁸⁹ Annemarie W.* questionnaire.

⁹⁰ Heidrun K. questionnaire.

influence ‘positively’ non-party colleagues and keeping a watchful eye on the proper conduct of its members, in both public and private life, and of the next generation coming up through the ranks of the school’s FDJ leadership. The SPO reports were in comparison to those of the Pedagogical Council written in a rather stilted way. The impression given on paper however may be deceptive. Walter S. was a member of the SPO. He pointed out that the atmosphere within the organisation, and amongst teaching staff in general, very much depended on the individual who held the post of the school’s party secretary. From the late 1970s onwards, the Salzmannschule had a party secretary and civics teacher who, in the words of Alfons G., was ‘a fine person’.⁹¹ Walter S. remembered that ‘Thanks to this humanely great party secretary, who was in fact supposed to stand sentinel over us and keep us in line, the SPO meetings became more and more frank, unconstrained and open.’⁹² The centrally organised political *Weiterbildungsveranstaltungen* [further study classes] were a different matter: ‘I remember tremendously boring and almost unbearable events which one avoided where possible.’ Asked whether he ever felt the urge to start a profound and open political discussion at these affairs, he said ‘Since we knew exactly that this would be like pissing in the wind and wouldn’t bring about anything apart from the reaction “Cut it out, for God’s sake, have a look at the watch, do you want to prolong this?”, we simply let it wash over us, we can’t change anything anyway.’⁹³

This shows again that generalisations about the teacher’s role and stance as a transmission belt for the SED are misleading. Teachers were not only functionaries who functioned, but also normal people who had their own opinion and fair share of disagreement and discontentment with life in the GDR. As one teacher, Comrade W. from Bad Elster, put it bluntly in October 1961: ‘What do I care for Cuba if I can’t even visit my brother in the West!’⁹⁴ After the *Wende*, a former civics teacher described the dilemma her profession had faced beautifully, namely how she had tried to look for ways, together with the pupils, to make socialism better – ‘a noble task’ which she said she never gave up, but one ‘which largely flew in the face of the societal reality’:

Mainly I had to work through the given topics of the curriculum. Over the years I managed to create room for discussion and to decide for myself which topics I could pare down. The biggest problem was the disparity between the textbook contents and GDR everyday life. People were also confronted daily with the discrepancy between newspaper reports and the reality in their personal surroundings. It was the same for me.

⁹¹ Alfons G. interview.

⁹² Walter S. interview.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ ‘Konzentrationen von Erscheinungen nach Berichten der Bezirksschulräte’ (October 1961), BArch DR2/6355. NB: Comrade W. was subsequently to this remark made to leave his teaching job.

I too was annoyed by the congratulations on the fulfilment of plans, the potholes in the roads, the inadequate supply of fruit and vegetables, and the thousand small things that make up life. Nobody wanted to or could answer my questions on the thousands of inconsistencies which surrounded me in society.⁹⁵

'Wrongly assessing one's own position': the issue of *Republikflucht*

More serious than stockpiling tinned vegetables were the instances where teachers openly showed their dissatisfaction with the regime by leaving the GDR for West Germany.⁹⁶ This was undoubtedly the ultimate betrayal of the profession:

Theory and practice sometimes contradict, especially in political and economic questions. Here it is not always the existing economic situation that will convince, but above all the actions and political commitment of the teacher. Success in civics will happen when the teacher seems credible. The ambiguity of some teachers is to be blamed for some failures. Every teacher who has fled the Republic erodes the knowledge and trust built up over the years.⁹⁷

Statistics on how many teachers fled to the West were taken from 1953,⁹⁸ but surviving evidence in the files is patchy and rare.⁹⁹ Joachim Hohmann gave an estimate of 20,000 teachers and educators who fled the SBZ/GDR from 1945 until 1961.¹⁰⁰ A rough overview of the state of affairs in the 1950s is given below:

Table 1: Numbers of teachers and pioneer leaders [*Pionierleiter*] leaving the GDR for the FRG¹⁰¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>1953</i>	<i>1954</i>	<i>1955</i>	<i>1956</i>	<i>1957</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
RF	1474	1290	1759	1521	1490	7534
% of total teachers in GDR	1.89	1.63	2.33	1.85	1.76	9.43*

* of average work force over five years: 79,900

⁹⁵ G. Weber, *Von Normal bis Verrückt. Rückschau einer DDR-Lehrerin mit einem weinenden und einem lachenden Auge* (Schkeuditz, 1997), 118.

⁹⁶ On emigration from the GDR to the FRG in general, see P. Major, 'Going west: the open border and the problem of Republikflucht' in Major, *The Workers' and Peasants' State*, 190-208; C. Ross, "'...sonst sehe ich mich veranlaßt, auch nach dem Westen zu ziehen' in: *Deutschland Archiv*, 34/2001, 613-27.

⁹⁷ 'Schuljahresanalyse 1960/61 Kreis Eisenach', ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, V41/1. On the 'contradiction between the problems taught in civics and the practical attitude of some teachers', see also 'Einzelinformation über den Selbstmord eines Oberschülers aus Zwickau am 21.4.1965' (30.4.1965), BStU MfS ZAIG 1049.

⁹⁸ According to an information found in 'Kaderabteilung: Analyse der Republikflucht von Lehrern und Pionierleitern' (2.4.1958), BArch DR2/6960.

⁹⁹ H. Heidemeyer, *Flucht und Zuwanderung aus der SBZ/DDR 1945/49-1961: die Flüchtlingspolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis zum Bau der Berliner Mauer* (Düsseldorf, 1994). Quoted in D. Zilch, "'Republikflucht' von Jugendlichen als Widerstand? Ursachen und Motive' in Hermann, *Protestierende Jugend*, 243f.

¹⁰⁰ J. S. Hohmann (ed), *Lehrerflucht aus SBZ und DDR 1945-1961: Dokumente zur Geschichte und Soziologie sozialistischer Bildung und Erziehung* (Frankfurt/Main, 2000). Quoted in G. Helwig's review in *Deutschland Archiv* (3/2001), 509.

¹⁰¹ Figures for 1953 to 1957 found in: 'Kaderabteilung: Analyse der Republikflucht von Lehrern und Pionierleitern' (2.4.1958), BArch DR2/6960. The only other statistic I found on RF dates from 1960, giving figures of RF amongst teachers for March (69), April (153), and May (120) of that year. Cf. 'Letzter Stand der Republikflucht' (Summer 1960), BArch DR2/5848.

Up until the mid-1950s, the flight of people to West Germany was generally not seen as a great problem; for the SED leadership, those who turned their backs to the GDR were just ‘disagreeable elements who disturbed the construction of socialism’.¹⁰² Only in 1955 did a change take place in the Party’s thinking.¹⁰³ What was the reason that teachers, not just civics teachers, left the GDR in droves in the late 1950s and early 1960s? Walter S., who taught geography, history and Latin at the Salzmannschule from 1953 until 1991, said that many teachers went to the West simply because the earnings were much higher than in the East. ‘At the time of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the [perceived, AB] demand in the West was not for teachers but engineers. Hence there were far fewer teaching students around and, in order to have any prospective teachers at all, one needed to pay very high salaries.’¹⁰⁴ He remembered that many teachers were seduced by the subtle labour piracy that was at work through West German television which would show the material advantages on offer whilst omitting any negative sides to life in the FRG, as well as by the fact that family and friends wrote in their letters ‘Why are you waiting any longer – come here, we have no problem accommodating you.’¹⁰⁵ His memories are corroborated by an official statement from Werner Neugebauer to Günter Mittag in 1959, then a member of the Economic Commission of the Politburo:

Part of the psychological warfare of the ruling forces of the *Bonner Nato Staat* is the organisation of people fleeing our republic by the imperialists. For the last few months, their activities have concentrated on poaching members of the intelligentsia. The number of teachers leaving up to December last year has risen considerably. The aim is obvious: to disturb the construction of the socialist school and to cover their own deficit of teachers – at the moment, 7000 teaching posts are vacant.¹⁰⁶

Reading through the numerous files simply headed ‘RF’ [*Republikflucht*]¹⁰⁷ however gave the impression that it was not exclusively, or even primarily material considerations which made teachers leave, but instead the conflict between the state’s civic expectations and the teachers’ own moral convictions. The prohibition, dating from the mid-1950s, on teachers contacting family members in the West was also a significant factor in making the decision to leave the GDR,¹⁰⁸ as was the difficult situation for Christian teachers in the socialist school (ca. 80% of all teachers who left

¹⁰² Cf. Zilch in Herrmann, *Protestierende Jugend*, 244.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Walter S. interview.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ ‘Plan zur Verbesserung der ideologischen Arbeit mit Lehrern und zur weiteren Verbesserung ihrer Arbeits- und Lebensbedingungen’ (7.1.1959), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/9.05/142.

¹⁰⁷ *Republikflucht*, also *Republikflüchtige* [literally: those fleeing the Republic].

¹⁰⁸ Cf. ‘Dienstbesprechung beim Minister: Bericht über die Erläuterung des Politbürobeschlusses vom 22.11.1960’ (15.12.1960), BArch DR2/1707.

for the West before 1961 belonged to a religious community).¹⁰⁹ In 1960, a teacher at the Salzmannschule left a letter which explained that he had gone ‘because he could not teach his pupils about something which he himself did not believe’, nor could ‘a fanciful view of the future paper over the cracks’.¹¹⁰ In discussions, his colleagues wondered whether they had been at fault in not preventing this, or if it was only ‘the incessant moaning and whingeing’ of his wife that was to blame: ‘We aren’t a collective, otherwise this wouldn’t have happened.’ ‘He wasn’t an active enemy of the GDR, we would have noticed that.’ ‘What do we do when something gets uncomfortable - we withdraw and say nothing!’ The conclusion for the teaching body was to create a ‘forum of trust’ amongst the Pedagogical Council and to ‘work together without infringing upon individuality’.¹¹¹

The reports unwittingly highlight the fact that many of those who left were not at all enemies of the state, but honest citizens committed to their pedagogical ideals who deeply regretted leaving their pupils behind. In a letter dating from 1955, two teachers who were sisters from Finow, Kreis Eberswalde apologise to their headmaster for ‘causing trouble’ to him. They left in order to be with their ailing brother in the West and asked for their building society savings of 1000 DM to be used for school trips and that somebody might use the 100 DM left on their current account to pay ‘the 10 DM for the SED in October as well as the electricity and gas bill’.¹¹² A teacher from Bezirk Frankfurt/Oder who left the GDR in 1958 is another example of German thoroughness: ‘I’m no longer participating in this circus. I’ve written the final marks in the class register with pencil. My Party document is in the desk.’¹¹³ In 1958, a former Party secretary from Angermünde went to the West and left a letter that is a model for other similar examples:

Dear colleagues, you will be surprised that family G. is no longer playing along, that two from the ‘host of socialist scouts’ have deserted. Six months ago [...] I was there where they wanted me. Sometimes I got upset, but soon fell again into the lethargy of an oft-whipped ox. [...] Then came the notice that I wasn’t allowed to visit my mother anymore. [...] Then came the Party Plenum and with it my decision to leave the GDR. The Plenum showed that only one man knows everything and always takes the right decisions in all areas. Personality cult, I can smell a rat! [...] Progress doesn’t follow its own way, but the path the Party wants. If it goes astray then things carry on regardless, sometimes at great cost to the general public. A consequence of this dogmatic course is the chronic underproduction of all things in our economy, except for alcohol. [...] The dictatorship of a majority over a small minority is nothing but dusty theory. A small tier

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Helwig’s review of Hohmann in *Deutschland Archiv*, 509.

¹¹⁰ ‘Sitzung Pädagogischer Rat’ (16.8.1960), SArch/PPR.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² ‘Berichte zur Republikflucht von Lehrern 1955’ (ca. 1956), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/9.05/142, 280.

¹¹³ ‘SED-Bezirksleitung Frankfurt/Oder: Briefe republikflüchtiger Lehrer’ (11.12.1958), SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV2/9.05/142.

of professional revolutionaries exerts dictatorship over the masses. There is not much space for personal decency. The state gives the teacher the opportunity to earn his living, but under the condition that he bows down.¹¹⁴

The large-scale problem of RF amongst teachers ended with the building of the Wall and reports by the MfS and MfV on the subject subsequently peter out. It is interesting to compare the issue of RF of teachers with that of pupils and young people whose disappearance gave the SED even greater cause to worry (see table 2):

Table 2: Migration movements of 15-25 year olds to the FRG and West Berlin and those who returned to the GDR¹¹⁵

Year	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961
RF Jan-Dec	133,000	60,727	42,647		
RF Jan-Sep			31,635	43,658	
RF August					15,400
Returnees Jan-Sep				10,546	
Immigrants Jan-Sep				3766	

Again, the statistics are fragmentary for the period leading up to the building of the Wall and thereafter we only find reports on individual cases at regional level. The southern Bezirke and Kreise with long stretches bordering the West were particularly affected by young people attempting to seek a new life in the FRG. With most reports using the term 'young people' [*Jugendliche*] for 15 to 25-year olds concerned, it is very difficult to determine how many of them were still at school. It is estimated that the majority were over 18, slightly more boys than girls and that every sixth was a member of the FDJ.¹¹⁶

The reasons why pupils wanted to leave the GDR were manifold and often interrelated. Main motives were: problems at school and bad marks, disagreement with SED politics, lack of religious and personal freedom, no prospect of being able to pursue higher education or a desired career, problems at home, partners living in the West, adventurousness spurred on by Western youth culture, pending prosecutions and economic discontent. Economic motives were overall the biggest influence for young people.¹¹⁷ 'Negative role models' were not only RF teachers, but former classmates who fled to the West and who would often write 'provocative' letters to their old friends in

¹¹⁴ 'SED-Kreisleitung Angermünde, Abschrift' (21.3.1958), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/9.05/142, 274.

¹¹⁵ Cf. 'Übersicht über Bevölkerungsbewegungen von Jugendlichen zwischen 15 und 25 Jahren nach Westdeutschland bzw. Westberlin und von dort in die DDR' (9.1.1961), BArch DR2/3071, folder II. The figures for 1957 and 1961 are taken from Zilch in Herrmann, *Protestierende Jugend*, 246.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Zilch in Herrmann, *Protestierende Jugend*, 246.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 254.

which they told them about the limitless opportunities that awaited them on the other side of the fence.¹¹⁸

Quite a large number of pupils were unsuccessful in their attempts to cross the border and faced with being questioned by the police and the MfS as well as sanctions of varying harshness, ranging from a prison sentence to relegation. A common practice was that those EOS pupils who attempted RF *unsuccessfully* were immediately relegated from school, whereas those who *successfully* fled to the West but then decided for various reasons to return to the GDR were allowed to continue their education at the EOS,¹¹⁹ to thank them for making the correct decision eventually. The case of one teenage girl from East Berlin whose parents ‘kidnapped’ her in order to get her to West Berlin in June 1961 and who returned to the GDR alone a few months later aroused so much interest and gratitude amongst high-ranking SED functionaries that it was proposed that a film should be made about her story.¹²⁰

Contrary to what one might expect, the SED did not go to great lengths to shift the blame for the large numbers leaving the country on to the class enemy. There were of course plenty of reports mentioning the ‘influence of the class enemy’ on young people and also ‘the wrong assessment of their own position towards the GDR’.¹²¹ Many reports written by local SED functionaries however show that they had understood only too well the root causes for young people’s flight to the West. Reports from the early 1960s openly criticised grievances at home: ‘All district councillors assess the insufficient work of the FDJ as an important factor that adds to the incidence of RF. Young people who have returned and those who have failed to flee to the West have declared that in their hometowns nothing is happening, that nobody cared for them, and that they did not know about the dangerousness of imperialism.’¹²² Those dating from the late 1970s were often more stilted and less understanding. In the case of a 17-year old girl who wanted to join her boyfriend in the West, the school’s Pedagogical Council and Parents’ Association stated:

With her attempt to cross the state border of the GDR illegally, she has betrayed our fatherland, the GDR. [...] This act is entirely incomprehensible for us, since she had, like all pupils, the possibility to prepare under optimum conditions for the *Abitur* and

¹¹⁸ See for example ‘Feindarbeit an den EOS’ (14.2.1962), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/9.05/27.

¹¹⁹ [my emphasis] ‘Beratung der Maßnahmen, die sich aus dem Bericht des Sektors Jugendhilfe über Grenzdurchbrüche ergeben’ (22.6.1962), BArch DR2/7731.

¹²⁰ The fascinating correspondence of Karin N. with her girlfriend Inge and the authorities’ evaluation of her deed (‘In this case, our education has proved to be stronger.’) can be found in SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/9.05/143, 325-354 (1961, no title).

¹²¹ Cf. ‘Ergebnisse des Schuljahres 1966/67’ (20.6.1967), KA L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG Abt. Volksbildung, 180.

¹²² ‘Übersicht über Bevölkerungsbewegungen von Jugendlichen zwischen 15 und 25 Jahren nach Westdeutschland bzw. Westberlin und von dort in die DDR’ (9.1.1961), BArch DR2/3071, folder II.

since our socialist state offers her a secure future. Not only has this pupil not used the possibilities which the school offers for the development of a socialist personality who is willing and able to participate actively in the further construction of the developed socialist society, but she pursued solely selfish goals.¹²³

The issue of *Republikflucht* of young people is a relatively underresearched topic, especially with regard to statistics on the 1970s and 1980s and the integration of the 'Rübergemachten' [those who went off to the West] into West German society. It would add a valuable piece to the overall picture of German society today if more was known about the people who resisted attempts to mould them into socialist personalities to such an extent that they were willing to sever all ties and take great personal risks.

The foundation stone of civic education: antifascism

Antifascism was an essential characteristic of a socialist personality. It was the foundation stone on which the GDR was established, distinguishing it from the FRG and also representing a genuine desire to break with the National Socialist past. By reference to the historical legacy of the antifascists, the SED leadership was able to stabilise the GDR and to legitimise their monopoly of power, not least because the biographies of the political leadership showed them to have been active antifascists and victims of Nazi terror.¹²⁴ Antifascism was particularly prevalent in education in the early decades, but never ceased to be a major cornerstone of the curriculum and inculcation in mass organisations.

Children were susceptible to the stories of unfaltering antifascist heroes, led by the airbrushed and very popular Ernst Thälmann whose life and works were presented without any complexities and whom they affectionately called by his nickname 'Teddy'.¹²⁵ Antifascists were presented as intelligent, crafty, upright, partisan, altruistic and fond of children. The powerful narrative of antifascism also hit an emotional chord with teenagers. Acquainting themselves with the sufferings and merits of antifascists by visiting former concentration camps and meeting real-life antifascists deepened their attachment. Brigitte F., born in 1954, said 'During the pioneer's meetings

¹²³ 'Relegierung von Schülern: Marina K., EOS "Juri Gagarin", Hermsdorf' (May 1978), BArch DR2/A7361/5.

¹²⁴ On the legitimating power of antifascism in the GDR see H. Bude, 'Das Ende einer tragischen Gesellschaft' in: H. Joas, *Der Zusammenbruch der DDR: soziologische Analysen* (Frankfurt/Main, 1993), 270-5.

¹²⁵ See I. Thälmann, *Erinnerungen an meinen Vater* (Berlin, 1977); F. Rodrian, *Paul und Janni finden Teddy* (Berlin, 1978); I. Gollus, *Teddy und seine Freunde* (Berlin, 1969). On the Thälmann cult and myth in the GDR, see R. Börrnert, *Wie Ernst Thälmann treu und kühn! Das Thälmann-Bild der SED im Erziehungsalltag der DDR* (Bad Heilbrunn, 2004); R. Börrnert, *Ernst Thälmann als Leitfigur der kommunistischen Erziehung in der DDR* (Brunswick, 2003); A. Nothnagle, *Building the East German myth. Historical mythology and youth propaganda in the GDR 1945-1989* (Ann Arbor, 1999), ch. 3.

[*Pioniernachmittage*] we heard a lot about Ernst Thälmann and how he fought against fascism. I totally adored him and thought he was ever so brave. Old workers [*Arbeiter veteranen*] were also invited and told us about their struggle against fascism.’¹²⁶ This emotional attachment was supported by a wealth of songs, poems and novels for children and young people about antifascists that were part of the school curriculum.¹²⁷ Songs in particular did not fail to impress. Dating mostly from the 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s, they had as subjects the communists’ fight against nascent and reigning Nazism in Germany and fascism in Spain, as well as the Soviet people’s help in the antifascist struggle. They had emotional power that came from combining catchy dramatic tunes with simple, and often rather shocking words telling of bloodshed and historical situations, the meaning of which might have eluded some very young children.¹²⁸ The most famous antifascist song was probably *Der kleine Trompeter*. A young boy of 12 years old was interviewed by Barbara Felsmann about his childhood in the GDR in 1991, and recalled this particular song:

The little trumpeter was a legendary figure, in some ways he was the Batman in GDR stories. Fritz Weineck always played the trumpet and was a convinced communist. And at a secret meeting he was shot dead by the Nazis. By an enemy bullet. The song was for the older people, it was truly moving to tears. My mother told me that she also used to cry when hearing this song.¹²⁹

Stories of the predecessors who paved the way for the communist antifascists in their battle for a better world such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Rosa Luxemburg were also represented in the literary canon, with the (highly embellished) story of Marx’s

¹²⁶ Brigitte F. questionnaire.

¹²⁷ For example B. Apitz, *Nacht unter Wölfen* (Halle, 1958); D. Noll, *Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt* (Berlin, 1960); A. Seghers, ‘Das Duell’ (written in 1965) in: *Die Kraft der Schwachen. 9 Erzählungen* (Berlin, 1994). On antifascism in films, see R. Steinlein, ‘Die antifaschistische Kinderfilmproduktion des DDR-Fernsehens als verfilmte Kinder- und Jugendliteratur’ in: T. Beutelschmidt, R. Steinlein (eds), *Realitätskonstruktion. Faschismus und Antifaschismus in den Literaturverfilmungen des DDR-Fernsehens* (Leipzig, 2004).

¹²⁸ For example the second verse of *Auf, auf, zum Kampf*: ‘*Da steht ein Mann, ein Mann/ so fest wie eine Eiche,/ er hat gewiß, gewiß/ schon manchen Sturm erlebt./ Vielleicht ist er schon morgen eine Leiche,/ wie es so vielen Rotgardisten geht.*’ [There stands a man, a man/ as solid as an oak,/ he has for sure, for sure/ experienced many a storm./ Perhaps tomorrow already he will be a corpse,/ as is the fate of so many Red Guards.] Cf. Zentralrat der FDJ (ed.), *Liederbuch der FDJ* (Berlin, 1979), 18f. Other examples of well-known antifascist songs are *Thälmann-Lied*, *Die Thälmann-Kolonne*, *Ich trage eine Fahne*, *Die Moorsoldaten*. Cf. *ibid.*

¹²⁹ The third and most moving verse went: ‘*Da kam eine feindliche Kugel/ bei einem so fröhlichen Spiel./ Mit einem so mutigen Lächeln/ unser kleiner Trompeter er fiel.*’ [There came an enemy bullet/ into our happy game/ with such a brave smile/ our little trumpeter he fell]. The song was first published in Kommunistischer Jugendverband (ed.), *Arbeiterlieder* (Berlin, 1925). The Nazis rewrote it in the 1930s with Horst Wessel substituting for the little trumpeter. The corresponding third verse was: ‘*Da kam eine feindliche Kugel/ von roter Mordbubenhand./ Horst Wessel, du liebst dein Leben/ für Freiheit und Vaterland.*’ [There came an enemy bullet/ from a red murderer’s hand./ Horst Wessel you left your life/ for freedom and fatherland.] Cf. B. Felsmann, ‘Sozialismus kam immer vor’ in *idem*, *Beim kleinen Trompeter*, 31f.

exile in Britain *Mohr und die Raben von London* being a classic.¹³⁰ In later years, children's literature also distinguished itself by going beyond the focus on Communists as the only righteous people during the Nazi era by addressing the Holocaust.¹³¹ These empathetic works did not feature on reading lists at school, but had to be discovered and digested by the young readers themselves.¹³²

Antifascists were also omnipresent in young people's environment thanks to the practice of naming schools, holiday camps, streets, factories, youth brigades, awards and competitions in memory of those resting in the pantheon of resistance fighters (e.g. Arthur Becker, Hans Beimler, Rudolf Breitscheid). The oft-quoted legacy [*Vermächtnis*] of Ernst Thälmann in particular was perceptible throughout young people's life.¹³³ It was an old tradition: during the Spanish Civil War, a battalion of the International Brigades named itself after Ernst Thälmann, for example. His name was widely bestowed in the GDR: to the pioneers' organisation, to schools, to pioneer houses and the 'pioneer palace' in Berlin Wulheide, to so-called 'memorial corners' in schools, to badges and banners for the best pupils, to research assignments for pioneers ('*Thälmanns Namen tragen wir – sei seiner würdig, Pionier!*')¹³⁴ and to annual campaigns such as the *Thälmann-Subbotniks* in August, and naturally to the annual commemorations on 18 August of the eleven years he spent in solitary confinement and his death in Buchenwald concentration camp.¹³⁵ Erich Honecker in particular saw himself as his successor and liked to point out their similarities, such as the long time spent in jail and their personal fight against Nazism.¹³⁶ Under Honecker, the Thälmann myth occupied a much more prominent role in educating the young generations than under Ulbricht. An image that many young people had of Erich Honecker was that of a 'real' old antifascist fighter who liked to inspect military parades with his fist risen in

¹³⁰ I. Korn, V. Korn, *Mohr und die Raben von London* (Berlin, 1962).

¹³¹ See for example G. Karau, *Der gute Stern des Janusz K.* (Berlin, 1972); B. Schulenburg, *Markus und der Golem* (Berlin, 1987). See also R. Steinlein, T. Kramer et al., 'Nazis, Kleinbürger, Kommunisten – Antifaschismus in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur der DDR der 50er und 60er Jahre' in: *Deutschunterricht* (3/2000), 129-37.

¹³² For a list of books 'which deal with the antifascist resistance fight, create in readers hate against fascism and neofascism and educate to proletarian internationalism', see 'Empfehlung von Literatur zur Unterstützung der patriotischen Erziehung' (5.10.1961), BArch DR2/6765.

¹³³ Thälmann was also immortalised in two famous DEFA films which to see was a required course for pupils from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s: *Ernst Thälmann – Sohn seiner Klasse* (1954) and *Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse* (1955).

¹³⁴ Loosely translates as: 'We carry Thälmann's name – pioneer, be worthy, bring not shame!'. Thus was the slogan for the *Pionierauftrag* [research assignment] of the Thälmann pioneers in the academic year 1971/72. Cf. 'Schuljahresarbeitsplan 1971/72' (ca. 1971), BArch DR2/6487.

¹³⁵ For a more exhaustive list, see Burkhard S. (Parteihochschule "Karl Marx" beim ZK der SED), *Jahresarbeit: Die Bedeutung der Thälmann-Ehrungen der FDJ für die klassenmäßige Erziehung der jungen Generation der DDR* (April 1985), BArch FDJ B 6346, appendix.

¹³⁶ Cf. T. Wollschläger, review of Börrnert, *Ernst Thälmann als Leitfigur* <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/2003-3-110>> [accessed 12.8.2005] (page 1).

the manner of the *Rotfrontkämpferbund* greeting (which was, not surprisingly, known as the *Thälmann-Gruß* in the GDR).

The SED's use of antifascism to gain people's allegiance, legitimise itself and claim moral superiority for the GDR over the Federal Republic has received a lot of attention.¹³⁷ Critics have pointed out the deficiencies of this one-dimensional message glorifying the role of communists and neglecting other opponents of fascism. In the antifascist narrative as well as in the context of compensation and acknowledgement as 'OdF' [*Opfer des Faschismus*], victims of Nazism such as Jews, Roma and Sinti, disabled people, homosexuals as well as antifascist combatants from the ranks of Social Democrats and Christians were all given a subordinate role or completely left out.¹³⁸ The role of Stalinism was also written out of history after 1956.¹³⁹ The critics also argue that antifascism failed to convey its values, having been 'prescribed' from above. This sweeping statement however is contradicted by archival evidence. Certainly, there are a number of incidents recorded involving young people who daubed fascist slogans and symbols in their textbooks and on photographs of leading members of the government.¹⁴⁰ What is striking though is that the majority of these actions were not done out of fascist conviction. Instead, the status of antifascism as an 'untouchable' issue or taboo was used by young people to express their discontentment with the government and political events (e.g. 13 August 1961 and 20 August 1968), a more general dissatisfaction with life, to shock their teachers, or in a completely unthinking way as in this example from 1975: 'Two pupils from year 4 daubed in the crafts workshop under cover of darkness 126 swastikas and left messages like "Hitler was good", "Carola is the hell bride of Hitler" and "Eilenstein is like Hitler".'¹⁴¹ The infantile and ahistorical character of most of these political provocations was recognised by the authorities:

The emphasis of the political provocations lies on agitating against our socialist state and high-ranking state functionaries as well as to denigrate important workers' leaders

¹³⁷ See for example A. Grunenberg, *Antifaschismus – ein deutscher Mythos* (Reinbek, 1993); Mitter, *Untergang auf Raten*.

¹³⁸ Cf. A. Leo, P. Reif-Spirek (eds), *Helden, Täter und Verräter. Studien zum DDR-Antifaschismus* (Berlin, 1999); A. Leo, P. Reif-Spirek (eds), *Vielstimmiges Schweigen. Neue Studien zum DDR-Antifaschismus* (Berlin, 2001); C. Hölscher, *NS-Verfolgte im 'antifaschistischen Staat'. Vereinnahmung und Ausgrenzung in der ostdeutschen Wiedergutmachung 1945-1989* (Berlin, 2002). On the treatment of the national socialist past in the GDR, see also Jurek Becker's novel *Bronsteins Kinder* (Frankfurt/Main, 1986).

¹³⁹ C. Dieckmann, *Das wahre Leben im falschen. Geschichten von ostdeutscher Identität* (Berlin, 1998), 60.

¹⁴⁰ See for example 'Kriminalstatistik Jugendlicher 1965-1967' (6.9.1967), BStU MfS-HA IX 12011 MF; 'Abschlußbericht zur Aktion Jubiläum 30' (10.10.1979), BStU MfS-HA IX 18560, 3.

¹⁴¹ 'Analyse zu politischen Provokationen vom 1.1. bis 31.12.1975' (21.1.1976), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, Nr. 027843. NB: Eilenstein was most probably a teacher.

by use of fascist symbols. [...] As the main reason for provocative acts by pupils we see the insufficient intellectual handling of knowledge of the life and works of high state functionaries and workers' leaders. It was also observed that most of the rebellious pupils were not conscious of the dangerousness and momentousness of their actions.¹⁴²

The fact that antifascism was such a sacred cow for the SED could cause them to overreact to insalubrious but trivial behaviour. A father (and SED member) of a pupil who was relegated from school in 1978 for having shouted anti-Soviet slogans and singing the *Deutschlandlied* whilst drunk and watching a USSR vs. FRG boxing match with friends scoffed: 'Well, chewing chewing gum and wearing jeans are now indicative of fascist attitudes, aren't they?'.¹⁴³ It is true, however, that antifascist education did not immunise everyone against genuine fascist ideas. While the GDR existed, some teenagers gathered in cliques, exalting Nazi leaders and ideas, vilifying the NVA and Red Army and maintaining that fascism also had its 'good sides'.¹⁴⁴ These groupings largely kept to themselves and did not express their viewpoint in violent actions.

It was only after the GDR's demise with the concomitant loss of authority and surveillance by the police and Stasi that East German neo-Nazi groups went public and resorted to violence. The attacks on foreigners motivated by racial hatred in the 1990s and, more recently, the success of far-right parties in the Eastern German federal states, are evidence that antifascist education in the GDR failed to reach everyone. However, it must not be forgotten that the post-1989 East German neo-Nazis were 'helped along' by right-wing extremist organisations hailing from West Germany who 'proselytised' in the East and blamed existing problems like unemployment, uncertainty and a sense of futurelessness on the foreigners now sharing their everyday life.¹⁴⁵ The resulting actions cannot be blamed exclusively on an overdose of antifascism in the GDR education system.

So did the education system produce dedicated young antifascists? In reports from the 1950s and 1960s, young people often told of their happiness about living in a state that proclaimed itself antifascist and their respect for the relatively recent exploits

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Cf. 'Relegierung von Schülern: Frank B., EOS "Hansa" Stralsund' (June 1978), BArch DR2/A7361/5.

¹⁴⁴ See for example 'Bericht aus Halle' (March 1963), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IVA2/9.05/57; 'Information über die Aufklärung einer Gruppierung negativer Jugendlicher an der KJS Güstrow' (6.1.1966), BStU MfS ZAIG-Z 1164; 'Hinweise über gewonnene Erkenntnisse und Erfahrungen bei der operativen Bearbeitung und vorbeugenden Absicherung Jugendlicher des Bezirkes Erfurt' (11.4.1979), BStU BVfS Erfurt, KD Worbis 516.

¹⁴⁵ On xenophobia in East Germany, see D. Mac Con Uladh, *Guests of the socialist nation? Foreign students and workers in the GDR 1949-1989* (unpublished doctoral thesis, 2005); J.-C. Behrens et al. (eds), *Fremde und Fremdsein in der DDR. Zu historischen Ursachen der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Ostdeutschland* (Berlin, 2003).

of resistance fighters.¹⁴⁶ By the 1970s and in the 1980s, the overblown and ever-same references to antifascists at school had resulted in widespread apathy.¹⁴⁷ The ‘repletion’ with antifascist heroes resulting from an unchanging literary canon on the heroic class struggle with writers like Ostrowski, Apitz and Weinert is described by Gerhard Hieke:

As a pupil in 1952, I worked for a few weeks in a sausage factory during the holidays. On the second or third day I ate sixteen *Bockwürste* in one shift. After four weeks I could not have managed a single sausage, even if they had paid me. The authors of our curricula and their ideological masters seem to have lacked this experience. Even sixteen-year olds who were interested in literature gradually built up a barrier against antifascist literature and also against valuable literature on this topic.¹⁴⁸

The difficulty that young people were faced with was that antifascism seemed to be no longer relevant and, in any case, they had no means of proving their genuine commitment as antifascists: the Nazi era was long gone, travels to Western states infested with fascists, as they learned in civics, were impossible, the People’s Police and the MfS kept a very close eye on any nascent fascist sounds coming from inside the GDR, so there was neither need nor possibility for young people to express their own antifascist convictions other than repeating slogans. Over the years, the antifascist founding myth had become as ossified as the real-life antifascists in the Politburo. However, antifascism in East German education had real substance and was not just a name. The conviction that antifascism is good and fascism a bad thing stayed on in most people’s minds, even after its ‘prescription’ from above had run out.

‘Be wise as serpents’: Christian children in the socialist school

The last section returns to the interaction of Christian children with the socialist school system and goes beyond the narrow focus on civic education. It examines the regime’s unease with those of ‘its’ young people who had a conflicting worldview, the Churches’ attempt to halt dechristianisation and the change over time in the way Christian children dealt with being somewhat different from the others.

In 1945, Paul Wandel outlined his vision for the new democratic school in the SBZ: ‘Part of the democratisation of the school is that we finish with the division of our children according to their parents’ faith and *Weltanschauung*. [...] In the new schools there will be no favouritism of any *Weltanschauung* or faith, [...] instead we demand respect for all convictions.’¹⁴⁹ This vision turned out to be true only in the first part, for

¹⁴⁶ ‘Abschlußbericht der “Umfrage 69” (ca. 1970), BArch FDJ B 6249.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Die Herausbildung der sozialistischen Lebensweise bei Schülern in der Freizeit und ihr Einfluß auf die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung’ (December 1977), BArch DC4/366.

¹⁴⁸ Fuchs and Hieke, *Dumm geschult*, 66ff.

¹⁴⁹ Schneider, *Weltanschauliche Erziehung*, 28f. NB: Paul Wandel was the president of the German Central Administration for People’s Education 1945-1949 and Education Minister 1949-1952.

school in the GDR was indeed a lay institution, its secularity proclaimed and implemented from the beginning. Religion had no part to play in school. In this, GDR schools did not differ from those in the public sector in the United States or France.¹⁵⁰ With the return to school in autumn 1945, religious education lessons were no longer part of the curriculum and so no longer took place in school buildings.¹⁵¹ The second part however was utterly implausible, since Marxism-Leninism undoubtedly played the pivotal role as the prevailing worldview. Very soon after the Communist forces in the SED gained the upper hand over the Social Democrats, religious tolerance gave way to subtle and sometimes not so subtle attempts to inculcate the ‘correct’ *Weltanschauung*. Conveying knowledge about the world’s religions was not part of educating the socialist personality at school.

Religion was usually only mentioned in connection with out-dated social orders and the misuse of power by the Churches throughout the ages.¹⁵² In a popular children’s book on Ernst Thälmann’s childhood, for example, the authors have young Ernst talking about his favourite subjects at school, such as history, arithmetic, and gymnastics, and have him say: ‘I was least, almost not at all, interested in religious education. [...] Seeing all the poor people in Hamburg, I had already begun to doubt the justice of the almighty God as a child.’¹⁵³ Little pinpricks such as this one into the conscience of Christian children growing up in the GDR were commonplace. The school’s missionary ambitions extended beyond the children to their parents via home visits and parents’ evenings on topics such as ‘How do we help our children to a scientific worldview?’¹⁵⁴ The SED even made (largely futile) attempts to adjust the language so as to shelter the ears of its citizens from religious references: ‘*Jahresendflügelfigur*’ [end of year winged figure] as a substitute for ‘angel’ or *Lichterkrantz* [wreath of lights] instead of *Adventskranz*. In 1960, a guideline for kindergartens was issued which told kindergarten teachers how to celebrate Christmas properly and defined it as ‘the celebration of peace, love, and the solstice’.¹⁵⁵

Christian children in the socialist school may be divided into three groups. The first one, which constituted the overwhelming majority throughout the period under

¹⁵⁰ Moore-Rivoluceri, *Education*, 14.

¹⁵¹ Döbert, *Bildungswesen*, 89.

¹⁵² See examples in D. Reiher, ‘Konfliktfeld Kirche – Schule in der DDR 1969 bis 1989’ in Dähn, *Und führe*, 126f. Civic education lessons of year 6 pupils at the KJS Luckenwalde in 1966 for example included one topic entitled ‘Science and religion/ superstition’. Cf. ‘Konzeption für die staatsbürgerliche Erziehung an der KJS Luckenwalde’ (5.5.1966), BArch DR2/6485.

¹⁵³ W. and C. Küchenmeister, *Als Thälmann noch ein Junge war* (Berlin, 1976), 20 and 26f.

¹⁵⁴ Schulchronik POS Pestalozzi Weimar (March 1959).

¹⁵⁵ ‘Abteilung Volksbildung, Vorschulerziehung, Rat des Kreises Borna’ (5.12.1960), BArch DR2/4685.

investigation, was that of Christian children who adapted to leading a double life of being Christian in private and a normal GDR pupil in public. They were just children and young adults in the same way as their classmates were, with the same fondness or dislike of various subjects and teachers, and the same inclination to be either pranksters or eager beavers. Just like the others, they might have been head of the pioneer group committee, have disliked or liked Russian,¹⁵⁶ and thought nothing of throwing fake hand grenades during PE. Like the wider population, they were the majority who did not question the state of affairs very much, or were not given any reason to question it. In many instances it was perfectly possible for Christian children to live in their two worlds, not to encounter any discrimination by classmates, teachers and authorities, and simply make their way in society. This was particularly the case in rural areas, where teachers and functionaries formed part of the social scene and had to deal with a close-knit community to which they themselves belonged.

The second group was much smaller. A minority of children, usually from a very strong Christian home or pastors' children, would stand up for their beliefs and not always give way. Many are the reports which tell of Christian pupils' resistance to learning songs or poems which stood in contradiction to their conviction. The teachers' and functionaries' reactions ranged from bemusement, indifference, uneasiness to severe penalties such as relegation. In 1962 for example, four 14-year old girls refused to learn *Die Internationale* because of its words 'No saviour from on high delivers, no trust we have in prince or peer'.¹⁵⁷ Another example is Heinrich Heine's poem *Die schlesischen Weber*, spawning protests throughout the 1950s to the 1970s, for its second stanza reads 'Doomed be the God who was deaf to our prayers / In winter's cold and hunger's despair / All in vain we hoped and bided / He only mocked us, hoaxed, derided.'¹⁵⁸ Dietrich E. remembered that in the early 1970s he did not learn the text of a particularly lurid battle song. 'Some of my classmates found [my protest] very interesting and didn't learn the text either. But the music teacher didn't overreact to the incident.'¹⁵⁹ The late 1950s and early 1960s was a time when discrimination against Christian children was particularly common at school. However, in contrast to later years, this was also a time where protests by parents and pastors were particularly common, too. The complaints not only arose in response to the introduction of specific

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Maria's letter (14.1.1969) in 'Bedanke-mich-Briefe', Deutsches Tagebucharchiv 729/ I.

¹⁵⁷ The German text reads: 'Es rettet uns kein höheres Wesen, kein Gott, kein Kaiser noch Tribun.' Cf. 'Information aus Oberschule Niederseifersdorf, Kreis Niesky' (16.2.1962), BArch DR2/6966.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. 'Rat der Gemeinde Neumark/ Vogtland an das MfV' (23.10.1962), BArch DO4/94 and 'Eingabenanalyse 1. Halbjahr 1974' (20.8.1974), BArch DR2/8145. Cf. also Ohse, *Jugend*, 237.

¹⁵⁹ Dietrich E. questionnaire.

policies, but poured in in protest against the widespread attacks on religion. A letter by a pastor from 1960 highlights the kind of arguments that teachers brought forward against religion:

When children who abstain from going to the *Christenlehre* are given pictures as a reward; when children who believe in God are ridiculed in front of the class; when it is said that only those who cannot 'think right' believe what the Church is saying (Whilst a large number of our members of government are paying and practising members of the Church and Christian teachers are decorated as 'deserving teacher of the people!'); when utterances are made such as 'The dear God cannot even build a car; Only the scientifically stupid go to Church; Those who believe in Jesus Christ are for Adenauer; Those who stay with the pastor want war; Science proves that God does not exist,' then all laws of decency and good conduct are being breached.¹⁶⁰

The letter was addressed directly to the teachers, a fact that together with the last sentence shows what the writer intended to achieve: simply respect for Christian belief, as demanded by Wandel in 1945. In another case from 1960, sixty parents voiced their concern that Christian children were 'made doubtful and confused about their faith' by the comments of teachers during lessons, appealing this time to a higher authority, Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl, asking him to ensure that in future there would be no academic or professional disadvantages arising from their avowal to Jesus Christ. 'We think that it is not the duty of the socialist school to use the conveyance of expertise to turn our children away from their Christian belief.'¹⁶¹ Letters concerned with the demand for general tolerance and respect such as the above become rarer in the 1970s; this may indicate either that pupils, parents, and the Church had given up hope for this and a fair treatment of their Christian faith in the socialist school; or that the proportion of active Christian families in the GDR had by this time become significantly lower; or that the practice of overt discrimination against Christian children had declined, and was no longer experienced as a problem to the same extent or quite as widely as it had been in earlier years.

The third group was made up of children with a very strong faith who were not prepared to compromise in any way; who encountered particularly anti-clerical teachers; for whom going to school meant everyday chicanery; and who consequently withdrew from socialist life at school into their private world which revolved around the Church. Caritas Führer, a pastor's daughter herself, has described everyday life endured by these children in detail in *Die Montagsangst*:

¹⁶⁰ 'Pfarrer Kasparick an die Lehrer der OS Schönwalde' (13.5.1960), BArch DR2/6318. NB: *Christenlehre* was and is the 'Sunday school' of the protestant Church for children aged 6 to 13, usually held on one afternoon during the week.

¹⁶¹ 'Brief von Eltern aus Karl-Marx-Stadt/ Borna an den Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates' (23.3.1960), BArch DO4/94.

Fear has a name: Monday. On Mondays there is the flag ceremony. [...] Those who don't utter the pioneer salute are against peace. The child wants to be for peace. In the *Christenlehre* they are for peace, too. But the child can't be for socialism. Socialism is the border, is the shop where for months one can't buy toilet rolls, is the flag ceremony, the hated last day at school, is the pioneer organisation and the teacher who lets all *Christenlehrekinder* stand up and be laughed at.¹⁶²

Two incidents underline how severe the attitude of some local school functionaries towards Christian pupils could be on occasions even in the 1970s. In the first case, an EOS pupil was asked by the headmaster and the civics teacher to remove the small silver cross which she carried on a necklace. Because 'she showed herself recalcitrant in the hearing and started to argue during civic education lessons' she was removed from the school.¹⁶³ In the second case, the headmaster of a POS called on a couple to stop sending their children to *Christenlehre* classes. When the parents did not oblige, the children were given bad marks in 'behaviour' [*Betragen*] and the headmaster said that marks would only improve once the children were withdrawn. The parents complied and the children got their good marks back.¹⁶⁴ The ways in which Christian children, particularly those from the third group, were treated by their teachers and functionaries often affected their future. Christoph Dieckmann wrote of his encounter with the fierce regional school councillor Richter from Sangerhausen: "Higher education is off limits for enemies of the state", she said. Many turned into them [enemies of the state] because of that.¹⁶⁵ With reference to the infringement of freedom of expression and belief, some Christians would dare to draw parallels between the Third Reich and the GDR; however this was more likely in the pulpit than at school. In this example, though, a PE teacher from Berlin spoke out against the curbing of personal rights at an open Party meeting in 1963: 'I was born 48 years ago and brought up as a Christian. I wasn't allowed to read certain books because of my faith. Then the Nazis came. They barred us from listening to foreign radio and burned books. Now you're coming along with the same things. I'm not prepared to argue against the free forming of opinion in my class.'¹⁶⁶

Despite the apparent normalisation of the relationship between Church and state from the end of the 1960s onwards (*Kirche im Sozialismus*) and the public reassurances of the SED-leadership on freedom of belief, grass-root functionaries and overzealous teachers continued to make life difficult for Christian children at school. Throughout the

¹⁶² Führer, *Die Montagsangst*, 7 and 11.

¹⁶³ 'Meldungen der Superintendentur Weimar an Landeskirchenrat in Eisenach' (November 1971), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, Nr. 027847.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ C. Dieckmann, 'Äpfel schütteln' in Kleßmann, *Kinder*, 57.

¹⁶⁶ 'Inspektionsberichte über politische und schulpädagogische Probleme an Berliner Schulen' (11.10.1961), BArch DR2/6403.

GDR's lifetime, Church leaders kept on issuing so-called *Orientierungshilfen* [orientation guidelines] for parish members; especially after the announcement of policies which could put Christians into precarious situations, such as the introduction of the *Jugendweihe* in 1954, the wording of the 1959 School Law and 1965 Education Act, the introduction of compulsory military service in 1962 or the introduction of military education lessons in 1978. In these guidelines, pupils and parents were always encouraged to insist on their constitutional rights. Once the GDR had become a member of the United Nations in 1973, many petitions by parents invoked the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states 'education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality', and underlines that 'parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children',¹⁶⁷

The absence of phrasemongering in Church circles was an aspect which drew many young people towards the *Jungen Gemeinden*. Leading functionaries and educators failed to address young people's natural interest in philosophical questions at a certain age, which included issues such as the meaning of life and the existence of God. The diatribes against religion provided by civic education lessons and the one-sidedness of the school dissatisfied many pupils, including those from a non-Christian background with a thirst for knowledge. Gudrun, the EOS pupil whom we met earlier, compellingly described the disquiet that schools caused by insisting at all costs only on the one truth, which merits being quoted at length:

God and *Weltanschauung* and things like that interest me a lot. I find it daft that we don't talk about that. [...] Our pastor has personal contact with people that the teachers haven't got. One of my classmates wanted to study theology because the pastor's such a great guy and doesn't argue so primitively against Marxism. He doesn't just say: this question is decided, it's all rubbish. If the teacher could make Marxism as interesting as this pastor religion, then he [the pastor, AB] would be out of his job. Young people like to talk back, they're interested in the unusual. They don't want ready-made truths which they only have to swallow. But if I say one word about all that at school, I get in the best of cases an educational lecture, and then I'm alone again with my questions. Everything is matter, no place for God!¹⁶⁸

Another issue which separated Christian children from their classmates was the demand made of socialist personalities to hate their enemies. Not only does Christianity preach love of one's enemies,¹⁶⁹ but Christian children were also more likely to encounter a specimen of these 'enemies' in person than non-religious classmates, for example when Christians from the FRG came to visit their twin parish in the GDR. Matthias W.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. art. 26, parts 2 and 3, <<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>> [accessed 26.1.2005] (page 1). See for example 'Eingabenanalyse 1. Halbjahr 1974' (20.8.1974), BArch DR2/8145.

¹⁶⁸ 'Gudrun: Die noch kämpfen können' in Wander, *Guten Morgen*, 117f.

¹⁶⁹ 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.' (Luke 6: 27).

remembers receiving parcels and some Deutschmarks to buy things in the Intershop from this source, but also stressed that ‘The visits of peers from the twin parish were important. This notional opening can’t be overestimated’.¹⁷⁰ Hence for Christian children, the hate-the-enemy policy could either pass them by or throw them into an inner conflict. It was possible that their classmates who might not have had any contact with the West due to lack of Western relatives were more likely to accept the school’s attempts at inculcation since they only knew one world outlook. Christian children knew two. Often they would pick out the best parts of both and live quite happily with that, as was the case for Petra R.*, born in 1960 in Berlin: ‘I didn’t discuss my attachment to the Church in public. This was my private affair, and I didn’t have any problems concerning my Christian identity at school.’¹⁷¹

As is well known, the MfS was not averse to intruding into people’s private lives and suspected anyone straying from the predetermined path of engaging in subversive activities. MfS reports connected to ‘church matters’ in the school environment mostly inform on the contentious issues of the *Jugendweihe*, petitions regarding access to the EOS, and suspected ‘enemy activities’ in the EOS. The concentrated presence of parents with ‘bourgeois’ professions such as physicians and theologians in the EOS was enough to arouse suspicions, although the range of misdeeds reported hardly had ‘state-endangering character’. The following example from 1968 on the situation in the EOS in Bezirk Cottbus is typical:

The overall assessment shows that most members of the *Junge Gemeinde* do not cause trouble in a political-ideological respect, and that only a small proportion actively hold religious views. [...] There exist indications that Prof. Dr. S.’ wife, who has strong ties to the church, invites like-minded classmates of her son to garden parties. Because of a concentration of religious pupils at this EOS, a further improvement of the political-ideological education by utilising the assistance of the many progressive pupils is necessary.¹⁷²

Christian EOS teachers’ ability to educate socialist personalities was also often a feature of the reports. Teachers who ‘still retain religious ties’ and thus have ‘a wavering attitude to the political questions of our time and towards progressive pupils’ were seen as thorns in the GDR’s flesh, for they might ‘disseminate religious views amongst the pupils with the aim of changing existing progressive views’.¹⁷³ In a school with several teachers of Christian conviction, there was the danger that the issue of ‘Jugendweihe or

¹⁷⁰ Matthias W. questionnaire.

¹⁷¹ Petra R.* questionnaire.

¹⁷² ‘Einzelinformation über die politisch-ideologische Situation an der EOS Cottbus’ (31.5.1968), BStU MfS BVfS Cottbus AKG Nr. 024.

¹⁷³ Cf. ‘Die Lage der pädagogischen Intelligenz an den allgemeinbildenden polytechnischen und erweiterten Oberschulen sowie den Lehrerbildungseinrichtungen (1962), BStU MfS ZAIG 618.

not' and the 'negative' influence of the Jungen Gemeinden could be given insufficient weight, compared to schools with overwhelming majorities of 'progressive' pedagogues, and the opinion that recreational activities should be left to the pupils might prevail.¹⁷⁴

A school that was under particular scrutiny was the *Kreuzschule* in Dresden with its religious tradition and choir. A detailed MfS report following the 'Anklam Incident' sheds light on the situation in 1961.¹⁷⁵ The report assessed the political-ideological situation at the school as bad, with strong western influences on most pupils and insufficient party and FDJ work. The strong religious influence was seen as the root cause of this: the majority of choir members belonged to the *Junge Gemeinde*, religious parents were strongly represented in the parents' associations, and 'leading members of the Saxon Church' were giving religious education classes in years 5 to 8 (very much an exception, as this had been officially proscribed in 1946). About 50% of pupils hailed from 'bourgeois circles: their parent were professors, clergy, doctors, technical intelligentsia, self-employed'. This bourgeois influence was visible in the use of antiquated terms such as '*Hauspräfekt*' [house prefect] instead of '*Ordnungsschüler*' [school orderly], and the fact that these positions of responsibility were not occupied exclusively by FDJ members, but 'in most cases by reactionary pupils'. The most popular teachers were those who 'don't carry politics into their lessons. Such teachers are also invited to pupils' parties from which progressive pupils and *Arbeiter-und-Bauernkinder* are generally excluded'. At these parties they would 'listen to western Beat music, dance Rock'n'roll, and apotheosise the western way of living'. The reported 'enemy activities' at the school involved daubing provocative slogans; anonymous telephone calls to Dresden's rag and bone men telling them to come to the school in order to collect there, 'in the nastiest slander of the school's comrades', some '*Lumpen*';¹⁷⁶ and in one particular incident the planting of home-made explosive devices. In this last case, the year 12 winner of the school's 'Chemistry Olympiad' had intended to cause a panic and achieve the school's closure for a few days. When questioned on his actions he stated that through visits to West Germany with the choir he had been impressed with life over there, especially the full shop windows, and that he had come to the conclusion that 'the homeland of the Germans is not the GDR, but West Germany'. In order to remedy this deplorable state of affairs the MfS suggested

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Cf. 'Einzelinformation über Feindtätigkeit an der Kreuzschule Dresden' (1962), BStU MfS Z 635. NB: All further quotes in this paragraph were taken from this file.

¹⁷⁶ *Lumpen* can mean either 'rags' or 'rogues'.

re-selecting the social composition of pupils and employing only ‘the best and most conscious [*bewußte*]’ pedagogues, changing the composition of parents’ associations at the next election in favour of progressive elements, and making civic education lessons as relevant as possible so that pupils would establish ‘a true mutual trust in the school and thus in our state.’

Discrimination against Christian pupils is an issue where once again the plurality of realities existing in the GDR comes into play. Even within the small sample of my interviewees there was a wide spectrum of experiences, ranging from the statement by Rainer W., an engineer born in 1948: ‘I come from the industrial area Halle-Leipzig-Merseburg, where the Church played absolutely no role whatsoever’,¹⁷⁷ through accounts where being of Christian belief never brought any disadvantages or where Christian classmates were treated the same as everybody else, to accounts of serious disadvantage which in some cases led to an attitude of complete disenchantment with the state or to applications to leave the country. Henning S., who trained as an electronics engineer in the GDR, could only take up university studies after the *Wende* and today teaches education science at Humboldt University Berlin. He hit the nail on the head for the majority of cases when he answered my question of whether or not he saw a danger of denying or losing his identity as a Christian in the socialist school: ‘If one was prepared to pay the price that it [retaining one’s identity, AB] cost, then not. If not, then yes. My Catholic classmates joined in everything and went on to the EOS; I didn’t and almost didn’t even get an apprenticeship place. The price was known amongst those who wanted to know it.’¹⁷⁸ Initially though, Henning got off to a hopeful start with his civics teacher, who had heard of his intention to join the *Bausoldaten* and told him he looked forward to their lessons together and to seeing whether he would not be a convinced Marxist after two years. ‘I was truly impressed by this man: somebody who wanted to get into discussions! At this moment, I could really imagine I would change sides if he had had the better arguments.’ But the reality turned out differently. ‘After the third lesson, my requests to speak were ignored and my marks manipulated. I got lots of Fs even though I tried to pipe up all the time.’¹⁷⁹

Erika P., who was born in 1932 and worked as a mathematical research assistant at the Erfurt College of Education, said she did not witness any discrimination against Christian children: ‘At our college, we had a number of Christian students, for example Dieter Althaus, currently the leader of Thuringia. Though of course in maths the issue is

¹⁷⁷ Rainer W. questionnaire (30.3.2004).

¹⁷⁸ Henning S. questionnaire.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

unproblematic.’¹⁸⁰ The example of Uta K.-L., born in 1943 in Erfurt, shows how a single headteacher could make life difficult if he or she wanted to. Uta was accepted for the EOS in 1957 only due to the personal support of the Thuringian Bishop Moritz Mitzenheim and after she had joined the FDJ. In 1959, she was on the school’s noticeboard where ‘*Unsere Besten*’ [the school’s star pupils] were honoured with a photograph and an article – ‘until the headmaster saw this and removed me at one: “A pastor’s daughter!”.’ When it came to applying for a place at university, the headmaster returned her applications for German literature and art history with the words ‘These are university places for *AuB-Kinder*! He gave me the friendly insider tip to try for theology, which I did.’¹⁸¹ Dietrich E. had a similar experience: ‘Going to EOS was out of the question despite having an A* in all subjects; so was vocational training with *Abitur*. Hence the only options were a trade or a Church career.’¹⁸²

These cases support Christoph Dieckmann’s earlier statement on the state creating its own enemies, and the thesis put forward by Mary Fulbrook who pointed out that ‘by denying committed Christians chances of higher education outside theology, the regime itself unintentionally *produced* a relatively cohesive group of disaffected activists’.¹⁸³ Most Christian children however conformed to the omnipresent guiding principle of Christians in the GDR: being ‘wise as serpents and harmless as doves’. Thus had been the advice of Jesus to his disciples.¹⁸⁴ In the ancient world, the serpent was a symbol of wisdom and prudence who would avoid unnecessary conflict with enemies, but always be on guard. This metaphor also held true for Christian children in the new world that the SED had created in the GDR.

Conclusion

I have explored the complex framework created by the regime designed to convey its ideological message to young people at kindergarten and school and examined the diversity of implementation and execution. At kindergarten, political-ideological education conveyed basic knowledge of their socialist homeland to the children and introduced them to central political figures and socialist ideas; a priming which the vast majority of children accepted willingly, but which often overstretched their capabilities of understanding. At school, on the other hand, it was simply too intense to be effective.

¹⁸⁰ Erika P. questionnaire (10.5.2004).

¹⁸¹ Uta K.-L. questionnaire (2.5.2004).

¹⁸² Dietrich E. questionnaire. Incidentally, he obtained his *Abitur* at a church school, studied church music, and is today the musical director of the Church province of Saxony.

¹⁸³ Fulbrook, *Anatomy*, 89 [emphasis in the original].

¹⁸⁴ ‘Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.’ (Matthew 10:16).

Teachers were also often not faultless transmission belts of the SED's doctrine, but ordinary citizens who experienced the widening gap between the ideology-laden contents of the curriculum and everyday reality. Pupils reacted to the inculcation of ideology at school with boredom and a certain amount of incredulity, developing that most unexceptional attitude for young people in dictatorships or democracies – political apathy.

What pupils were taught in civic education lessons was that, in theory, the societal order of socialism was good and that of capitalism was bad. Pupils tended to believe this. They also caught a glimpse of the reality of capitalism when watching Western television which did not hide problems such as unemployment, poverty or drugs. However, these negative aspects of capitalism were largely overshadowed by the glossy world of material riches and freedom of thought which was presented evening after evening. If socialism really was the better social order, why did it have to be so grey, dry and prescriptive? The fact that the state reacted with such suspicion and harsh sanctions to any expression of disagreement by young people alienated many intelligent pupils who were not at all opposed to socialist ideals, but who had reservations about how socialism was being enacted in the GDR, principally to the lack of freedom of speech and the refusal to acknowledge the increasing apparent divergence in the standard of living from that enjoyed in the West.

Curiously, civic education received some retrospective approval after 1989. When, following the demise of the GDR, East Germans finally experienced real capitalism and not just the television version, many suddenly remembered the old slogans from their civics lessons and saw some truths which they had hitherto dismissed as indoctrination and propaganda. Adelheid K., a primary teacher from Orlamünde near Jena born in 1934, said:

Many of my former pupils said after the Wende that the teachers had been right about capitalism after all. One of them told me: 'You teachers lied to us when you told us about evil capitalism, in reality it is much worse!' This insight, however, he only gained once he had come to know the capitalist system, as the owner of a small enterprise.¹⁸⁵

Certain values, such as antifascism, did become internalised by the pupils however, despite all the slogans and catechisms that washed over their heads. Dietrich E. said: 'What stayed with us was probably this: a collective feeling [*Wir-Gefühl*], a sense for equality of people – in the positive sense – and a belief in the advancement of societal circumstances, but also an unbelievably narrow-minded petty-bourgeois mentality.'¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Adelheid K. questionnaire (24.2.2004).

¹⁸⁶ Dietrich E. questionnaire.

The examination of the hidden reality behind the regime-created socialist façade of pupils and their moral convictions is the task of the next chapter.

Chapter 5. How to juggle issues of morality: moral values

The instilling of moral values was perhaps the SED's boldest and most difficult venture. In the following, I explore the formation of this part of the character of socialist personalities. First, the principal moral values are introduced, followed by an examination of how close young people were to the proposed model of the socialist personality as a paragon of morality. The third section looks at the issue of the widespread dishonesty in the GDR. Section four analyses military education. The last three sections address the question how young Christians dealt with the strain that socialist morals presented to their conviction: first I look at the contentious issue of the decision between *Jugendweihe* and confirmation; then at how they juggled being confronted with two contrasting worldviews; and lastly, the case study of young Catholics in the Eichsfeld.

This chapter also introduces Ottokar Domma, the 12-year old character of the famous 'Ottokar books' who reported humorously on school life from somewhere in Brandenburg.¹ Under the cloak of fiction, the books actually described real school life in the GDR and the quotes that are used in the following may be read as situations that many East Germans will recognise from their own school life.

Principal moral values

The moral values demanded of GDR citizens stemmed from the 1950s, the country's most 'moralising' decade during which the SED tried to bring out the new human being as a paragon of socialist morality. The nature of the moral values put forward was similar to those promoted in the young Soviet Union.² As already discussed in chapter 2, in 1958 the SED formulated for the first time defaults for the population's behaviour, its 'Ten Commandments'. They were made up of civic, moral and societal obligations. The moral duties were typical of the priggishness of the 1950s, not exclusive to the GDR but also evident in Adenauer's FRG. One was reminiscent of traditional Prussian values and demanded that one 'live cleanly, decently and respect one's family'; another called for parents to bring up their children 'in the spirit of peace and socialism to all-

¹ The Ottokar books were written under the pseudonym Ottokar Domma by the teacher turned journalist Otto Häuser. His creation Ottokar appeared for the first time in 1959 in the satirical magazine *Eulenspiegel*, and proved to be so popular that Häuser alias Ottokar Domma wrote six books before 1989 and six further books thereafter. The compilation of three books used for this work is O. Domma, *Der brave Schüler Ottokar* (Berlin, 1982), 4th ed.

² Cf. D. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values. The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity 1917-1941* (Ithaca, 2003).

round educated, highly principled and physically fit human beings',³ without elaborating on the nature of these principles. Great importance was attached to the development of virtues such as order, decency, honesty, cleanliness and sedulity. Mutual respect, courtesy and cooperativeness within peer groups and especially towards parents, authority and older people, the so-called '*Aufbaugeneration*' [postwar reconstruction generation], were also held in high regard. Respect was demanded for all material achievements of socialism and thus vandalism was judged particularly anti-social, severely reprimanded, and hence quite rare.

Moral obligations also included love and hate in various forms. Love was demanded for the working class, the GDR as the socialist fatherland of the German workers, all progressive countries, and for peace. The last demand might appear to clash with the SED's calls for 'hate the enemies of the workers' and peasants' power',⁴ i.e. the revanchists and militarists residing in the non-socialist world, headed up by the FRG and the USA. But the situation was clarified in the pioneers' laws where the love of peace and the notion of friendship amongst the peoples [*Völkerfreundschaft*] was limited to the peaceloving peoples in the world, with the USSR occupying first place.

It also strove to create a cultured working class which would have, in a way, rejected its proletarian roots by reading good books and by visiting museums and theatres instead of getting drunk in pubs. Young people's preference for 'decadent dance music' over culturally richer types of music was a thorn in the side of the Party elder who abhorred 'amoral' Rock'n'Roll and Beat fans. The aesthetic of the GDR was also seen as an outward expression of inner purity [*Sittlichkeit*]: a spruce and neat appearance; tidy hair, clothes and living arrangements – think Doris Day in her shiny new formica kitchen. The 'Ten Commandments' had their heyday from their proclamation until the mid-1960s. Afterwards references to them became rarer and rarer. The values they supported however remained valid in the decades to come.

The socialist personality – the paragon of morality

Moral education merged completely into civic and societal education. Being a virtuous human being was not seen as something personal, but a mission to benefit society. That said, the moral obligations of a socialist personality demanded by the Party were generally not that dissimilar to those desired by parents for their children. Modesty,

³ Cf. '*10 Gebote*', folds 1 and 5.

⁴ See for example 'Referat Lemnitz auf der 8. Tagung des Zentralvorstandes der GUE am 22. und 23. Mai 1962', BArch DR2/6317, 42.

orderliness, a certain discipline, courtesy and cleanliness were taught from infancy.⁵ Differences emerge when one looks at the reasons and methods of instilling these values. For example, Franz Fühmann's book *Vom Moritz, der kein Schmutzkind mehr sein wollte* (1959), although having the good intention of making children wash, was criticised for using fairy-tale characters instead of asking the question 'Why does socialism need healthy, well-groomed young people who are hygienic and do exercise?'.⁶

Cleanliness not only applied to having clean hands, but also clean relations between the sexes. Love was not seen as a purely private matter, but was an integral, if minor part of the fully-fledged socialist personality.⁷ Following the Soviet example, in the 1950s and 1960s, the SED took a very puritan stance towards sexuality; an attitude which was not at odds with that of parents in both East and West Germany at the time.⁸ The Party deplored the 'disgusting overvaluation of anything sexual in the capitalist pleasure industry'⁹ and the 'dirty' literature infiltrating from the West possibly leading to 'sexual deviation'¹⁰ – which covered a wide range of activities.¹¹ The commercialisation of sexuality and associated degradation of women which swept through West German society from the mid-1960s was obviously not in accordance with the moral values of socialist society, where the emphasis was on upright marriage and procreation. But in the late 1960s and in the Honecker years, the SED approach changed to recognise (within limits) that a liberated and 'healthy' sexual attitude in young people was an 'attainment of socialism and a flowering of socialist consciousness'.¹² Sexual enlightenment [*Aufklärung*] in young people however

⁵ M. Honecker, 'Mit Optimismus erfüllen wir unseren Auftrag (1977)' in *idem, Zur Bildungspolitik*, 504. On the conveyance of courtesy, see the short stories in two of the GDR's best loved children's books, 'Wie ich Höflichkeit übte' in G. Holtz-Baumert, *Alfons Zitterbacke. Die heiteren Geschichten eines Pechvogels* (Berlin, 1988), 9th ed., 205-10 and 'Wie man sich höflich verhält' in Domma, *Der brave Schüler*, 226-29 as well as 'Das Zauberwort' in Authors' collective, *Reime*, 181f.

⁶ 'Zentralstelle für Kinder- und Jugendliteratur Dresden. Umfrage über Kinderbücher und sozialistische Erziehung' (5.12.1960), BArch DR2/6746.

⁷ J. Cromm, *Familienbildung in Deutschland: soziodemographische Prozesse, Theorie, Recht und Politik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der DDR* (Opladen, 1998), 392.

⁸ See D. Herzog, *Sex after Fascism. Memory and morality in twentieth-century Germany* (Princeton, 2005), esp. ch. 5 'The romance of socialism', 185-219.

⁹ R. Bormann, *Jugend und Liebe* (Leipzig, 1966), 131.

¹⁰ 'Verordnung zum Schutze der Jugend', § 4 (8.9.1959), BArch DR2/1653.

¹¹ Writing in 1966, Rolf Bormann, well known amongst young people through his column 'Professor Dr. Bormann rät' in the magazine *Neues Leben*, argued: 'Other possible forms of expressing the sex drive like masturbation; homosexuality; heterogenous stimulus plays such as petting; and promiscuity must largely be eliminated or surmounted as quickly as possible.' Bormann, *Jugend*, 41. See also 'Was ist pervers?' in G. and D. Weber, *Du und ich* (Berlin, 1959), 95f.

¹² Thanks to Mark Fenemore for sending me the script of his paper entitled 'Sex education in the GDR', held at the conference 'History of Sex Education of the Young in the 20th Century' in Durham, UK (16.4.-17.4.2005), 33 pages, here 20.

remained a 'hot potato' [*ein heißes Eisen*] for Party, educators, teachers and parents.¹³ Both parents and biology teachers tended to stick to the the 'birds and bees approach' when talking about reproduction, which did not satisfy young people's thirst for knowledge regarding questions on love and friendship, as ZIJ studies established.¹⁴ This explains the immense popularity of enlightening literature, whether hard-to-get books,¹⁵ the well-thumbed copies of either *Das Magazin* (catering for young (and older) people's desires with one tasteful nude photograph per month) or *Neues Leben*, featuring franc articles and agony aunts, the West German *BRAVO* magazine, or films that catered for young people's interests, such as the 1978 film *Sieben Sommersprossen* which tells the story of a friendship turning into love; a cult film for youths not only because of its extensive scences featuring nudity.¹⁶

Another moral battleground where the Party and parents were pitched against young people was youth culture in the form of music, dance and fashion. Every decade brought new music which could not be stopped from reaching the GDR across the airwaves: from Boogie-Woogie, Rock'n'Roll, Beat and Rock music to later Punk and Pop, all of which alienated and revolted Party and parents in equal measure. In the 1950s, the SED sharply disapproved of this 'immoral' Anglo-American mass culture and concentrated on mocking teenage idols like Elvis Presley in the press.¹⁷ Whilst the dislike did not abate, the Party sought to rescue 'its' youth from the corruptive influence of these forms of youth culture, 'hot' music with its concomitant reprobate dances, clothes and hairstyle by offering an alternative youth culture 'made in GDR'. After the very rigid phase following the building of the Berlin Wall in the early 1960s, but especially during what is known as the phase of 'liberalisation', the years from 1963 to 1965, youth policy began to take the wishes of young people seriously.¹⁸ Hans W.*, a metalworker from Erfurt born in 1955, remembered: 'Suddenly we were allowed to

¹³ K. Bach, *Geschlechterziehung in der sozialistischen Oberschule* (Berlin, 1974), 15.

¹⁴ 'Einstellungen von Diskobesuchern zur Diskothek und zur Musik. Bericht zu ausgewählten Ergebnissen der ZIJ-Untersuchung "Disko 77"' (December 1978), BArch DC4/649, 28; 'Funktion und Zusammenwirken der sozialistischen Massenmedien bei der ideologischen Erziehung der Schuljugend, dargestellt an Schülern der Klassen 9 und 10' (December 1976), BArch DC4/618, 76.

¹⁵ Heinrich Brückner, *Denkst du schon an Liebe? Fragen des Reifealters, dargestellt für junge Leser* (Berlin, 1976); S. Schnabl, *Mann und Frau intim: Fragen des gesunden und des gestörten Geschlechtslebens* (Rudolstadt, 1969); K. Trummer (ed.), *Unter vier Augen gesagt...Fragen und Antworten über Freundschaft und Liebe* (Berlin, 1966).

¹⁶ '*Sieben Sommersprossen*', DEFA (1978), director and scriptwriter: Hermann Zschoche. On nudity in the GDR, see J. McLellan's forthcoming article, 'State socialist bodies: East German nudism from ban to boom'.

¹⁷ Cf. U. G. Poiger: *Jazz, Rock and Rebels. Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley, 2000).

¹⁸ Cf. M. Fenemore, 'The limits of repression and reform. SED youth policy in the early 1960s' in Major and Osmond, *The Workers' and Peasants' State*, 171-89.

watch films and listen to music that had been taboo until then.’¹⁹ and Hermann B., an accountant from Gotha born in 1949, said: ‘Finally we could realise our own ideals by pursuing certain hobbies, like playing the music of famous bands in our own band.’²⁰ The youth radio DT64 was founded; the East German record company AMIGA pressed the first Beatles record; ‘home-made’ combos, ‘Beat formations’ and Rock bands that emerged during these years found a broad fan base amongst young people; and film and literature openly addressed young people’s problems.²¹ The *Jugendkommuniqué* [Youth Communiqué] of September 1963 genuinely aimed to give ‘more trust and responsibility to the youth’:²² ‘It cannot be tolerated to dismiss “uncomfortable” questions of young people as irritating or even as provocations, since through such practices, the youth are pushed down to road to hypocrisy.’²³ Reflecting the Party’s youth policies in general over the 1960s and 1970s, which vacillated between tolerance and repression, the *Jugendkommuniqué* had promised new leeway, set however within limits. The oft-quoted passage ‘youth can dance to their own beat, as long as they are not out of tune’²⁴ is vividly illustrated by Doris P.’s experience of a concert in Sömmerda in the mid-1960s:

We had got the tickets through the FDJ. The group was called ‘Soul Fool’. They were gaudily dressed and played ‘Mademoiselle Ninette’, so we stood up and wanted to clap our hands. The FDJ *Ordnungsgruppe* [bouncers] came and told us to sit down again otherwise they’d throw us out. We only wanted to express our passion, nothing else, but that wasn’t allowed at public events like that.²⁵

With the SED getting cold feet over the granting of too many liberties, 1965 saw the return to state-imposed morality; the alarming behaviour of young West Berliners at a Rolling Stones concert in September and a demonstration by young people in Leipzig in October against a ban on amateur Beat music groups had served as proof of the moral failure of non-socialist youth culture. The clampdown started with the campaign against ‘loafers’ [*Gammler*] who had enforced hair cuts and were sent to work camps,²⁶ and

¹⁹ Hans W.* questionnaire (25.3.2004).

²⁰ Hermann B. questionnaire (21.5.2004).

²¹ Cf. M. Rauhut, *Rock in der DDR 1964 bis 1989* (Bonn, 2002).

²² Cf. D. Wierling, ‘Der Staat, die Jugend und der Westen. Texte zu Konflikten der 1960er Jahre’ in Lüdtke and Becker, *Akten*, 223f; *idem*, ‘Erzieher und Erzogene: Zu Generationenprofilen in der DDR der 60er Jahre’ in A. Schildt *et al.* (eds), *Dynamische Zeiten. Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften* (Hamburg, 2000), 633ff. See also ‘Bericht über den Stand der Arbeit mit dem Jugendkommuniqué und dem Entwurf des Jugendgesetzes’ (12.11.1963), BArch DR2/7790; ‘Pressestelle: Zusammenstellung von Argumenten zum Jugendkommuniqué’ (October 1963), BArch DR2/7245.

²³ Ohse, *Jugend*, 65.

²⁴ Wierling in Kaelble, 409.

²⁵ Doris P. questionnaire (21.3.2004).

²⁶ An unfortunate choice of means, as the writer Brigitte Reimann remarked: ‘Das hatten wir doch schon mal?’ [Didn’t we have that already?]. Cf. Ohse, *Jugend*, 98ff.

culminated in the 'Kahlschlagplenum' of the SED Central Committee in December 1965,²⁷ which restricted artistic freedom once more, silenced Wolf Biermann with a publication and stage ban, and banned books and films which failed to paint a sufficiently uplifting picture of life in the GDR.²⁸ After the 'clear-cutting' [*Kahlschlag*] plenum, the FDJ proposed an alternative to the immoral 'guitar competitions' in the form of the cultivated 'FDJ-Singebewegung'. These were guitar groups (4000 in the early 1970s) in schools, factories, universities and youth clubs that played a mixture of different styles of music (Rock, Jazz, Folk and Skiffle) and traditional as well as their own songs,²⁹ that were popular from the mid-1960s until the late 1970s, especially with the 'progressive' young generation, i.e. EOS pupils and students. Teacher Alfons G. remembered the Salzmannschule's own *Singeklub* 'Angela Davis': 'This really gained ground, the pupils went for it and enjoyed it. Especially because there were a number of texts that were open minded, often cheeky and outspoken.'³⁰

In the 1970s, the state's demands regarding young people's taste in music, haircut and clothes were a lot less dogmatic than they had been in the 1960s. Ulla M., who was a teenager in the mid-1960s, remembered getting strange looks for her dress style:

Western music and fashion set the trend. I was lucky because my mother was a tailor and so I had the first flares and the shortest skirts. Although it wasn't necessarily expected that I should have worn these modern clothes: I came from a 'progressive' home, my father worked for the police and some people thought I shouldn't walk around dressed like that.³¹

But by the time of the FDJ's *Weltfestspiele* in Berlin in 1973, mini skirts were being worn with the blue blouse of the FDJ, the GDR had started its own production of 'rivet trousers' [jeans],³² and even male FDJ functionaries sported hair that went below their ears. Despite these bold statements describing the general trend, we need to remember that in the same way that not all young people were fans of Beat music and suffered the

²⁷ Cf. G. Agde (ed.), *Kahlschlag. Das 11. Plenum des ZK der SED 1965. Studien und Dokumente* (Berlin, 2000), 2nd ed.

²⁸ Writers who were criticised included Volker Braun, Peter Hacks, Stephan Heym, Günter Kunert and Heiner Müller. One exemplary film case is 'Denk bloß nicht ich heule' [Don't think I'm crying], made in 1964/65 (director: Frank Vogel). It tells the story of Peter, a rebellious 17-year old ex-EOS pupil who was relegated because he challenged the idea of socialism in an essay. It was shown publicly for the first time after the Wende. Cf. C. Mückenberger (ed.), *Prädikat: besonders schädlich. Filmtexte* (Berlin, 1990).

²⁹ L. Kirchenwitz, 'Die FDJ und ihre "Singebewegung"' in Gotschlich, *Links*, 327. On the *Singeklubs*, see also O. Schäfer, *Pädagogische Untersuchungen zur Musikkultur der FDJ. Ein erziehungswissenschaftlicher Beitrag zur Totalitarismusforschung* (Berlin, 1998).

³⁰ Alfons G. interview. See also 'Pädagogischer Rat' (2.2.1971), SArch/Protokollbuch 11.2.1969-4.4.1972.

³¹ Ulla M. questionnaire.

³² Cf. R. Menzel, *Jeans in der DDR* (Berlin, 2004).

state's intrusion into the formation of personal tastes,³³ the implementation of moral values also differed from school to school, and of course from family to family. Teacher Walter S. remembered his caution in teaching pupils about what was seen as right and wrong by the Party: 'The story with the long hair was handled in many different ways, since we had seen what had happened with the once hated jeans; things were different from one moment to the next.'³⁴

For Edgar Wibeau, the 17-year old hero of Ulrich Plenzdorf's novel *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (1973), jeans were 'an attitude and not trousers'.³⁵ He told the following story:

Somebody told me the tale of a good-goody, average mark A and better, son of splendid parents, only he couldn't find any mates. In his area there was this gang that tipped over park benches, broke windows and stuff like that. No sod could catch them. The leader was an absolutely shrewd boy. But one more or less nice day it happened. They caught him. The blighter had hair down to his shoulders – typical! Only, it was a wig, and in truth he was precisely this splendid goody-goody. One day, he had had enough, and he got himself a wig.³⁶

This brings us round to the subject of moral vices which, unsurprisingly, did exist in the GDR. Since all negative behaviour patterns were said to be 'alien' [*wesensfremd*] to socialism, the causes of immoral behaviour such as crime and rowdiness were primarily said to be situated in the 'politically-ideologically diverted' situation in the parental home and the negative influence the class enemy.³⁷ Linked to crime was the abuse of alcohol, as numerous MfS reports evidence, yet the social phenomenon that alcohol effectively substituted for drugs in the GDR, was not recognised by the authorities.³⁸ A ZIJ investigation into the vice of smoking, which was conducted with pupils aged 13 to 19 in Leipzig over eight years, showed that EOS pupils had taken parents' and teachers' warnings of the danger of the drug most seriously and 'behaved most positively' with regard to smoking; whereas apprentices, i.e. future workers, were smoking the most.³⁹

³³ A ZIJ survey of 1100 young disco visitors (average age seventeen) from the regions of Dresden, Halle and Leipzig in 1977, for example, established that the second-most popular kind of music after Beat was organ music! Cf. 'Einstellungen von Diskobesuchern zur Diskothek und zur Musik. Bericht zu ausgewählten Ergebnissen der ZIJ-Untersuchung "Disko 77" (December 1978), BArch DC4/649, 25.

³⁴ Walter S. interview.

³⁵ The famous passage on jeans can be found in U. Plenzdorf, *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (Rostock, 1977), 6th ed., 20f.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁷ Cf. 'Einschätzung der wesentlichen Ursachen, begünstigenden Bedingungen u Umstände für negative Verhaltensweisen sowie staatsfeindliche und andere kriminelle Handlungen jugendlicher Personen bis zu 25 Jahren aufgrund von Ergebnissen der politisch-operativen Arbeit des MfS, insbesondere in der Bearbeitung von Untersuchungsverfahren, im Zeitraum vom 1.1.1965 bis 30.6.1967' (no date), BStU MfS HA IX 12036 MF, 19-24. On rowdiness and juvenile delinquency in the GDR, see Fenemore, *Nonconformity*, ch. 8, 252-286; S. Lamnek (ed.), *Jugend und Gewalt – A Never Ending Story* (Opladen, 1996); H. Aue, *Jugendkriminalität in der DDR* (Berlin, 1976).

³⁸ Wilhelmi, *Jugend*, 124.

³⁹ 'Zusatzinformation zum Rauchverhalten Jugendlicher' (Juli 1976), BArch FDJ B 6285, 11f.

Violent behaviour was, naturally enough, considered to be a vice which should not be found in the socialist personality. However, this was not a moral absolute and attitudes changed over time. In the Ulbricht years, it was acceptable for youngsters to resort to a little violence here and there to serve a good cause. When a youngster spat at a picture of Walter Ulbricht in Berlin in 1961, the regional PO leadership stated: 'We are concerned that, although schools and pioneer groups do react now to such provocations, they have not always done so with the sufficient swiftness, severity and punch. In this case, the pioneers should have unhesitatingly responded with manual arguments [i.e. fists].'⁴⁰ Other instances where (mostly the older and male) members of the FDJ resorted to force with the state's approval were the '*Aktion Blitz gegen NATO-Sender*' in September 1961, when all over the country television aerials were 'turned to peace and socialism', or the above mentioned action taken against long-haired fans of Beat music in 1965. Under Honecker, the youth organisation no longer endorsed this 'morally good' direct action. Despite the emphasis on socialist military education in the 1970s, in everyday life the demands on pioneers and FDJ members were for decency and peaceableness, a combination of moral values which sometimes gave way to jokes along the following lines: 'Will you stop fighting!', shouts Anita. 'As pioneers you must be a paragon of virtue.' 'Precisely!', exclaim the scufflers, 'to be a pioneer means to be a fighter.'⁴¹

Lastly, the escapist nature of education, with its emphasis on the sunny socialist world should be noted. There was even a clause in the pioneer laws instructing children to be cheerful.⁴² That there were also darker moments in life was not part of a socialist personality's socialisation process. Topics such as pain, suffering, illness, disability, mourning, loss and solitude were avoided, and so a large part of existence was ignored in the effort to create socialist personalities. Harald M. noticed this tendency in socialist art: 'As a matter of principle, exhibitions concentrated on showing portraits of workers with laughing faces. Other depictions were frowned upon as "western".'⁴³ Death was treated as a taboo since it was, as Wolfgang Emmerich wrote, 'an antagonism that needed to be suppressed by a socialist society which declared all antagonistic conflicts to be antediluvian'.⁴⁴ The only places where these experiences were freely addressed

⁴⁰ 'Pionierorganisation "Ernst Thälmann", Bezirksleitung Berlin' (23.11.1961), SAPMO-BArch DY25/PO1212/II.

⁴¹ *Die Trommel* (15/1977), 1.

⁴² Cf. Gesetze der Thälmannpioniere: 'We Thälmann pioneers keep our body clean and healthy, exercise regularly and are cheerful.' in Felsmann, *Beim kleinen Trompeter*, 313.

⁴³ Harald M. questionnaire.

⁴⁴ W. Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (Berlin, 2000), 250.

were the Churches. The change in leadership in 1971 and the ensuing cultural (re)liberalisation did herald a change.⁴⁵ The film *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* (1973) and the above mentioned *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* were immensely popular with young people, perhaps because they brought the subject of death in socialism out of the closet as well as capturing the mood of fading optimism.

‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’: Young People’s Janus face

The internalisation of one particular moral value, honesty, proved to be exceptionally difficult for young people. The reason for this was that the wide gap between the reality of life and the idealised version portrayed by the Party, media and textbooks was recognised by most people, but they were compelled to deny it publicly. Like ‘the Emperor’s New Clothes’, everyone pretended things were marvellous, ‘*Die Partei, die Partei, die hat immer recht!*’,⁴⁶ and hardly anyone dared point out the deficiencies. The suppression of one’s honest opinion in public had a profound effect on people’s personality and behaviour, such as the thorough screening of people before forming true friendships and the strong bond existing between family members for example. In this context, the etymology of the word personality is interesting: it comes from the Latin *persona*; which designates, amongst other things, ‘an actor’s mask’; ‘masking one’s inner thoughts and feelings’; and ‘social façade and public image’.⁴⁷ Wearing a ‘mask’ in public, or having ‘two faces’, one in private and another in public, like the Roman god Janus, was a common occurrence in East Germany.

Archival evidence suggests that most pupils had developed a Janus-faced attitude by the early 1960s. There was a discrepancy between formally good achievements in civics lessons and privately uttered opinions. The regime was well aware of this through reports being sent from the schools to Berlin and also through discussions of this problem in the press. In 1963, FDJ functionaries of the Kreuzschule Dresden were quoted as saying:

Pupils often discuss things during breaks differently than during lessons. Some think that the teacher will look askance at you if you ask searching questions. One should change the method of evaluating pupils in the school report. The instruction to ‘discuss

⁴⁵ Prior to 1971, only three notable writers had broken with the taboo of death: Uwe Johnson (*Mutmaßungen über Jakob*, 1959), Erwin Strittmatter (*Ole Bienkopp*, 1963) and Christa Wolf (*Nachdenken über Christa T.*, 1968). Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Eng. : ‘The Party is always right.’ From the poem *Die Partei*, written by Louis Fünberg (1950), which was later set to music to become a well-known song.

⁴⁷ Entry ‘persona’ in *Chambers Dictionary*, 1219.

positively' inevitably causes some pupils to only say in lessons what is officially desired.⁴⁸

The increasing superiority of the capitalist world over the socialist one in economic terms rendered the civics textbooks' insistence on the modernity of the GDR's machinery, for example, inane and preposterous. This put both teachers and pupils into an awkward situation, because if either of them addressed problems openly, it could have been interpreted as criticism or provocation of the state with negative consequences. Hence it was logical that pupils kept quiet. In the early 1960s, some teachers at the Salzmannschule were still looking for the reason for the 'missing trust' when 'some pupils or whole classes show a certain self-restraint [*Befangenheit*] in discussing political questions openly with their civics teacher'; whilst others already knew the answer: 'Pupils keen to obtain good marks sometimes answer questions in the way that they are expected by the teacher, regardless of whether the answer is their own conviction or not.'⁴⁹ Reading through several volumes of sixth-formers final evaluation forms, it is striking that almost everyone was judged 'reserved', 'demure', 'abstaining' in political discussions; some 'can be moved only reluctantly to express their opinion'; some 'do not take part in political discussions as a matter of principle'. The reasons for this sort of behaviour were put down as 'quiet temperament' or 'uncertainty about the fundamental political questions of our time'.⁵⁰ In 1968, the ZIJ gave a warning about this development, stating that 'knowledge does not automatically turn into beliefs and convictions. The accumulation of knowledge or the reproduction and repetition of political and historical facts, for example in civics, do not produce convinced socialists.'⁵¹

One of the SED's toughest obstacles in 'producing convinced socialists' was the fact that people were able to get a second opinion on life in the GDR. Whilst it was able to limit the access to western print media, the effect radio and television from the Federal Republic had was very significant.⁵² But in the words of Stefan Wolle, 'Nothing harmed the GDR more than its own propaganda.'⁵³ It was the juxtaposition of the

⁴⁸ 'Pressestelle. Zusammenstellung von Argumenten zum Jugendkommuniqué' (October 1963), BArch DR2/7245.

⁴⁹ 'Sitzung des Pädagogischen Rates mit der ZSGL', SArch/PPR (ca. October 1963).

⁵⁰ Cf. various '*Beurteilungen*', SArch/Abitur 1961 and 1962.

⁵¹ 'Zur politisch-ideologischen Lage der Jugend der DDR. Eine Zusammenfassung von Ergebnissen aus Untersuchungen des ZIJ von 1966 bis 1968' (1968), BArch DC4/311, 106.

⁵² On television in the GDR, see Lee, W.-S., *Das Fernsehen im geteilten Deutschland 1952-1989. Ideologische Konkurrenz und programmliche Kooperation* (Potsdam, 2003); F. Tennert, I. König, *Flimmerstunden. Daten zum Fernsehgebrauch ostdeutscher Kinder bis 1989* (Leipzig, 2003); S. Barck et al., 'The fettered media. Controlling public debate' in Jaraus, *Dictatorship*, 213-39.

⁵³ S. Wolle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur. Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971-1989* (Munich, 1999), 108.

official version of the world according to the SED with the relatively objective broadcasts from across the border which fed the scepticism in young people's minds. There is plenty of archival evidence to support this: 'If you want know what's going on, you have to listen to both sides.'⁵⁴ And it was not just old cynics who ridiculed the Party's habit of ignoring problems and reporting untruthfully in order to keep up appearances, as this graffiti discovered on a blackboard in a Berlin school testified:

Lieber Gott mach mich blind,
daß ich nicht die Mauer find.
Lieber Gott mach mich taub,
daß ich nicht dem RIAS glaub.
Bin ich taub und bin ich blind
bin ich Ulbrichts liebstes Kind.⁵⁵

Yet the need to lie about one's favourite television programmes was not universal. As with the reasons for a Janus-faced attitude generally, it depended on whether or not there was something to be lost, for example favourable reports for access to the EOS. Teacher and SED-member Walter S. remembered that in the later 1960s, his son Friedrich was asked at school whether he knew the West German children's programme '*Augsburger Puppenkiste*', which he answered in the affirmative:

But the funny thing was that at that time we didn't own a television. Friedrich got his knowledge on the tomcat Mikesch from our neighbours where there were always loads of children all watching television together. And this LPG farmer didn't give a hoot whether they knew that he was watching the West or not. He was needed and if they made a problem, then they could find someone else to do his work.⁵⁶

In contrast to the regime's attempts to prevent the reception of western broadcasting under Ulbricht; by 1973, Honecker was resigned to the fact that the overwhelming majority of GDR citizens were 'exiting' the GDR every evening.⁵⁷ Henning S. said he had never 'intentionally' ignored the GDR's own television programmes, but it was simply that 'less interesting things were shown there'. He was also keen on listening to *Sender Freies Berlin II* radio, and knew the West German politicians better than the East Germans ones (whereas for his pen pal in Lüneburg in the West, whose family did not own a television and who therefore listened to the many children's programmes on GDR radio, it was the other way around: 'On the bus he was looking for Soviet soldiers,

⁵⁴ Cf. 'Einflüsse der Westsender auf Denk- und Verhaltensweisen Jugendlicher' (August 1978), BArch B FDJ 5852; 'Analyse der Kreisberichte über die politisch-ideologische Situation an den Schulen' (July 1963), SAPMO-BArch DY24/1375.

⁵⁵ Freely translates as: 'Dear God, make me blind/ That I shall the Wall not find./ Dear God, make me deaf/ To the broadcasts from the West./ If I am but deaf and blind/ I am Ulbricht's favourite child.' Cf. 'Information' (ca. December 1961), SAPMO-BArch DY25/PO1212/II.

⁵⁶ Walter S. questionnaire.

⁵⁷ Wollé, *Die heile Welt*, 107ff.

in arts he drew an LPG when they were asked to draw a farm, and today he still knows more pioneer songs than I do.’)⁵⁸

The Janus-faced attitude of young people persisted through the 1970s and 1980s and was noted by the authorities. It was particularly apparent on occasions like the *Pfingsttreffen* and *Nationales Jugendfestival*, where there would be pompous, choreographed shows of support by the youth for the nomenclature; but in reality the delegates were more interested in meeting foreign students and enjoying attractions like concerts and shopping facilities in Berlin. Whilst the GDR media called the National Youth Festival of 1979 ‘an avowal to our Republic’, the MfS noted that the hosts’ willingness to welcome young people ‘had never been as low as today’; that instead of FDJ members, they would ‘rather receive visitors from the West and western TV’; and that generally, ‘the citizens want to be left in peace’.⁵⁹ It seems that by the early 1980s, hypocrisy was so much taken for granted by the authorities that problems that still needed to be remedied by teachers no longer feature in reports. There is no doubt however that the Janus face was omnipresent. The testimonies in Gabriele Eckart’s book show this very clearly,⁶⁰ as does Thomas Davey’s study on children in the divided Berlin from 1987: ‘Children frequently prefaced their responses to many of my questions by asking “Do you want my opinion or the state’s?”’⁶¹

As a young man in the mid-1960s, Hartmut König of *Oktoberklub* fame had criticised the gulf between public and private opinion in a famous song: ‘*Sag mir, wo du stehst und welchen Weg du gehst. Wir haben ein Recht darauf, dich zu erkennen. Auch nickende Masken nützen uns nichts.*’⁶² As so often, the words did not match reality. Instead of wanting to know the truth to make things better, by making life very difficult for young people who dared to take off their masks, the SED itself contributed to the pervasive atmosphere of untruthfulness instead of honesty.

‘The peace dove must have claws’: socialist military education

Socialist military education [*Wehrerziehung*] did not begin in 1978 with the introduction of *Wehrkundeunterricht* (WKU); it was only the last and most controversial insertion of military education into the curriculum.⁶³ Its beginnings go

⁵⁸ Henning S. questionnaire.

⁵⁹ ‘Abschlußbericht “Jubiläum 30” (10.10.1979), BStU MfS-HA IX 18560.

⁶⁰ Eckart, *So sehe ich*.

⁶¹ T. Davey, *A Generation Divided* (Durham/North Carolina, 1987), 98.

⁶² Eng.: ‘Tell me where you stand and which way you are going. We have the right to know who you are, nodding masks are of no use to us.’ Cf. Zentralrat der FDJ, *Lieder der FDJ*, 146f.

⁶³ For an in-depth overview of premilitary education, see C. Sachse, *Aktive Jugend – wohlbezogen und diszipliniert: Wehrerziehung in der DDR als Sozialisations- und Herrschaftsinstrument 1960-1973*

back to the year 1952, with the militarisation of the FDJ (ordered by Stalin) and the founding of the paramilitary 'Society for Sports and Technology' (GST). The 1960s brought two principal innovations: a clause in the 1965 Education Act which bound all educational institutions to direct education towards the service of national defence⁶⁴ and the introduction of the FDJ '*Hans-Beimler-Wettbewerbe*'⁶⁵ in 1968, which were annual competitions for pupils of years 8 to 10 involving sporting exercises, first aid, orientation running and theoretical military knowledge. The 'increasing aggressiveness' of western militarism necessitated the intensification of military education in the 1970s: the introduction of the AG Defence Formation [*Wehrausbildung*] for pupils of years 9 and 10 in 1973, and a clause in the Youth Law of 1974, obliging young people to gain premilitary knowledge and to serve in the army.⁶⁶

Military education was supposed to instil values such as a sense of responsibility for the defence of socialism, patriotism, vigilance, discipline, courage, resourcefulness, endurance and determination in young people. The adornment that the SED gave to Picasso's peace dove, 'the peace dove must have claws' [*die Friedenstaube muß auch Krallen haben*], encapsulates the contradiction inherent in the regime's policy of military education: it defined itself as peace-loving and antimilitaristic; but it crammed young people's lives with as many military components as possible.⁶⁷ Whether in kindergarten, school or spare time, militaristic forms of organisation, rituals and education were ubiquitous. The youngest played with 'peace toys', i.e. toy soldiers and tanks. They learnt to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' soldiers; the former were there to protect their kindergartens, mum and dad whilst the latter planned to invade their socialist homeland. At school, the curriculum was peppered with military references in nearly all subjects, from multiplying x-numbers of tanks in maths to throwing fake hand grenades in PE. Familial solidarity was employed when older brothers of pupils visited their school to tell them about the 'Honourable Service' [*Ehrendienst*] with the NVA. Days out meeting NVA soldiers were 'an adventure', or at

(Münster, 2000); *idem*, 'Vormilitärische Ausbildung in der DDR' in Bildungsministerium Brandenburg, *In Linie angetreten* – vol. 2 (Berlin, 1996), 211-314. Military education is also a cornerstone of Emmanuel Droit's research. Cf. 'L'éducation socialiste au quotidien dans les écoles de Berlin: réception de l'idéologie et des pratiques éducatives 1949-1989' (forthcoming doctoral thesis, Université Paris 1, 2006).

⁶⁴ *Bildungsgesetz*, § 5, section 2, 90.

⁶⁵ Named after Hans Beimler (1895-1936), a German communist who died in the Spanish Civil War.

⁶⁶ *Jugendgesetz*, § 24, 33.

⁶⁷ On the origins of 'militarised socialism', which lay as much in Russia's as in Germany's past, see C. Ross, "'Protecting the accomplishments of socialism?' The (re)militarisation of life in the GDR' in Major and Osmond, *The Workers' and Peasants' State*, 88ff.

least 'a welcome change since there would be no school'⁶⁸ for pupils, when they 'would wander round their army base, try out the scrambling wall and look at the soldiers' barracks and weapons.'⁶⁹ Technically minded pupils could subscribe to two magazines dedicated to military topics: *Armeerundschau* and the GST magazine *Sport & Technik*. PO and FDJ organised 'pioneer manoeuvres' which involved orientation with map and compass, first aid and sporting exercises.⁷⁰ They were very popular with youngsters since they satisfied their sense of adventure and offered campfire romanticism, with Soljanka from the field kitchen [*Gulaschkanone*] often being described as the 'best thing of all'.⁷¹

Older pupils, both boys and girls, were encouraged to join the GST, whose principal purpose it was to secure long-service recruits for the army and prepare boys for the demands of military life and civil defence. The GST was able to offer a range of adventurous sports such as parachuting, shooting, diving and radio communications, so it was popular with boys interested in technology and motor mechanics. There is little evidence that the military aspects left any impression: most people most appreciated the opportunity to pass a driving test for various vehicles and even boats cheaply or for free. GST camps during the holidays were often simply seen as a pleasant contrast to the daily grind at school; although boys with low sporting abilities dreaded the military-style exercise (going through the same emotion when called up for military service in the NVA). It is open to question whether the GST did anything to prepare young people for the defence of the socialist homeland: reports show that ammunition thefts increased following the events of 13 August 1961 and 21 August 1968;⁷² whilst in the late 1970s, gliders and aeroplanes were stolen 'in treacherous attempts to leave the GDR'. The three such attempts made in 1979 were successful,⁷³ which suggests that, if nothing else, GST training did instil initiative and some technical skills.

The introduction of WKU was hotly debated in the Western press⁷⁴ and by the Churches in the GDR. Christian parents in particular petitioned for their children's

⁶⁸ Petra R.* questionnaire.

⁶⁹ Brigitte F. questionnaire.

⁷⁰ Cf. 'Soldaten sind vorbeimarschieren. Beiträge zur sozialistischen Wehrerziehung', supplement of *Pionierleiter* (24/1978), 6.

⁷¹ As mentioned by Lothar M. questionnaire (21.3.2004) and Stefan G.* questionnaire (28.5.2004), growing up in the 1960s and 1980s respectively.

⁷² Cf. 'Abschlußbericht über Ergebnisse der Arbeit der GST 1961' (ca. 1962), SAPMO-BArch DY59/91; 'Einschätzung der besonderen Vorkommnisse im Jahre 1968' (18.2.1969), SAPMO-BArch DY59/136.

⁷³ 'Bericht über besondere Vorkommnisse im Ausbildungsjahr 1978/79' (6.11.1979), SAPMO-BArch DY59/244.

⁷⁴ Newspaper articles relating to military education in the GDR from 1976 to 1979 are collected in BStU MfS ZAIG 8844 and BStU MfS ZAIG 8845.

exemption from classes,⁷⁵ which in year 9 amounted to about 90 lessons and in year 10 to 26, dedicated to theoretical questions of national defence and practical exercises (mainly shooting and military drill for boys and first aid for girls). The protests were unsuccessful; with the SED defusing complaints by pointing out that WKU would enable Christians to practice brotherly love [*Nächstenliebe*] in case of disaster and provide effective help to others in civil defence.⁷⁶ Christian D., a pastor from Erfurt, was born in 1965 and so was one of the first to experience WKU. He remembered the following scene from one lesson:

The teacher, a former NVA officer, asked the question: 'Why is socialist defence always victorious?'. Nobody wanted to give the answer since it was already written. ('Because the defence is carried by the whole people who all belong to one class.') So I said 'In the next war, there will be no victors, only losers.', which caused the teacher to completely lose his temper and was later used to argue that I wasn't 'mature' enough to go to the EOS.⁷⁷

The above example illustrates that thinking for oneself was not the aim of WKU. The repetitive and shallow rhetoric used in these lessons as well as in civics and FDJ and GST meetings rendered the whole issue of military education unattractive to young people. A fairly typical comment on young people's attitudes is this one dating from 1969: 'The aggressiveness of West German imperialism is often underestimated and the willingness for aggression of the *Bundeswehr* soldiers is often trivialised [*verniedlicht*]'.⁷⁸ Familial ties to the Federal Republic proved to be stronger than the negative propaganda about West German soldiers. Similarly, the notion of internationalism and brotherly feelings amongst people from the socialist camp had still a long way to go, as this highly symbolic incident recorded in July 1968 shows:

Students from Potsdam were violently threatened in a restaurant in Senec (ČSSR) by a group of male Czechs, because they were thought to be Soviet citizens. When the students revealed themselves to be from the GDR, the Czechs did the fascist greeting and sang the *Deutschlandlied*.⁷⁹

Also, the more the SED painted the picture of a smartly shaven young man in uniform as the paragon of virtue, the more uncool this sort of personality was for teenage boys, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s when youth culture made it cool to have the longest possible hair and the scruffiest clothes. It took great courage to refuse any aspect of military education and expose oneself to accusations of being hostile to the state and to

⁷⁵ 'Einschätzung der Eingaben gegen bzw. zur Einführung und Gestaltung des Wehrunterrichts' MfS-HA XX 4269 (1978), 74-101.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Christian D. questionnaire (28.4.2004).

⁷⁸ 'Abschlußbeinschätzung der wehrpolitischen und wehrsportlichen Aktion "Signal 20"' (19.6.1969), BArch DY30/IVA2/12/167.

⁷⁹ 'Informationsbericht' (1.8.1968), BArch DY30/IVA2/12/24.

peace. Surely, this argument was unanswerable. Consequences of such refusal depended on individual circumstances, but ranged from non-admittance or relegation from the EOS to imprisonment for pacifists who did not take up the concession to serve as 'spade' or 'construction' soldiers (available from 1964), but refused military service right out.⁸⁰

The introduction of compulsory military aspects into young people's lives, notably conscription in 1962 and WKU, was met without enthusiasm and some hostility by the majority of those whom it affected. In 1962, opinions voiced were for example 'Now the national hymn has to be changed since it says there "No mother shall mourn her son ever again."', or the question 'Why was conscription only introduced after the 13 August; if this would have been done earlier, all young men would have bunked off to the West.'⁸¹ The shocked reaction by a considerable number of young people, and to a lesser extent also by teachers, to the intervention of the Warsaw Pact armies in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 also showed their disappointment at the way the dream of a 'socialism without tanks', as the dramatist Heiner Müller called it, had died.⁸² In 1978, pupils and parents questioned mostly the regime's credibility with regard to its much-vaunted policy of peace and détente, and the necessity to add yet another form of military education: 'The GDR needs skilled workers, not soldiers.'⁸³ By the late 1970s, young people were tired of educators clinging on to the old friend-foe way of thinking that disregarded the rapprochement between the two ideological camps. ZIJ studies undertaken in the late 1970s and 1980s underlined their satiation with small-calibre shooting, military sports and socialist national defence. Whilst in 1978, (only) 39% of 15- and 16-year olds had vouched their 'willingness to defend the GDR risking my life', 48% would do so 'with reservations', 10% 'hardly' and 3% 'not at all'; for 1988, the corresponding percentages were 18, 39, 25 and 18 percent.⁸⁴

Contrary to the image presented in children's books and songs, obligatory military service was mostly viewed as an unwelcome interruption in one's life rather than 'Honourable Service'. Those wanting to make a career in the NVA were not highly

⁸⁰ Between 1962 and 1989, the total number of conscientious objectors amounted to only ca. 6000. Cf. B. Eisenfeld, 'Wehrdienstverweigerung als Opposition' in K.-D. Henke *et al.* (eds.), *Widerstand und Opposition in der DDR* (Cologne, 1999), 242.

⁸¹ 'Bericht aus Dresden' (January 1962), Barch DR2/6966.

⁸² Reports and statistics on young people daubing slogans and producing pamphlets against the 'supporting measures' of the socialist states can be found in BStU MfS-HA IX 2670; BStU MfS-HA XX/AKD 804; BStU BVfS Cottbus, AKG 026.

⁸³ 'Stand der Vorbereitung der Einführung des Wehrunterrichtes ab Schuljahr 1978/79' (28.6.1978), BStU MfS-HA XX 3879.

⁸⁴ P. Förster, 'Die Entwicklung des politischen Bewußtseins der DDR-Jugend zwischen 1966 und 1989' in W. Friedrich *et al.* (eds), *Das Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung Leipzig 1966-1990. Geschichte, Methoden, Erkenntnisse* (Berlin, 1999), 155.

regarded by their classmates. *'Ob Eins oder Vier, wir werden Offizier.'*⁸⁵ implied that high academic achievement was not required. Increasingly, career soldiers came from families where the father was already a member of the forces.

It is proper for any state to inform its young people on national defence policy and to motivate them to serve their country as soldiers. This was not only the case in socialist countries; the United Kingdom has the Cadet Force and the USA the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps. It is however morally wrong to use an ideological 'concept of the enemy' [*Feindbild*] as the core of the motivation, as was the case in the GDR. Most young people felt this instinctively. They saw no need for the peace dove to have claws; their *Feindbild* was an abstract one, since they had been lucky enough not to experience war; unlike the antifascist elders who had been responsible for setting up the system of military education. Ultimately, the attempts to motivate the youth of the GDR to defend their country were futile.

A question of conscience: *Jugendweihe* and confirmation

The *Jugendweihe* was an important milestone in the CV of a socialist personality. Much has been published on this subject already,⁸⁶ therefore this section is relatively brief and focuses on a comparison between *Jugendweihe* and confirmation. Harking back to a tradition of the revolutionary German workers movement, *Jugendweihe* in the GDR was a rite of passage for fourteen-year olds that symbolically welcomed them to the adult world. The SED decided to revive the tradition in 1954:

At present, many parents without any inner attachment to the Church send their children to courses in preparation of confirmation and communion since there is no other facility for the ceremonial introduction of the children to the new stage in their lives after leaving basic school. In order to end this situation we will, in the interest of reinforcing civic education, this year commence with the implementation and preparation for the *Jugendweihe* in 1955.⁸⁷

Preceding the *Jugendweihe* was a course of instruction in the form of ten extracurricular *Jugendstunden* in which pupils discussed relatively dull political issues intended to strengthen their bond with the SED; but it also included lively discussions on moral issues such as love and friendship, visits to the theatre and, from the late 1950s

⁸⁵ Eng. : 'Whether [we get] an A or a D, we will become officers.' Erika P. questionnaire.

⁸⁶ See for example H. M. Griese (ed.), *Übergangsrituale im Jugendalter: Jugendweihe, Konfirmation, Firmung und Alternativen* (Münster, 2000); G. Diederich et al., *Jugendweihe in der DDR. Geschichte und politische Bedeutung aus christlicher Sicht* (Schwerin, 1998); T. Gandow, *Jugendweihe – humanistische Jugendfeier* (Munich, 1994).

⁸⁷ Preparations for the introduction of *Jugendweihe* and ensuing conflicts started in March 1954; the first celebrations were held in spring 1955. Cf. G. Diederich, 'SED und Jugendweihe' in *idem, Jugendweihe*, 16. See also 'Dienstberatung' (11.1.1955), BArch DR2/1558; 'Hausmitteilung über die erstmalige Durchführung der Jugendweihe in der DDR' (4.2.1955), BArch DR2/6890.

onwards, visits to one of the three former concentration camps (Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück) in the territory of the GDR to pay homage to antifascist heroes.⁸⁸

The *Jugendweihe* itself was an hour-long festive ceremony, at the centre of which stood the solemn declaration by the youngsters of their moral commitment to work and fight for socialism and the socialist fatherland,⁸⁹ which was framed by a cultural programme and assisted by the participants' extended family. There was also a speech by a local dignitary (usually SED). The quality and effectiveness of these speeches depended very much on the individual, of course, but more often than not, had young people's and their guests' thoughts drifting off to the ensuing large meal rather than sweeping them off their feet in the desired direction. A report from 1964 by a woman who, herself a *Jugendweihe* speaker, attended a ceremony in Cottbus where the speech was given by the neurologist Dr P., illustrates the danger of overdoing the ideological content, and merits being quoted at length:

The speech was tailor-made to set the people against us and alienate them through the *Jugendweihe*. From the programme of the extensive construction of socialism through the development of the NVA in the GDR to nuclear war, everything was in there. Colleague D. from the NDPD spoke to me afterwards and said he had counted him use the word 'socialism' 68 times. [...] Who would be surprised if children and parents cannot hear the word 'socialism' anymore in the next few weeks. I tell you openly, that it was too much even for me after half an hour – and we are used to that kind of speech. [...] The speaker should replace the role of the vicar. This speaker however acted as a lecturer and scare monger. I don't know how many times he made it clear to the youngsters what a difficult thing the construction of socialism is and that there have never been such high demands made as upon their generation. What do we actually expect from such an education of the youth? These poor kids must get frightened of us, and their parents, who want their children to have it better than them, hear from such a speech of course no prospects for their children, even though the word 'prospect' is said ten times. Comrade S.'s wife said to me afterwards: 'We took guests from West Germany to the celebration. I can't tell you how embarrassed I now feel in front of them.' We must bear in mind with these events that through such gaffes, we present ourselves to West Germany as being exactly how they always misrepresent us: as a 'heartless society' that is bent on 'yoking people for a cause that takes their own personality away'.⁹⁰

Once the speeches had been made, everyone received a bunch of carnations and a book, a kind of 'socialist children's bible'⁹¹ or, in Walter Ulbricht's words, 'the book of

⁸⁸ Cf. 'Pädagogisches Institut Zwickau, Lehrstuhl Psychologie: Zwischenbericht über die kasuistischen Untersuchungen der Jugendweihe in 8. Klassen' (20.9.1968), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IVA2/9.05/77.

⁸⁹ Cf. 'Zentraler Ausschluß für Jugendweihe: Politische Richtlinie für die Parteiorganisation zur weiteren Entwicklung der Jugendweihe' (29.6.1960), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/9.05/137.

⁹⁰ 'Agitationskommission Paula A. an Gen. Albert Stief, 1. Sekretär der Bezirksleitung der SED, Cottbus. Betrifft: Jugendweihe' (13.4.1964), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IVA2/9.05/63.

⁹¹ Cf. E. Neubert, 'Jugendweihe' in Eppelmann, *Lexikon*, 430.

truth’,⁹² which hoped to answer any question on the purpose of life in a socialist society. The three editions between 1954 to 1989⁹³ dealt with topics ranging from history, societal development, science and nature to life in socialism. Although they were probably the books with the highest print runs in the GDR, they were also amongst the least read books and usually collected dust on young people’s bookshelves. A ZIJ report from 1975 made only cautious comments on the ‘effectiveness’ of the book, at this stage entitled *Der Sozialismus-Deine Welt*, stating ‘We must presume that in the view of some parents and children, the valuable *Geschenkbuch* [‘book present’] does not find the necessary appreciation and is often treated as a “run of the mill give-away”.’⁹⁴ The most popular articles among a sample of year 9 pupils from Bezirk Leipzig were largely those with topics that teenagers were generally interested in, such as friendship and love, nuclear physics, astronautics, career choice, spare time and genetics, but apparently also the articles on the socialist *Menschenbild* and imperialist ideology.⁹⁵

Religious confirmation, the ritual which *Jugendweihe* challenged, has also been the topic of numerous works.⁹⁶ Confirmation is the act through which young Christians consciously affirm their faith and belonging to the Church. When the *Jugendweihe* sparked off the ‘battle of the worldviews’, both Churches initially adopted a firm either-or position, meaning no confirmation for anyone who participated in the *Jugendweihe*. Although the Catholic Church officially never budged from its position that ‘a Catholic is confirmed and thus devoted to Christ, hence another devotion is out of the question,’⁹⁷ Catholics increasingly also participated in the atheist ritual.⁹⁸ Since their *Firmung* usually took place at the age of twelve, the *Jugendweihe* did not clash as glaringly as it did with the protestant *Konfirmation* at age fourteen. In the words of the SED, ‘the successful development of the *Jugendweihe* and the strong approval of the

⁹² So Ulbricht in the preface of A. Kosing et al., *Weltall-Erde-Mensch: Ein Sammelwerk zur Entwicklungsgeschichte von Natur und Gesellschaft* (Berlin, 1967), 5. Quoted in H.-H. Hertle, S. Wolle, *Damals in der DDR. Der Alltag im Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat* (Munich, 2004), 129.

⁹³ *Weltall-Erde-Mensch* (1954-1975), *Der Sozialismus-Deine Welt* (1975-1982) and *Vom Sinn unseres Lebens* (1982-1989). Cf. *ibid.*, 307.

⁹⁴ Cf. ‘Eine Effektanalyse des Geschenkbuches *Der Sozialismus-Deine Welt* (1975), BArch DC4/646, 18.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁶ See for example C. Griese, ‘Bin ich ein guter Staatsbürger, wenn ich mein Kind nicht zur *Jugendweihe* schicke...“ *Die Deutung von Phänomenen der Erziehungsrealität in Berichten an die Volksbildungsadministration der DDR – Analyse von Wahrnehmungsmustern und Handlungsstrategien im Umgang mit kirchlicher Jugendarbeit* (Hohengehren, 2001); C. Fischer, *Wir haben Euer Gelöbniß vernommen. Konfirmation und Jugendweihe im Spannungsfeld. Ein Beispiel für den Einfluß gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse auf praktische-theologische Argumentationen in der DDR 1949-1978* (Leipzig, 1998), esp. 108-24.

⁹⁷ Cf. Schneider in Dt. Jugendinstitut, *Was für Kinder*, 320.

⁹⁸ In 1958, ca. 12% of all Catholic children participated in the *Jugendweihe*; 1959 already 37.8%; and in 1960 almost 44%. Cf. B. Schäfer, ‘Katholische Kirche und Jugendweihe – Auseinandersetzung mit offenem Ausgang’ in Diederich, *Jugendweihe*, 72.

youth and also the parents caused the Protestant Church to change its rigid stance,⁹⁹ and be willing to compromise by first imposing a probationary one-year deferral of confirmation on 'apostates' in 1958/59.¹⁰⁰

Both Churches eventually had to admit defeat in view of the subtle and less subtle measures such as limited career prospects taken by the SED to make the *Jugendweihe* part and parcel of everyone's biography. The overwhelming majority of Christians became 'tired of the perpetual pressure'¹⁰¹ and played along with the rules of the state by accepting the empty clichés of the *Jugendweihe* and pragmatically using it as just another occasion for a family celebration. By the late 1960s, double participation, being confirmed and sworn in by the state, had become common practice.¹⁰² On the official level though, the Churches continued to battle against the *Jugendweihe*, as this statement issued by the Catholic Church in 1969 shows:

The *Jugendweihe* is still a solemn promise for a socialist way of life which knows itself bound to atheism on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. This objective circumstance however becomes more and more difficult to see as a result of the ambivalence of the vow's wording and the propaganda. Therefore the youth and the parents often do not assess the participation in the *Jugendweihe* as a direct and conscious breach of faith.¹⁰³

The success of the *Jugendweihe* in terms of numbers is impressive: from a modest start with 17.1% of all fourteen-year olds participating in the first *Jugendweihe* in 1955, the number had risen to over 85% by 1960 and remained fairly constant at over 90% for the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰⁴

Whereas the commitment pledged in the morning in church differed strongly from that given at the *Jugendweihe*, the rest of the Confirmation day was celebrated within the families also in a very 'worldly' way. 'In the kitchen distant relatives prepare soup with egg cubes and peas. On this day the confirmand gets a whole beef olive for

⁹⁹ 'Sekretariat des Zentralrats der FDJ an die Bezirksleitungen der FDJ' (17.9.1959), BArch DO4/94.

¹⁰⁰ Each regional church however handled this issue differently, and sometimes pastors and priests would act as they thought best. Sometimes they threatened to deny those who participated in the *Jugendweihe* the rights of being confirmed, a Church wedding, funeral, or christening of future children, even until the mid-1970s. Cf. 'Akttenotiz aus Kreis Worbis' (16.1.1976), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, Nr. 027843.

¹⁰¹ Ohse, *Jugend*, 232.

¹⁰² Already in 1959, the percentage of double participants stood at 20%. Cf. 'Einige Informationen die *Jugendweihe* betreffend' (24.8.1959), BArch DR2/4351.

¹⁰³ Cf. 'Stellungnahme der Berliner Ordinarienkonferenz zur Frage der *Jugendweihe*' (19.11.1969), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IVA2/9.05/77.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. A. Paetz, 'Die sozialistische *Jugendweihe* zwischen Initiationsritual und Hegemoniestreben' in D. Benner *et al.*, *Deutsche Bildungsgeschichte seit 1945* (Berlin, 1993), 80. These figures give the GDR average, but it must be remembered that participation could vary considerably in different regions. Industrial areas such as Bezirk Magdeburg and Halle usually topped the list with the most participants, whereas regions with strong religious traditions such as Kreise Worbis and Heiligenstadt (Catholic Eichsfeld), Meissen (traditionally Catholic) and Lusatia (Catholic Sorbs) lagged behind; in 1959, for instance, the ratio between the 'best' and 'worst' regions was 80% : 10%. Cf. 'Einige Informationen, die die *Jugendweihe* betreffen' (24.8.1959), BArch DR2/4351.

the first time. From now on she may drink real coffee.’¹⁰⁵ Both events were celebrated in the style of country weddings, with the political background of the *Jugendweihe* or ‘*Schlips-und-Schwips-Feier*’¹⁰⁶ [tie and tipsiness bash] for the most part completely disappearing behind the mountains of cakes and presents.¹⁰⁷ For many, the decisive question on the big day was not the oath, but ‘What I am going to wear?’.

The tradition of having only confirmation persisted more in the rural areas, where the Christian faith had palpably stronger roots than in cities. An analysis undertaken in 1968 noticed this, pointing out that perhaps the ‘stimulus satiation’ [*Reizüberflutung*] also played a certain role here: ‘Although the difference between town and countryside has been largely reduced under the conditions of the developed societal system of socialism, pupils in town are offered more possibilities for recreational activity than those in the countryside.’¹⁰⁸ An MfS report from the same year listed a whole range of more mundane reasons why confirmation dominated over *Jugendweihe* in the rural regions of Bezirk Cottbus, ranging from the fact that those who were confirmed were given a nylon coat by the Church; grandparents would disinherit grandchildren; the butcher would not take on apprentices who did the *Jugendweihe*; the innkeeper who could not accommodate *Jugendweihe* celebrations by ‘not having any chairs in 1965 because he’d lent them all to the priest; not having a heated room in 1966; and having given his room to another event in 1967’.¹⁰⁹

The SED was keen to transmit the message to young people that those who were progressive realised the ‘backwardness’ of confirmation, as the young Ernst Thälmann had done: ‘Ernst was confirmed because his mother had wanted it. [It was] an event which did not impress him.’¹¹⁰ In 1957, Walter Ulbricht fulminated against confirmation lessons by underlining their unscientific character: ‘Anyone who today allows himself to be prevented from recognising patterns in nature and in society, prevented from casting aside outdated old beliefs, is doing himself a disservice. Those

¹⁰⁵ Führer, *Montagsangst*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ K. Kärbling, ‘Eine Feier mit Schlips und Schwips. Die Jugendweihe als Teil der staatsbürgerlichen Erziehung der jungen Generation’ in Puhle, *Daß der Mensch*, 119.

¹⁰⁷ The nature of presents given to the *Jugendweihlinge* in particular evolved over the years from, for example, a modest watch to tape recorders and even mopeds in later years. That this was not the intended aim of the occasion is clear from the reports: ‘Regarding some family celebrations and also the presents for the *Jugendweihe* there are phenomena of a relatively high material expense.’ The supply bottlenecks of restaurant tables and cake ingredients like canned peaches, which mothers needed to organise from the *delikat* shops months in advance were also known in the MfV: ‘Certain difficulties in questions of provisioning arose when many celebrations in Kreise or towns were held on one day.’ Both quotes in ‘Entwicklung der Jugendweihe nach dem VIII. Parteitag’ (24.10.1975), BArch DR2/A6204.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Pädagogisches Institut Zwickau, Lehrstuhl Psychologie: Zwischenbericht über die kasuistischen Untersuchungen der Jugendweihe in 8. Klassen’ (20.9.1968), SAPMO-BArch DY30/TVA2/9.05/77.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. ‘Bericht über Probleme der Jugendweihe’ (17.4.1968), BStU-BVfS Cottbus AKG Nr. 024.

¹¹⁰ Küchenmeister, *Als Thälmann*, 49.

who do not like the light of knowledge are themselves at a disadvantage.’¹¹¹ In 1969, the SED felt confident enough to write in a draft for a new *Jugendweihe* statute that ‘all girls and boys may participate in the *Jugendweihe* and its preparatory classes, irrespective of their social origin and the *Weltanschauung* of their parents’.¹¹² The omission of the young people’s *own Weltanschauung* might be seen as an indication that the SED was by then convinced that young people who were socialised in the GDR did not believe in the unscientific God of their parents’ generation anymore.

What the SED had not realised was that it only gained a Pyrrhic victory by making the *Jugendweihe* a must for everybody including Christians, who for the most part only paid lip service to the proscribed ideals. Regine H., who was born in 1951, said she was told early on that she could only go to the EOS if she ‘did’ the *Jugendweihe*: ‘So I decided to postpone confirmation by one year and participate in the *Jugendweihe*. An act that I found a waste of time. A family gathering, nothing else. I had no scruples whatsoever, since this thing was completely meaningless.’¹¹³ As this example illustrates, it became a mere family celebration, whereas the participation in confirmation became a true statement of belief. Whilst the deeper connotations of the *Jugendweihe* passed by the majority of young people and their families, the event as such was positively accepted by a considerable number of people.

An interesting aspect of the *Jugendweihe* became apparent only after the GDR’s demise, for it turned out to be one of the most durable GDR traditions. One needs to recall that a lot of time and effort went into organising the celebrations, and this not just by ‘the SED’. In 1988, *Jugendweihen* were organised by 350 full-time cooperators with the support of over 55,000 committee members, 5700 speakers, 80,000 interlocutors and various others, which makes for a total of 300,000 GDR citizens who were involved.¹¹⁴ *Jugendweihe* was reinvented by some of these adherents coming from various corners of the ex-GDR society as a festive and public way for teenagers without a confessional background to mark the transition from childhood into the adult world. Instead of swearing allegiance to the socialist state, *Jugendweihe* today focuses on conveying humanist values, tolerance and respect within society. The fact that nearly 1.2 million¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Cf. ‘Auszüge aus der Rede des Genossen Walter Ulbricht zur Eröffnung des Jugendweihejahres in Sonneberg’ in *Neues Deutschland* (1.10.1957), 4.

¹¹² Cf. ‘Entwurf Satzung für die Jugendweihe in der DDR’ (18.2.1969), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IVA2/9.05/77.

¹¹³ Regine H. questionnaire.

¹¹⁴ Cf. U. Rößling, ‘Jugendweihe in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik’ in M. Isemeyer, K. Sühl (eds), *Feste der Arbeiterbewegung. 100 Jahre Jugendweihe* (Berlin, 1989), 120. Cited in Paetz in Benner, *Deutsche Bildungsgeschichte*, 79.

¹¹⁵ Cf. ‘Jugendweihe - Zahlen und Fakten’, URL: <www.jugendweihe.de>.

young people celebrated their *Jugendweihe* since the GDR ceased to exist testifies to the successful acceptance of this GDR rite by many parents and teenagers as a normal way of celebrating the children's entry into adult society.

Serving two masters: jester's licence or comedia dell'arte for Christian pupils

The penultimate section stays with Christian pupils and looks at how they juggled the moral dilemma of having 'two masters'. Ottokar Domma reflected on the issue of religion: 'On Sundays, some must go to Church and others don't. One Sunday, our pioneer leader made a trip with us. It was lovely. And those who had to go to church were mightily envious.'¹¹⁶ Christoph Dieckmann wrote of 'this yearning to belong to the majority' in his younger days. As a *Pfarrerskind* and non-pioneer, it was obvious which master he would serve, although his parents allowed him a peek into the other world as long as it did not clash with their belief:

Our parents did their utmost to keep the border between us and the worldly children open. [...] Before pioneer afternoons, my father would ask what's on offer. If a paper-chase was on the agenda, sports, and walks, then I was allowed to go. Visits to the border guards and partisan films happened without me.'¹¹⁷

The difference between institutional socialisation and parental socialisation was particularly apparent in Christian homes. The attempts by pedagogues to bridge this gulf were often thwarted by the strong Christian family values. Ludger H., born in 1962, called it the 'filter' of the parental home and the particular situation in the Catholic Eichsfeld, which 'strongly relativised our socialist education'. What this filter let through was 'education content that was consistent with the Christian values at home and in our rural environment, an education to humanist values'.¹¹⁸

The perpetual tension between personal conviction and outward conformity was not so much a problem for a child who might have seen this as some kind of game, but became increasingly difficult to master with age. One way of dealing with the situation was to play a kind of comedia dell'arte, as Gunter U.*, born in Weimar in 1962 and of protestant faith, did: 'The best thing was to disavow one's identity and still get one's way privately.'¹¹⁹ Whether or not this was really the ideal attitude is another story, but it was practised by the great majority of Christian children. Ulrike V.*, born in Erfurt in 1945 and also a Protestant, remembered from growing up in the 1950s that 'public and private spheres were strictly divided. At school and during my apprenticeship I didn't

¹¹⁶ Domma, *Der brave Schüler Ottokar*, 29.

¹¹⁷ Dieckmann in Kleßmann, *Kinder*, 48f.

¹¹⁸ Ludger H. questionnaire (29.3.2005).

¹¹⁹ Gunter U.* questionnaire.

voice my opinion, only in the *Junge Gemeinde* and at home.’¹²⁰ The reason for the double identity of Christian children in the GDR was the clash between their own *Weltanschauung* with the *Weltanschauung* of a socialist personality decreed by the state. The same problem applied to Christian teachers who wanted to have it both ways, often getting into conflict with their family. Trying to hide church membership led to contortions and subterfuges like in Comrade M.’s case, with whom the other party members of his school had an altercation because ‘he was married by a pastor secretly in his flat in order to ensure, as he said, that his wife’s grandmother would baby sit their child’.¹²¹ The life of Christian teachers wanting to serve two masters could be problematic (for the SED), even if they themselves did not have a problem with combining the two convictions. An MfS report from 1962 for example scorned a teacher whose ‘lack of principles went as far as having a depiction of the “crucified Jesus” next to the picture of Comrade Lenin in his living room’.¹²²

Life for Christians was often easier if they took a clear line. Christian D. from Jena, who was a teenager in the late 1970s, said on this issue: ‘I had to avow myself as a Christian again and again, but this was a good school for me.’¹²³ The account of one of Gabriele Eckart’s interviewees testifies to this: ‘If one can see that you have a clear standpoint on one issue, and that you’re not afraid to express it, then this is accepted in most cases. To be a sneak, to not say aloud what you think, just trying to find a bolt-hole for yourself, would be lunacy, you’d destroy yourself doing that.’¹²⁴ Heidrun K., herself a pastor, said that Christian children *were* discriminated against, but ‘they didn’t dare touch with the same severity those whose parents made no secret of their Christianity.’¹²⁵ Harald M., born in 1940, grew up in Dresden and also became a pastor, agreed, saying that ‘whether or not one denied being Christian in the education system was a question of personal conviction and of personal courage, but it was not a necessity.’¹²⁶ Two of my interviewees described the ‘jester’s licence’ [*Narrenfreiheit*] that pastors’ children sometimes enjoyed at school. Jürgen P., protestant and from Berlin, thought that this was ‘in order to maintain the pretence that all children had the

¹²⁰ Ulrike V.* questionnaire (10.5.2004).

¹²¹ ‘Schuljahresanalyse 1962/63 des Kreises Bad Langensalza’ (10.8.1963), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, V 42. Similar issues in ‘Pressestelle: Information über Fragen und Argumente’ (September 1963), BArch DR2/7245; ‘Bericht über KJS Zella-Mehlis’ (October 1966), BArch DR2/6473.

¹²² Cf. ‘Die Lage der pädagogischen Intelligenz an den allgemeinbildenden polytechnischen und erweiterten Oberschulen sowie den Lehrerbildungseinrichtungen (1962), BStU MfS ZAIG 618, 11.

¹²³ Christian D. questionnaire.

¹²⁴ Wolfgang’s account in Eckart, *So sehe ick*, 53. For a similar observation, see Ilse’s account, *ibid.*, 134.

¹²⁵ [emphasis in the original] Heidrun K. questionnaire.

¹²⁶ Harald M. questionnaire.

same opportunities.¹²⁷ Dietrich E. said since he grew up in a vicarage, he enjoyed more *Narrenfreiheit* than others. The pressure on him was limited since it was clear that he would not participate in socialist school life.¹²⁸ This was not only true for children. Alfons G. said that his superiors and colleagues at the Salzmannschule saw no problems in him educating socialist personalities, although everyone knew that he was a committed Catholic. His experience stands in contrast to the examples given in the last section of the previous chapter, thus showing another side of the various realities that existed in the GDR. ‘Because I had said from the beginning “I am Catholic, I will never join the Party”, they only ever asked me twice. And the second time the Party secretary just said “Well Alfons, I needn’t really ask you, need I?”. I said no and this was accepted, albeit without enthusiasm.’¹²⁹ In the early 1960s, he was overlooked when it came to accolades, but in later years he also received bonuses and the title of ‘activist’. He thought a career as headmaster would however have been impossible, and he remembered that elsewhere, some Christian colleagues were forced to give up teaching because their head teachers were more severe.

Trying to serve two masters was never easy, and its difficulty strongly dependent on various personal, social, and regional factors. Generally however it may be observed that the heated altercations between the two, lasting from the 1950s until the early 1960s, gave way to a certain equanimity until the late 1970s. The reasons for this may be seen in the stabilisation of the state and the consequent feeling of the SED that the Churches did not constitute such an existential threat anymore. This changed when at the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s the Churches became places of spiritual as well as religious refuge for Christians and non-Christians alike.

‘Young, catholic, GDR citizen’: a case study of young people in the Eichsfeld

The last section in this chapter deals with the ways in which Catholic children experienced life in the GDR.¹³⁰ Whilst Mary Fulbrook’s assessment that the Catholic Church tended to adopt ‘a policy of retreat and hibernation’¹³¹ holds true on a nationwide political level, Catholic children were for a long time certainly not as willing to compromise their belief as perhaps the majority of children from Protestant homes were. The Catholic Church in the GDR always made plain its opposition to the atheist,

¹²⁷ Jürgen P. questionnaire.

¹²⁸ Dietrich E. questionnaire.

¹²⁹ Alfons G. interview.

¹³⁰ On the Catholic Church in the GDR, see M. Höllen, *Loyale Distanz?: Katholizismus und Kirchenpolitik in SBZ und DDR. Ein historischer Überblick in Dokumenten* (Berlin, 1994-2000).

¹³¹ Cf. Fulbrook, *Anatomy*, 88.

Marxist idea of a human being. My interviewee Matthias W., a Catholic theologian, found that his local priest criticised the SED's attempts to turn all children into socialist personalities by simply turning the friend-foe picture on its head and arguing in the same pigheaded manner.¹³² More than the Protestant Church, the Catholic Church used its authoritative voice to oppose the atheist worldview. Catholic bishops never stopped urging parents and children to stand up to the state's ambition towards a monopoly in education. Throughout the lifetime of the GDR, in addition to various *Hirtenbriefen* [shepherd's letters] on the subject of education in school and family, church leaders reacted with statements to the introduction of new laws concerning young people, such as the Education Act or the Youth Laws.¹³³ In the 1950s, their objections focussed on the portrayal of religion in the school curriculum and textbooks as 'outdated and obsolete superstition'.¹³⁴ In the 1960s this shifted to opposing the increasingly atheistic principles laid down by various laws which created a widening gulf between state and family education.¹³⁵ In the 1970s, the main demand concerned the state's observance of the right to freedom of conscience and worship,¹³⁶ noticeably so in view of the GDR's new role as an internationally accepted state.

The ways in which parents and children heeded these exhortations were many. I shall examine them in a case study of a particular geographical area. The Eichsfeld, a rural area in western Thuringia,¹³⁷ was the largest Catholic 'enclave' in traditionally Protestant Eastern Germany, containing 10 % of all GDR Catholics who accounted for over three quarters of the local population.¹³⁸ Its people were moulded by faith, tradition, and by its links with the FRG in terms of proximity and family ties. In the following I concentrate on one area, the suitably named Kreis Heiligenstadt. This region of 386 square kilometres with around 43,000 people lay in the north-western part of Bezirk Erfurt and consisted of the town Heiligenstadt (where about 30% of the

¹³² Matthias W. questionnaire.

¹³³ Cf. G. Lange *et al.* (eds), *Katholische Kirche – Sozialistischer Staat DDR. Dokumente und öffentliche Äußerungen 1945-1990* (Leipzig, 1993), 2nd ed.

¹³⁴ Cf. 'Hirtenwort der Bischöfe und Bischöflichen Kommissare der Berliner Ordinarienkonferenz, "Zu Schule und Erziehung in unseren Tagen"' (23.10.1957), *ibid.*, 108-11.

¹³⁵ Cf. 'Die Bischöfe und Bischöflichen Kommissare der Berliner Ordinarienkonferenz an Ministerpräsident Grotewohl, "Zum Gesetz über die sozialistische Entwicklung des Schulwesens in der DDR"' (9.1.1960), *ibid.*, 157-62; also: 'Die Katholischen Bischöfe in der DDR an Ministerpräsident Grotewohl, "Zum Entwurf eines neuen Jugendgesetzes"' (1.12.1963), *ibid.*, 203ff.

¹³⁶ Cf. 'Stellungnahme der Berliner Ordinarienkonferenz, "Zum Entwurf des Jugendgesetzes"' (18.10.1978), *ibid.*, 254-56; also 'Die Berliner Bischofskonferenz an die Regierung der DDR, "Zur Einführung des Wehrunterrichts in den 9. und 10. Klassen"' (12.6.1978), *ibid.*, 294ff.

¹³⁷ Part of the Eichsfeld area is also located in southern Lower Saxony.

¹³⁸ Cf. 'Struktur der katholischen Kirche im Kreis Heiligenstadt' (27.2.1989), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG1010.

population lived) and 53 communes.¹³⁹ In 1975, 24,000 people lived in communes with fewer than 1000 inhabitants. 33 of these communes were in the prohibited area within the *Schutzstreifen* [protection strip] of the region's 72-kilometre long border with the FRG. These villages were located between 5 kilometres and 500 metres from the border, and inhabitants needed a permit to pass through barriers staffed by police. Permits for friends and relatives to visit were granted sporadically on occasions such as christenings and weddings; but it was impossible to receive relatives from the West. In some reports, the situation for the population created by the proximity of the inner-German border was near farcical: 'In Lindewerra, the security situation is exacerbated by the fact that some of the inhabitants speak with their relatives and acquaintances across the river Werra, which flows alongside the village and constitutes the state border.'¹⁴⁰ Their geographical position made the people very isolated and served to reinforce their adherence to their faith as a spiritual refuge. Around 85% of the population in *Kreis Heiligenstadt* were Catholics.¹⁴¹ In 1989, the Catholic Church ran two monasteries, one hospital, two homes for the disabled, five nursing homes for the elderly, one orphanage,¹⁴² and sixteen kindergartens. The high number of denominational kindergartens (with over one third of all kindergarten places)¹⁴³ speaks for the many Catholic *kinderreiche Familien* [families with four or more children] in the area, who received substantial financial and logistical support from the state,¹⁴⁴ keen to redress the problem of the GDR's low birth rate.

How then did the situation for Catholic children in *Kreis Heiligenstadt* contrast with other more atheist areas? Ludger H. was born into a Catholic family of six children in the village of Heyerode in the Eichsfeld in 1962. The mayor was a CDU member and 'the Church had a bigger influence than state and Party'. He never experienced concrete discrimination against Christian children in his environment. 'Of the 52 children in my year at the POS, only one pupil didn't go to Church. If one was to speak of ostracism in connection with religion in the GDR, then here the issue was twisted.' At his EOS in the regional town of Mühlhausen, the situation was that 'one tended not to mention this

¹³⁹ The population remained relatively constant. Sources from 1967 and 1975 cite this figure. Cf. 'Analyse des Territoriums' (31.12.1967), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG6; 'Verkehrskonzeption des Kreises Heiligenstadt' (15.4.1975), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG3634.

¹⁴⁰ 'Einschätzung der Gemeinde Lindewerra' (24.4.1960), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG394.

¹⁴¹ The numbers for 1958 were 84% Catholics, 15% Protestants, and 1% atheists, cf. 'Bericht über die Arbeit mit Geistlichen' (9.10.1958), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG394; 85.1% in 1989, cf. 'Struktur der katholischen Kirche im Kreis Heiligenstadt' (27.2.1989), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG1010.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ The number of state-run kindergartens in *Kreis Heiligenstadt* was 41. Cf. 'Statistische Meldungen Kindergärten' (1971), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG3597.

¹⁴⁴ See for example 'Bericht über die komplexe Betreuung der Familien mit vier oder mehr Kindern sowie alleinstehender Bürger mit drei Kindern' (26.4.1976), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG3528.

subject. Although everybody knew of course that everyone who came from the Eichsfeld was a Christian.’¹⁴⁵ This situation was indeed very peculiar to this corner of the GDR. Matthias W. for example, who went to school in Mecklenburg in the 1970s, had quite different experiences. He remembered various slights by teachers in connection with his Catholic faith. ‘When I was ten, one teacher called me regressive because I still believed in God and had me laughed at in front of the class’. Later, the biology teacher once asked him what the Church thought about Darwinism. But in the end, he said, being picked on was more about ‘whether one conformed and joined in or whether one was somehow obstreperous and spoilt the statistics of the relevant mass organisations.’¹⁴⁶ But returning to the Eichsfeld, it must be remembered that in an area with such a high proportion of Catholics there must consequently also have been a large number of Catholic teachers.¹⁴⁷ In the late 1950s, the re-education of teachers had not yet taken place in the area. They acted in a ‘non-partisan manner at school and in the public’, shied away from ‘adversarial views’, and did not always implement the decrees of the Party.¹⁴⁸ At the few schools which had a *Schulparteiorganisation* (SPO), the comrades had no ‘planned procedure’ and discussions with non-party colleagues lacked ‘fundamental ideological arguments’.¹⁴⁹ In class, the conveying of pure factual knowledge still predominated, and the possibility of reflecting ‘societal reality’ in course content was rarely realised. If it was, then it often happened in a formal and forced manner.¹⁵⁰ In the early 1960s, one-sided cramming of facts, i.e. the insufficient connection of theoretical knowledge with real life, and excessive idealism were still the main causes for lament:

The pupils are conveyed unauthentic depictions of the level of the development in production and societal life. In and outside lessons, the known complications in the building of Socialism are conveyed to the children in an idealising manner. From this accrue hitches in the formation of the socialist personality. Older pupils especially come into contact with these contradictions and are not given satisfactory information.¹⁵¹

Things had not changed much by the middle of the decade; civic education lessons, for example, were still described as boring, seeing things only in black and white, and not

¹⁴⁵ Ludger H. questionnaire.

¹⁴⁶ Matthias W. questionnaire.

¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately I was unable to find any statistics on this subject.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. ‘Über den Stand der sozialistischen Erziehung im Kreis Heiligenstadt’ (28.4.1958), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG017.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ ‘Bericht der Abteilung Volksbildung vor dem Kreistag am 14.12.1961 über den Stand der Entwicklung der zehnklassigen POS’, KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG5172.

bearing any connection with the local realities.¹⁵² How difficult it is however to generalise about young people's attitudes is exemplified by a report.¹⁵³ It stated that on the one hand, Beatlemania had reached the shores of the Eichsfeld, and emphasised the negative influence of the Western lifestyle that young people tended 'to ape and to glorify'. On the other hand however, it showed that pupils with good academic results would adopt a positive attitude towards the socialist state. This is the first time that such an observation appears in the files, but the question remains whether those good pupils were convinced young socialists, or whether they might not also transform into beat fans after school.

In the early 1970s, reports listed a number of successes with regard to pupils' convictions, such as pride in the development of the GDR under the SED's leadership. But there was always a short list of 'isolated negative tendencies' at the end of all these reports, which tell as true a story. In 1971, these were the 'deliberate reserve of older pupils when dealing with problems of *Weltanschauung* in the natural sciences, history, and civic education';¹⁵⁴ as well as 'uncritical attitudes towards manifestations of Western decadence such as music, fashion, and the media'; an underestimation of the danger of Western ideology; and a contradiction between pupils' words and deeds.¹⁵⁵ Two years later, pupils were still not fulfilling all their obligations as all-round developed socialist personalities, with problems in areas such as readiness to defend the GDR and attitudes towards productive work. In history and civics, some pupils were unable to justify things or come up with the 'correct' arguments. Factual knowledge was also incomplete.¹⁵⁶ This shows that although all civics teachers in Kreis Heiligenstadt were members of the SED by the early 1970s, the teaching was not necessarily in accordance with the party line or having the desired effect.

Throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, reports by the MfV and the MfS also recorded incidences where Catholic pupils took up the cudgels for their faith. In 1957 at the school in Felchta near Mühlhausen, the bulletin board that had presented various successes of the Soviet Union, was damaged, pictures and articles ripped off and the words '*Betet lieber!*' [you'd better pray] were written across in large letters.¹⁵⁷ In 1979,

¹⁵² Cf. 'Referat zur Kreistagssitzung über das Bildungsgesetz' (20.5.1965), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG5185.

¹⁵³ *Idem.*

¹⁵⁴ 'Information über Kirchenfragen' (24.3.1971), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG317.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. 'Ergebnisse des Schuljahres 1970/71' (19.6.1971), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG553.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. 'Ergebnisse des Schuljahres 1972/73' (6.6.1973), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG553.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. 'Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, Abteilung Volksbildung an Ministersekretariat MfV' (26.11.1957), BArch DR2/4151.

a 16-year old pupil from Arenshausen near Heiligenstadt declared during a civics lesson that the GDR was a murderous state because of its abortion laws.¹⁵⁸

Another aspect of school life concerning Catholic children, and this was not only particular to the Eichsfeld, was the phenomenon of absenteeism. Alfons G., who was a pupil at *Schulpforta* near Naumburg in the mid-1950s, said: 'When there was a Catholic holiday like Corpus Christi, we asked for permission to attend the church service. And it was always granted. When the feast of Corpus Christi was coming up, we were always a few more Catholics in our class than normally.'¹⁵⁹ In the early 1960s, reports from the Eichsfeld speak of as much as 70 percent of pupils being absent in some schools on such occasions,¹⁶⁰ and the problem recurs throughout the decade.¹⁶¹ By the early 1970s, the phenomenon stops being mentioned in the files and may possibly have ceased.¹⁶²

The *Jugendweihe* had of course problems gaining acceptance in the Eichsfeld. Notes taken during sermons by informants illustrate the particularly harsh stance the local clergy took on this issue.¹⁶³ In 1967, for example, the suffragan bishop preached that for Christians, the kingdom of God always took the first rank, everything else in their lives must be subordinated. The young people were called upon not to participate in the *Jugendweihe*, they should not give up the Church for 'thirty pieces of silver, a good position in society and because of the Party'. Christians should not put Sunday football and other pleasurable things in the foreground, for their first obligation was to go to and serve the Church. The Christians in the Eichsfeld had a particular responsibility which was of great importance for the future of the Church.¹⁶⁴ In the 1950s, the SED's success rate must have been so small that functionaries were ashamed to mention any numbers at all in the files consulted. In 1958, one school reported: 'We have achieved no success whatsoever this year in promoting the *Jugendweihe*. This was partly because of the attitude of the population, and partly because of inconsequent propaganda by the schools.'¹⁶⁵ In 1962, 9.1% of all pupils participated in the

¹⁵⁸ 'Hinweise über gewonnene Erkenntnisse und Erfahrungen bei der operativen Bearbeitung und vorbeugenden Absicherung Jugendlicher des Bezirkes Erfurt im Alter von 14 bis 25 Jahren' (11.4.1979), BStU Außenstelle Erfurt, KD Worbis/ 516.

¹⁵⁹ Alfons G. interview.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. 'Bericht der Abteilung Volksbildung vor dem Kreistag am 14.12.1961 über den Stand der Entwicklung der zehnklassigen POS', KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG5172.

¹⁶¹ See for example 'Berichte 1966/67', KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG394.

¹⁶² The latest mention I found was in 'Plan der politisch-ideologischen und organisatorischen Arbeit des Rat des Kreises auf kirchenpolitischem Gebiet' (29.7.1970), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG317.

¹⁶³ See for example 'Rede des Bischofs vom 14.4.1959 in der Kirche in Breitenholz', KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG394.

¹⁶⁴ 'Information' (28.9.1967), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG394.

¹⁶⁵ 'Bericht der Mittelschule Ershausen zum Stand der sozialistischen Erziehung' (22.3.1958), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG017.

Jugendweihe;¹⁶⁶ in 1967, 16.4%;¹⁶⁷ in 1972, 25%;¹⁶⁸ and in 1977, 69.3%.¹⁶⁹ Although still far from the desired target, the increasing numbers were a success for the SED. Perhaps there was an even greater success in the Party's efforts to change the Eichsfeld's young generation's ideological outlook than pure numbers can convey, for a report from 1967 stated that 'In the previous months we often observed that children from Christian families are willing to participate in the *Jugendweihe*, but that their parents don't permit it.'¹⁷⁰ Some of those parents might have been members of the choirs in Arenshausen and Hohengandern, who boycotted *Jugendweihe* celebrations by stating that due to too many cases of sick leave, their choirs were unable to provide the choral accompaniment.¹⁷¹ Even in the 1970s it happened that not a single EOS pupil would participate in the *Jugendweihe*, on grounds varying from true conviction to priests' threats of excommunication; with some parents claiming that they had nothing against the *Jugendweihe*, but they didn't want their child to be the first for fear of being discriminated against by the priest and peers.¹⁷²

How far away young people in the Eichsfeld were in the 1950s and early 1960s from the ideal socialist personalities they were meant to aspire to is also exemplified by the high numbers of 15 to 25 year olds fleeing across the border to the West,¹⁷³ particularly in the months following the building of the Berlin Wall. In the first quarter of 1962, POS pupils were especially involved, including children of Party and economic functionaries; but their attempts did not always succeed. A report on the arrested pupils noted that detailed escape maps were found that had been drawn and sent by two pupils who had successfully made it to the West and who had also written letters saying how good life was now and that they had found suitable apprenticeship places. Pupils' reasons for wanting to leave the GDR correspond to those given in the previous chapter. The root causes for these failed socialist personalities were thought to be that the teachers, parents, and children were 'partly unclear on the character of West Germany and did not believe in the victory of socialism'; that the issues of the GDR were not treated realistically in class, but were often idealised; that there were insufficient spare-

¹⁶⁶ Cf. 'Entwicklung der Teilnahme an der Jugendweihe' (17.4.1967), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG394.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Cf. 'Einschätzung der Tätigkeit und der politischen Wirksamkeit der Arbeit der katholischen Kirche im Kreis Heiligenstadt' (10.3.1975), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG317.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. 'Ergebnisse des Schuljahres 1972/73' (6.6.1973), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG553.

¹⁷⁰ 'Aktenvermerk' (17.4.1967), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG394.

¹⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁷² 'Information über Kirchenfragen' (24.3.1971), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG317.

¹⁷³ In the first quarter of 1960 for example, 38 people from Kreis Heiligenstadt fled to the West, five of whom were up to 15 years old, and 22 between 16 and 25 years old. Cf. 'Quartalsbericht 1. Quartal 1960' (7.4.1960), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG394.

time activities for young people apart from sports; and that often pupils did not 'believe with their hearts what they had learnt theoretically'.¹⁷⁴

The Church was still perceived as a dangerous rival in the early 1970s despite reassuring reports that the Eichsfeld children were on the right track to forming members of a socialist society. Good material conditions, the presence of particularly young priests in the local parishes, spare-time activities within the *Katholische Jugend* [Catholic Youth] like study courses or discussion evenings on topics such as the meaning of life or the position of Christians in socialist society, cycling tours, and also 'Beat music events with West German records' were seen as reasons why the Catholic Church continued to have such great appeal.¹⁷⁵

The bond between the people and the Church varied through the generations, as a report from 1975 noted:

A strong, unchanged relation and fidelity exists in the older generation. The middle generations have a more relaxed attitude, but apart from a few exceptions, there is no open detachment from the Church. The influence of the Church extends up into the ranks of regional council functionaries, mayors, comrades, leading functionaries in the economy and pedagogues.¹⁷⁶

Yet despite the number of faithful remaining constant, the Church itself noted some inner detachment of the young from its bosom. In a report on a pilgrimage in 1960 for example, the writer noted that a play written and performed by fellow pilgrims showed how 'the people of today, especially the young, are breaking away from the Church and devote themselves to pleasure'.¹⁷⁷ By the early 1970s, it seems that most young Catholics in the Eichsfeld, like the majority of their compatriots, had resigned themselves to living in the GDR and were described as 'being actively involved in developing the societal system of socialism under the leadership of the working class and its Party'.¹⁷⁸ The state nevertheless continued to make life unnecessarily difficult for the Catholic Church; in 1970 for example, guidelines were issued which stipulated that the education department should not lend any objects such as cinematographs to the Church; the building authority should not to give any building material; and the Department of Trade and Provisioning should not book any events organised by the

¹⁷⁴ 'Berichterstattung vor dem Kreistag über einige Probleme des Beschlusses des Politbüros und über die Sicherung der Staatsgrenze West' (24.4.1962), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG394.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. 'Information über Kirchenfragen' (24.3.1971), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG317.

¹⁷⁶ 'Einschätzung der Tätigkeit und der politischen Wirksamkeit der Arbeit der katholischen Kirche im Kreis Heiligenstadt' (10.3.1975), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG317.

¹⁷⁷ 'Bericht über die Kulthandlungen anlässlich der Wallfahrt am Hülfsberg' (1960), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG559.

¹⁷⁸ 'Plan der politisch-ideologischen und organisatorischen Arbeit des Rates des Kreises auf kirchenpolitischem Gebiet' (29.7.1970), KArch L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG317.

Church within restaurants.¹⁷⁹ At the grassroots however, the situation was dependent on the human responses to such directives. The author and journalist Karl-Heinz Jakobs wrote his *Eichsfelder Kolportagen* in the mid-1960s and painted a realistic picture of this small swathe of land. A member of the local council told him about the realities of life there:

I was brought up a Catholic, married a Protestant, my oldest son bunked off to West Germany, and I'm in the SED. The citizens in our village care little about politics; it's a purely Catholic village. Like everywhere in the Eichsfeld, the priest has a great influence on the people here. Church and Party work hand in hand. For example, when the Church organises rogation processions for a good harvest, then members of the SED take part. Yes, it even happens that the Party Secretary carries the dais. And when the SED calls on the citizens for voluntary work for the *Nationales Aufbauwerk*, then the priest joins this appeal in his announcements from the pulpit.¹⁸⁰

As in countless other respects, the chances of a child developing into a socialist personality under these ideologically confused circumstances depended on a plethora of personal, social, and coincidental factors. To follow up the biographies of children from the Eichsfeld over a space of several decades would certainly be a worthwhile and highly illuminating undertaking for another study.

Conclusion

This chapter has assessed the impact of the state's attempts to influence and shape young people's moral values. The SED's undertaking to create morally flawless human beings was not successful. – and how could such a utopian goal have ever been. The GDR was no kingdom of virtue, but a country populated by a majority of decent young people, and by a small minority who misbehaved. The Party's doctrinaire attitude towards western youth culture alienated many youngsters who should naturally have fallen into the former category. With the politically 'neutral' moral values which coincided with parental expectations, there was some success. As for instilling morality through military education, the policy was a failure for various reasons, notably disbelief in anti-imperialist propaganda and a profound disinterest in dedicating time to issues of national defence. Lastly, the exploration of the moral issues for Christians with regard to conforming to the demands made both by the state and their Churches, and the particular case of young Catholics standing their ground in the Eichsfeld led to two main conclusions: first, that there existed a great diversity in the way Christians were treated in the GDR and second, that the ways they themselves chose to safeguard their

¹⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ K.-H. Jakobs, *Heimatländische Kolportagen* (Berlin, 1975), 20. NB: *Nationales Aufbauwerk* (NAW) = National Rebuilding Programme.

moral beliefs in a societal environment that was inherently hostile towards Christianity were equally varied and often entailed a loss of, at least outward, identity.

Chapter 6. Living in and for socialist society: societal values

This chapter explores the societal values that a socialist personality was supposed to possess as well as the changes in the social environment in which young people grew up from the late 1950s to the late 1970s. It shows the strong impact that school and youth organisation ultimately had in changing East Germans' outlook on life, but also how, in spite of the SED's aim of controlling young people's lives, the majority of them were, within limits, exploiting the offerings of the state to their own advantage. First, a brief overview of the main societal values is given, followed by an investigation of how two of the principal ones, collectivity and community spirit, were instilled in children and young people. The next part looks at the contribution of education to changes in the East German class system, and the following two sections deal with a major area of competition between the state and the Church: reaching out for young people through their respective youth organisations. The implementation of polytechnic instruction into the school curriculum and pupils' experience of the world of work are the focus of the following part, and the last section shows the changes in girls' education and socialisation.

Principal societal values

Principal societal values to be instilled in young people were collectivity and community spirit and an understanding that choosing a profession was not a private matter, but that one had to subordinate private desires for a career to economic requirements. Selfishness and competitive self-interest were judged to be severe flaws of character by the SED. In the Marxist view, the needs of the individual are subordinate to the needs of society. History suggests that this state of affairs is also a prerequisite for a properly functioning dictatorship. For those living in socialist states, any discomfort this caused was assuaged by the promise that in the bright communist future there would be no conflict between the interests of the individual and the collective. The SED of the 1950s certainly showed contempt for the individual, but with the ups and downs of the 1960s and, officially, after the change of leadership in 1971, the Party sought to harmonise the private aspirations and interests of the population with societal requirements, though precedence was of course still given to society. Instilling the correct societal values in the young was a major element in the strategy for bridging the gap. This would lead to a sense of spiritual unity among the people and give them an

inspiring common objective: the building of a socialist and ultimately communist society. The concept of the collective was an integral part of this process. There was no shortage of them in the school: pupils' collectives, pioneers' collectives, FDJ collectives, youth collectives and pedagogues' collectives. The SED sought to foster in the young builders of socialism a high sense of responsibility for the common good, a sense of collectivity and cooperation.

Collectivity and community spirit

Marxist-Leninist personality theory only considered an individual to be a positive unit of society if they were willing to offer all their abilities towards the service of society. It stipulated that individuals should develop their capabilities and actively shape society, and this was intrinsically tied to the concept of the collective. A socialist worldview was a precondition for this '*Einordnung in das gesellschaftliche Ganze*' [integration into society as a whole].¹ What were the ways that pre-school and school instilled the notion of collectivity in pupils?

Crèche and kindergarten were for most children the starting point for the socialisation process outside the family. Each year comprised one or more class collectives; the institution as a whole was known as the kindergarten collective; in fact, any small group designated to work together was called a collective, and this emphasis remained unchanged throughout the GDR's lifetime. The first step in the development of collectivity was to instil a community spirit [*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*] in the children. This trait should manifest itself in virtues such as helpfulness, consideration, a sense of duty, discipline and modesty. For those under the age of three, just being with other children and sharing with them the attention of the nursery teacher was considered sufficient to foster their sense of collectivity. Children were actively trained to develop '[their] desire and ability to do something useful for the community'.² This was done by giving activities a collective aspect, i.e. by playing together and setting common goals, thus instilling in them mutual respect and helpfulness. Even the toy industry supported collective education with their products 'reflecting what is new in our societal life' and 'furthering collective attitudes' in children's play, which in the early 1960s meant fairy-tale figures as well as toys that 'reflect the state of technology in the countryside'.³ The

¹ G. Neuner, *Zur Theorie der sozialistischen Allgemeinbildung* (Berlin, 1974), 2nd ed., 35.

² 'Kollegiumssitzung, TOP1: Ergebnisse, Entwicklungstendenzen und Probleme bei der Verwirklichung des Bildungs- und Erziehungsplanes im Kindergarten' (9.1.1973), BArch DR2/7647.

³ 'Vorschläge von Forschungsthemen für die Spielzeugindustrie' (ca. 1961), BArch DR2/6424.

sharing of small tasks, be it laying the table or helping a younger child to tie their shoelaces, was meant to teach the value of caring for others.

Helpfulness is the often cited character trait which socialist education succeeded in permanently instilling into people. Already in the mid-1960s, the MfV reported that ‘in most kindergarten children, the desire to do useful activities for the children’s collective and the teacher is particularly pronounced’.⁴ Both kindergarten teachers and parents often set a good example to the children, as Karin K., born in 1939 and a kindergarten teacher from Orlamünde near Jena, remembered: ‘Helpfulness was demonstrated through voluntary efforts of staff and parents regarding the renovation and decoration of rooms in the kindergarten and the creation and upkeep of a playground. We were proud of what we had created and were thus able to do good quality work with our children.’⁵ In kindergarten education, collectivity served as preparation for life in socialist society in two ways: firstly, it facilitated children’s ‘successful learning at school and quick integration into a collective of peers’,⁶ and later it ensured the smooth running of the ‘people’s-own’ economy:

Our children must be prepared for living and working in socialism, i.e. for *collective* living and working; for working in socialist large-scale production with sophisticated and complicated machinery and for life amongst highly educated socialist people between whom new comradely relations have developed.⁷

At school, collective education continued in the same pattern, now going by the name of ‘societally useful activities’ [*gesellschaftlich nützliche Tätigkeiten*]. Each class had mentoring schemes between strong and weak pupils [*Lernpatenschaften*] and teams, usually pairs, who helped keep the classroom tidy or, in boarding schools, aided kitchen staff peeling vegetables. There were also weekly-changing ‘offices’ [*Dienste*] for wiping the blackboard [*Tafeldienst*] or getting the milk bottles at breakfast [*Milchdienst*]. Ulla M., the kindergarten teacher from Eisenach, said that this kind of education left a permanent mark on pupils, for they learned ‘to make social contacts with their peers, to integrate into a collective and to assert themselves’.⁸ Although there may have been economic benefits from this unpaid labour, it cannot be denied that it instilled a sense of responsibility, as well as respect for the ‘technical personnel’ (non-academic staff like cleaners and caretakers) working at the school.

⁴ ‘Stand der Bildungs- und Erziehungsarbeit in den Einrichtungen der Vorschulerziehung’ (23.2.1965), BArch DR2/7579.

⁵ Karin K. questionnaire (29.2.2004).

⁶ ‘Genosse Manfred Müller: Bericht über die Bildungs- und Erziehungspläne der Vorschulerziehung, Vorwort’ (8.8.1960), BArch DR2/1694.

⁷ Kreckler and Launer, *Die Aufgaben*, 8.

⁸ Ulla M. questionnaire.

The fulfilment of these tasks and pupils' overall attitude towards collectivity counted toward a special feature of the East German marking system, the so-called '*Kopfnoten*'.⁹ These were marks which were not awarded for specific subjects, but evaluated pupils' overall 'moral performance' in all subjects. Every subject teacher attributed marks in discipline [*Betragen*], tidiness [*Ordnung*], diligence [*Fleiß*] and participation [*Mitarbeit*] which meant that unruly pupils, even though they might be academically brilliant, could fail to proceed to the next year if they lacked the required moral disposition. In 1976, after discussions that lasted several years, the MfV realised that the '*Kopfnoten*' 'insufficiently reflected the core development of a pupil's personality'. The focus on political-ideological convictions and attitudes was said to be missing, so new guidelines for evaluation of the '*Kopfnoten*' were introduced, where once again the importance of collectivity was stressed.¹⁰ In *Betragen*, teachers were to evaluate the pupil's integration into the pioneer or FDJ collective of his class, how he or she respected and implemented the decisions of the collective, his or her positive role model status for the collective and how he or she heeded justified criticism and addressed shortcomings and immoral behaviour that was directed against the collective.¹¹

Another area where collective behaviour was to contribute to the formation of the socialist personality were the extracurricular activities of pupils. An annual tradition for pupils was the harvest help [*Ernteeinsätze*]: to support the cooperative farmers by picking up potatoes or, particularly in the 1950s, saving the crop by collecting Colorado beetles. Another example are the *Timurtrupps*. Following the example of the Soviet boy Timur, a popular figure in a 1941 Soviet children's book who organised help for women whose menfolk were away fighting in the Great Patriotic War,¹² *Timurhilfe* in the GDR consisted of a group of pioneers helping elderly people or single mothers with chores such as doing their shopping and carrying up the coal from the cellar.¹³ The altruistic nature of these activities was somewhat diminished by the requirement that the little helpers had to give an account of their good deeds so that lists could be drawn up to show who had helped the most. Nevertheless, archival evidence suggests that socialist

⁹ *Kopfnoten* [literally 'head marks'] were so called because of their position at the beginning of pupils' end of year reports.

¹⁰ 'Dienstbesprechung beim Minister, TOP1: Abteilung Grundsätze, "Standpunkte und Vorschläge zur Verhaltensbewertung" (7.12.1976), BArch DR2/8218.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹² A. Gaidar, *Timur und sein Trupp* (Berlin, 1975).

¹³ For a humorous account on how overzealousness in this matter can go wrong, see the adventures of Alfons Zitterbacke: 'Wie ich aus Versehen das Bücherregal zerhackte' in Holtz-Baumert, *Alfons Zitterbacke*, 175-80.

education had by the beginning of the 1960s succeeded in instilling a sense of collectivity into young people:

In the after-school clubs [*Arbeitsgemeinschaften* or AG] such forms are establishing themselves which emanate from the example of the workforce in production. Working in brigades has proved its worth. Each member now no longer builds, for example, his own model aeroplane which he flies and which wins him prizes, but it is the brigade or the whole AG that builds all parts and models together, and there is only one owner of the finished model, the collective.¹⁴

My interviewees remembered the earnest community spirit that existed in the Salzmannschule. Walter S. recalled that pupils often went to the nearby rubber factory to work there on Saturdays with the result that with the money earned, new flooring could be put into the classroom and their boarding rooms. ‘The parents also gave their support: one was an electrician who did the wiring, another was a decorator who hung the wallpaper.’¹⁵ Alfons G. said there was a sense of unity [*Miteinander*] in the way that ‘If somebody had a problem, we sat down and said “We can’t let him stew.” Regardless of like or dislike, there was this sense of community – we always used to say “the collective” – that’s probably one thing of which there is less these days.’¹⁶

There was of course a dark side to all this cooperation. The Soviet pedagogue Makarenko claimed that societal challenges could only be met by membership of a collective and not with isolated individuals.¹⁷ Most young children love being in a group anyway, but in the GDR this propensity was exploited to the detriment, for some, of a carefree youth. ‘We would choose the wrong way if everybody, detached from the interests of the collective, wanted to proceed according to their own wishes and notions. Where many young comrades [*Jugendfreunde*] work together, strict order and discipline are indispensable’, was the Party’s thinking.¹⁸ As they grow up to be teenagers, young people often want to assert their individualism and thus tend to disagree with everyone in a position of authority, be they parents or teachers. Steffi K.-P., who was a teenager in the mid-1970s, is a typical example: ‘I started to detest certain forms of regimentation. When they said “Let’s get going”, I would immediately become defiant and think “Not me!” Which was of course not always the right way either.’¹⁹ The SED failed to understand that this was simply a developmental stage in adolescent psychology.

¹⁴ ‘Bericht über die außerunterrichtliche Arbeit’ (20.10.1960), BArch DR2/3844. An account on instilling the value of helpfulness, reporting that ‘almost all FDJ and pioneer collectives have created societally useful projects for the improvement of their schools and hometowns’, can be found in ‘Kollegiumssitzung’ (15.10.1968), BArch DR2/7620.

¹⁵ Walter S. interview.

¹⁶ Alfons G. interview.

¹⁷ A. Makarenko, *Werke. Pädagogische Studientexte zur Vorschulerziehung*, vol. V (Berlin, 1961), 352ff.

¹⁸ ‘Rechenschaftsbericht der FDJ-Grundorganisation des MfV’ (27.10.1971), BArch DR2/6899.

¹⁹ Steffi K.-P. questionnaire (24.2.2004).

Instead, the attitude of youngsters who were reluctant to go along with the crowd was interpreted as an anti-socialist and anti-GDR attitude. 'Individualist tendencies' that 'damage the image of the FDJ and the school collective and that breach the norms of socialist morality' was a typical reason (though in conjunction with more serious misdemeanours) for the relegation of EOS pupils.²⁰ Despite this, when compared to the prevailing western tendency to concentrate solely on the individual in education,²¹ the positive consequences of collectivity largely outweighed the negative.

Educational aspects of changes in the class system

Whilst the primary aim of education in the GDR was to produce all-round developed socialist personalities, it had another role to play in changing society, and that was to ensure that the vestiges of the capitalist class system did not perpetuate themselves. It was not thought desirable that the children of aristocrats should all aspire to be good socialist diplomats and those of the bourgeoisie good socialist doctors or planners, whilst the children of working-class parents limited themselves to becoming factory workers, even if the pay was the same (which it was not, see below). With the end of inherited legal privilege, political control and industrial control, there was officially no class system in the GDR, only class enemies, although objective observers using more subtle definitions than Marx's²² would have no difficulty discerning one.²³ Whether or not the classes themselves could be said to still exist was a point of argument. For practical purposes, i.e. positive discrimination, they did, in a strictly non-hierarchical

²⁰ 'Zentrale Relegierungskommission: Relegierungen von EOS-Schülern, Uwe W., Klasse 12, EOS Wismar' (October 1975), BAArch DR2/A5568; 'Zentrale Relegierungskommission: Relegierung von Schülern' (May 1978), BAArch DR2/A7361/5.

²¹ The SED followed Makarenko in its opposition to western 'free' education which supposedly consisted of 'kneeling down in front of the nature of the child'. Makarenko said that letting children simply grow up would have the same outcome as letting nature simply grow: weeds. Cf. G. Neuner, 'Geborgen im Kollektiv wächst die sozialistische Persönlichkeit' in *Neues Deutschland* (11.3.1973), 5.

²² Cf. Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, MEW (1962), vol. 23-5.

²³ For a statistical overview, see S. Grundmann, 'Zur Sozialstruktur der DDR' in Badstübner, *Leben in der DDR*, 20-62. On class in the GDR, see C. Ross, 'Staging the East German "working class": representation and class identity in the "workers' state"' in M. Fulbrook, M. Swales (eds), *Representing the German nation: history and identity in twentieth-century Germany* (Manchester, 2000), 155-69; P. Hübner (ed.), *Eliten im Sozialismus. Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Cologne, 1999); A. Bauerkämper et al. (eds), *Gesellschaft ohne Eliten? Führungsgruppen in der DDR* (Berlin, 1997); F. Thieme, *Die Sozialstruktur der DDR zwischen Wirklichkeit und Ideologie. Eine Analyse geheimgehaltener Dissertationen* (Frankfurt/Main, 1996); H. Solga, *Auf dem Weg in eine klassenlose Gesellschaft? Klassenlagen und Mobilität zwischen Generationen in der DDR* (Berlin, 1995); Parteihochschule 'Karl Marx' beim ZK der SED, *Zur Entwicklung der Klassen und Schichten in der DDR* (Berlin, 1977). On class more generally, see M. Weber, *Gesamtausgabe Max Weber. Band 22: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen, 2001); P. Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede: Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft* (Frankfurt/Main, 1987); M. Djilas: *Die neue Klasse. Eine Analyse des kommunistischen Systems* (Munich, 1958).

way: workers, peasants, intelligentsia, white-collar, or 'miscellaneous' [*Sonstige*]²⁴ was written after each pupil's name in the school register to record the circumstances of the parents. But Ulbricht's '*sozialistische Menschengemeinschaft*' was basically considered a classless society, whilst under Honecker it was decided that, although class antagonisms had become smaller, classes as such still persisted: 'Although it is necessary to stress the similarities between classes and the stage of socialist circumstances reached, it is also important not to underestimate or obliterate the existing social differences.'²⁵

It was the task of the educational establishment to work towards the diluting of these difference, and its aspirations were to a large extent laudable. The first twenty years after 1945 were a period marked by genuine concern and success in opening up education to the formerly disadvantaged social classes of workers and peasants by introducing a free, unitary school system that did not depend on parental wealth. During this period in particular, *Arbeiter-und-Bauernkinder* enjoyed positive discrimination, regardless of whether they actually wanted to climb the academic ladder or not. In the mid to late 1960s however, the effect diminished because a part of the first generation that had benefited were now the socialist intelligentsia and were not happy that their children should be discriminated against.²⁶ The SED's simple solution to this problem was to extend the definition of 'workers' to such an extent that it included nearly everyone, from true industrial workers to functionaries and even policemen. Whether one sees this as a sign of success (children all had the same opportunities) or failure (a new class asserting itself); it is a fact that from the 1970s onwards, social origins played less of a role.

The ZIJ conducted several surveys on the influence of social origin on the formation of the socialist personality. Empirical data indicated that socialisation instances outside school, primarily the parental home, still decisively influenced the formation of young people's personality. For example, children of SED party members, functionaries and teachers 'judged ideologically much more positively than children of non-party parents'; and female students whose mothers were housewives had more

²⁴ The classification of white-collar workers [*Angestellte*] was changeable; sometimes they formed their own category, sometimes they were part of '*Sonstige*', but were never counted as workers as this meant primarily industrial workers. '*Sonstige*' included the few remaining 'capitalists' in the GDR, for instance those who were self-employed, private entrepreneurs, tax advisors and those working within the Churches. Cf. 'Über die soziale Einstufung der Schüler' (ca. 1961), BArch DR2/6343.

²⁵ Cf. K. Hager, *Der IX. Parteitag und die Gesellschaftswissenschaften. Rede auf der Konferenz der Gesellschaftswissenschaftler der DDR am 25. und 26. November 1976 in Berlin* (Berlin, 1976), 42.

²⁶ For example with regard to further education. See ch. 3.

‘conventional’ ideas regarding family and the status of women in society.²⁷ Higher educated men chose higher educated women (and vice versa) who would then reproduce children with above-average academic results due to parental enthusiasm for learning. A corresponding pattern was noted for academic low achievers.²⁸ A study from 1975, which claimed to be representative for the overall age group of between 17 and 25 years, established that social origins still had a considerable influence on the thinking and attitudes of young people.²⁹ Those with a working-class background were less likely to be influenced by their parents in issues relating to politics and ethics than those having intelligentsia origins.³⁰ Social origin also influenced the way young people chose to spend their spare time. Those with an intelligentsia background were less interested in owning a motorbike; more interested in a hi-fi unit than a tape recorder; more interested in spending their holidays abroad and camping compared to those with a working-class background. Young people with a peasant background were not at all interested in owning cine or photographic equipment.³¹ Those with an intelligentsia background were more atheist and strove more towards a leadership position compared to those from workers’ and peasants’ families. On the subject of willingness to defend the country, they showed the least disposition and ‘a greater discrepancy between vague agreement (word) and concrete (deed)’ than young workers’.³²

This supports my contention that those wanting to get ahead in the GDR were more likely to play to the tune of the Party than to wholeheartedly believe. Working-class children were often more honest with themselves and their environment when it came to ideological guidelines. Asked what he understood by the term ‘socialist personality’, one of my interviewees, Steffen S., who was a true *AuB-Kind* with an electrician father and a postwoman mother, said: ‘On leaving school you were a personality when you had something that others needed in this economy of scarcity. I became an electrician and my moonlighting was sought-after. Flag-carrying on Labour Day was not important in whether or not one was appreciated in society.’³³

For all its faults, the GDR was not a society riven by class antagonisms. According to the ZIJ, this was a consequence of the public ownership of the means of

²⁷ ‘Zur Persönlichkeitsentwicklung sozialistischer Studenten (13.3.1975), BArch Bibliothek FDJ/1475, 28.

²⁸ ‘Forschungsbericht “Schüler in Spezialzirkeln”’ (June 1979), BArch DC4/368, 13.

²⁹ ‘Parlamentsstudie 1975. Zusatzbericht: “Zum Einfluß der sozialen Herkunft”’ (June 1977), BArch Bibliothek FDJ/6283.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Steffen S. questionnaire (18.3.2004).

production,³⁴ but even if the people did not always feel like the owners of their factory, they did at least feel that inequality was being redressed. This was due to various factors. First, the gap between wages was much reduced; the ratio between the lowest and highest salary within an industry or profession was about 1:3.³⁵ Second, the consequence of socialist housing policy was that many people of all social backgrounds and with differing financial resources lived as neighbours in the *Plattenbauten* [prefabricated high-rise buildings]. Third, the economy of scarcity meant that status symbols were limited; there were only two sorts of car, for example. And lastly, the education system was a major contributor to the great social mobility in the GDR by enabling children from any social background to make their way in society, so long as they ‘played by the rules’.

The youth organisation: participation and retreat

Socialist education did not stop at the school gates, but intruded into young people’s spare time activities. Here, the GDR’s only permitted mass organisation specifically for youth carried the torch: the Free German Youth (FDJ) for older teenagers encompassed and was responsible for running the pioneer organisation (PO) ‘Ernst Thälmann’ for younger children. There were however other organisations with large memberships of young people.³⁶ The youth organisation has fascinated historians and numerous books have been written on the subject, although the PO has been neglected in comparison to the FDJ.³⁷ These have examined the history, structure, statutes and policies of the youth organisation in depth already, so this section explores how young people took up the offerings of the state and how they chose to spend their spare time. It argues that young people often accepted the framework in order to exploit the youth organisation for their own purposes; but retreated into their non-organised private life for two reasons: when the organisation’s attempts at indoctrination became too obvious and when they ‘naturally’ developed other interests.

³⁴ Cf. ‘Parlamentsstudie 1975. Zusatzbericht: “Zum Einfluß der sozialen Herkunft”’ (June 1977), BArch Bibliothek FDJ/6283, 20.

³⁵ Cf. Engler, *Die Ostdeutschen*, 179.

³⁶ This was the case for the GST, the German Gymnastics and Sports Association (DTSB) and the Society for German-Soviet Friendship (DSF), all of which equally fulfilled the task of acting as transmission belts for the Party, but these will not be examined in this section.

³⁷ On the FDJ, see for example Mähler, *Blaue Hemden*; M. Walther, ‘Die Funktionen der Freien Deutschen Jugend im politischen System der DDR’ in Timmermann, *Diktaturen*, 193-214; Gotschlich, *Links und links*; A. Freiburg, C. Mahr, *FDJ. Der sozialistische Jugendverband der DDR* (Opladen, 1982) and other publications cited further in this section. Discounting the numerous GDR publications on the subject, since 1989 the PO has been dealt with mainly in works on education history, for example ‘Die Pionierorganisation “Ernst Thälmann” – Instrument zur Politisierung von Schule und Erziehung in der DDR’ (ch. 3) in Tenorth, *Politisierung im Schulalltag*, 99-174. The only works exclusively devoted to the PO so far are: Felsmann, *Beim kleinen Trompeter*; Ansorg, *Kinder im Klassenkampf*.

The FDJ was founded in 1946 and given the emblem of a rising sun, supposed to symbolise the awakening of a young and untainted generation into a bright future. This emblem featured on the blue shirt which members wore on important occasions. The FDJ was open to members from the age of 14 to 25 (older members were no exception though, notably the *'Berufsjugendliche'*, aka the full-time FDJ functionaries). The PO was founded in 1948 in order to unite the various existing children's associations and give them a party-political orientation. In 1957, the PO (whose members were all called *Jungpioniere* until then) was divided into *Jungpioniere* (ages 6-9) and *Thälmannpioniere* (ages 10-13). Modelled on the Soviet youth organisation, the pioneers' pride and joy was a blue (for the youngsters) or red neckerchief (for the *Thälmannpioniere*). The initial nonpartisanship and tolerance of the youth organisation towards religion soon gave way to a total dependency on the SED and the subordination of its own role in the interests of the Party.

What exactly were these interests? From the very beginning, the youth organisation had five objectives: to socialise young people to become conforming citizens; to educate them along Marxist-Leninist lines to become the 'cadre reserve' for Party, state and society; to motivate and train them to higher achievements at school; to organise useful recreational activities that conformed to the ideas of the Party; and to inform the SED about the interests and needs of 'the' youth.³⁸ Behind the monopoly of a single youth organisation stood the unambiguous objective of continuing the shaping of young people's personality beyond school, underlined by the setting of moral standards as expressed, for example, in the pioneers' laws. These stipulated love for a number of things (GDR, peace, parents, truth), hate (of warmongers), friendship, helpfulness, assiduous learning, discipline, respect for the working people and a prescribed fondness for singing, dancing, playing and handicrafts.³⁹ An example of the SED's exploitation of the youth organisation for its own goals is the way in which it used pioneers' banners to herald the triumph of building the Berlin Wall: *'Wir brauchen den Frieden wie die Blume das Licht, den Kriegstreibern die Faust ins Gesicht!'*⁴⁰

School and youth organisation were closely linked. Membership in the youth organisation was theoretically voluntary (in contrast to the Hitler Youth) but, over the

³⁸ U. Mählert, "Die gesamte junge Generation für den Sozialismus begeistern". Zur Geschichte der Freien Deutschen Jugend' in *APuZ* (49/50, 1993), 5.

³⁹ For an overview of statute, laws and symbols of the PO, see Felsmann, *Beim kleinen Trompeter*, 304-22.

⁴⁰ Eng.: 'We need peace like flowers the light – our fist in the warmongers' sight'. 'Kurzbericht über die Tätigkeit der Pionierorganisation im Zusammenhang mit den Maßnahmen der Regierung zum Schutze des Friedens und während der Ferien' (1961), SAPMO-BArch DY25/83.

years, non-participation became increasingly difficult, although how this was handled could differ from case to case. In 1958, it was still possible for Hans-Jochen S. not to be a member of the youth organisation and nevertheless go to the EOS Salzmannschule ('In 1955, I wanted to join the community of the Young Pioneers, yet my parents did not allow this for health reasons.'),⁴¹ whilst Heidrun K. remembered an incident at her school in Greiz from 1959, when the only two non-FDJ members of the school were singled out during a roll call and informed that they were 'not allowed' to participate in the Labour Day parade.⁴² Henning S.'s anecdote from the early 1980s illustrates the general attitude that had developed in the meantime:

In year 8 Mario, one of my classmates, did not want to join the FDJ. He was a rather mediocre pupil and had never drawn attention to himself by any political opinion. Only he suddenly took it seriously that this should be a voluntary thing. This set the whole machine rolling, and he, as well as his mother, were ordered to see the headmaster (who had formally nothing to do with the FDJ) where the voluntariness thing was clarified.⁴³

Giving a percentage for the number of participating members is difficult due to often inexact registration at the grassroots and the artificial inflation of membership numbers by the central leadership.⁴⁴ For the PO, this is particularly obvious when one compares the number of pupils in years 1-7 and their membership of the pioneers in the Statistical Yearbooks of the GDR. This suggests that in some years, the PO managed to recruit more members than there were pupils.⁴⁵ Going by the official figures, from 1948 to the early 1950s, about 60% of eligible pupils were pioneers; rising to nearly 85% in 1959; and remaining over 90% from the early 1970s onwards.⁴⁶ The FDJ was not quite so successful in its recruitment. From 1946 to the foundation of the GDR in late 1949, the FDJ counted one third of all 14 to 25-year olds as its members; in the 1950s and 1960s, membership fluctuated, but by the second half of the 1960s, the FDJ counted half of all young people as members.⁴⁷ In the 1970s and 1980s, the degree of membership rose steadily and by the mid-1980s it had levelled off at around 75%, but peaked at 87% in 1987.⁴⁸ A report from the grassroots prepared for the SED in 1961 mentions some of the reasons why pupils joined the FDJ: 'Even if the membership at the school is high, we need to be aware as to whether or not a significant number of pupils only became

⁴¹ 'Reifeprüfungen 1962, Darstellung der Entwicklung' (1962), SArch/Abitur 1962.

⁴² Heidrun K. questionnaire.

⁴³ Henning S. questionnaire.

⁴⁴ Schulze, *DDR-Jugend*, 156f; D. Zilch, 'Statistiken der FDJ-Mitgliederbewegung und demographische, soziale sowie politische Struktur ihrer Mitglieder in der SBZ/DDR' in Brislinger, *Jugend im Osten*, 207-14.

⁴⁵ For example in 1960 (100.6%), in 1979 (101.45%) and in 1988 (100.98%). Cf. Tenorth, *Politisierung*, 158f.

⁴⁶ Ansorg in Stephan, *Die Parteien*, 676.

⁴⁷ D. Zilch, 'Wer war die FDJ?' in Timmermann, *Diktaturen*, 216.

⁴⁸ Mähler in *APuZ* (49/50, 1993), 11.

members of the socialist youth organisation because the teacher likes to see it; or because they do not want to stand out; or because they believe that one can thus secure a university place.’⁴⁹ So, the high percentages for membership are no indication of the actual success of socialisation and internalisation of the SED’s agenda.

The PO and FDJ have been portrayed as two organisations which were forced upon young people and served as an agency of the SED, allowing it to extend its grip beyond school and control and steer their spare time. This interpretation ignores a vital point: that there were two sides to the youth organisation. Ottokar’s comment on *Pionierarbeit* illustrates this fact:

Most of the time it is not work, but rather play and diversion and preoccupation with things that are fun, but also meetings, which are very important, so that we can get used to them for later. Meetings start like this: my friend Harald sits on the class teacher’s chair and makes a serious face.⁵⁰

I will examine first the side of boring meetings and serious faces, which included military-like aspects such as uniform, roll calls, flags, salutations and manoeuvres.⁵¹ This is the side which mirrored the SED’s own organisational structure with a membership book and functionaries, intended to draw the youth of the GDR into the socialist way of doing things. There were five principal ways in which the youth organisation set about this goal.

Firstly, in bi-weekly meetings, the ‘pioneer afternoons’ [*Pioniernachmittage*], plans were drawn up jointly by the class teacher and the pioneers following the same basic outline all-over the country: political discussions [*Politisches Gespräch*], preparing celebrations of political, historical and seasonal events (‘Every pioneer has to make twelve buntings to decorate the town when the guests of the 4th Pioneer Festival arrive’),⁵² field trips, visits to the *Patenbrigade*, learning about antifascists in meetings, and, from the early 1970s onwards, the SERO⁵³ recycling campaigns to raise funds for socialist solidarity. Current affairs played a big role; pupils would write postcards demanding the liberation of Angela Davis and Nelson Mandela, for example, or prepare

⁴⁹ ‘Bericht über den Einsatz einer Arbeitsgruppe an der Oberschule ‘Friedrich List’, Berlin Pankow’ (18.11.1961), BArch DR2/6343.

⁵⁰ Domma, *Der brave Schüler Ottokar*, 26. NB: *Pionierarbeit* should not be confused with ‘pioneering work’, the term simply served to add a more serious touch to pioneers’ activities.

⁵¹ This in many ways is reminiscent of the Hitler Youth, but the GDR took its inspiration from the communist youth organisations of the Soviet Union, the pioneers and comsomols, founded in 1922 and 1918 respectively.

⁵² ‘Vorbereitungen für das IV. Pioniertreffen in Erfurt vom 9. bis 19.8.1961’ (12.6.1961), Schulchronik Pestalozzischule Weimar.

⁵³ SERO: VEB Kombinat Sekundärrohstoffeffassung Berlin – recycling plant for secondary raw materials (glass, wastepaper, rags etc.). SERO was also the name for a countrywide network of receiving offices where these waste goods were taken in against payment, a popular way for children to supplement their pocket money. See Alfons Zitterbacke’s wastepaper experience in ‘Als mir ein Löwe auf der Treppe begegnete’ in Holtz-Baumert, *Alfons Zitterbacke*, 97-103.

'solidarity parcels' consisting of stationery and toys for Nicaraguan children. This pattern continued in year 7 with the *Zirkel unter der blauen Fahne*,⁵⁴ where the *Thälmannpioniere* were prepared for their future membership in the FDJ. From year 8 onwards, this continued as FDJ meetings [*FDJ-Studienjahr*], with the difference that they were based on guidelines drawn up by the FDJ Central Council and revolved around politics and propaganda; but everyday problems at school would also be discussed: teachers complaining about low achievers or the caretaker objecting to boys smoking in the toilets. These meetings were often criticised for being 'too dry and theoretical';⁵⁵ promising a lot with their grand themes but failing to deliver: 'Our meeting had the title "We are the state", so we visited the mushroom farm in our village.'⁵⁶

Secondly, the FDJ had its own publishing house, the *Verlag Junge Welt*, intended to 'achieve maximum political-educational results'.⁵⁷ The contents of the *ABC-Zeitung* (for ages 6-9, since 1946), *Die Trommel* (for ages 10-14, since 1958) and *FRÖSI* (for ages 8-14, since 1953) revolved around pioneer life, solidarity and recycling campaigns, but were also interlaced with jokes and brain-teasers; and from the 1970s onwards, paid more attention to adolescent interests with some reporting on sports, film and music personalities.⁵⁸ A ZIJ study from 1976 found that the daily newspaper for young people, *Junge Welt*, was mostly read for its information on culture and sports and its popular column 'In confidence' [*Unter vier Augen*] which dealt with matters of the heart and conscience, whilst its political content was criticised for painting too rosy a picture of life in the GDR.⁵⁹

A third means of conveying political information was the bulletin board [*Wandzeitung*] in each classroom. Each class had their own '*Wandzeitungsredakteur*' who designed and updated the board or delegated the task to someone else. Topics were varied, but tended to concentrate on international political events, the achievements of socialist production or local news. The designated pupil would often work along the same lines as Ottokar when writing an article for it: 'The subject was: the fight for good

⁵⁴ Eng.: 'work group under the blue flag'.

⁵⁵ 'Arbeitsbesprechung' (8.4.1969), SArch/Protokollbuch 11.2.1969-4.4.1972.

⁵⁶ 'Rechenschaftsbericht Schuljahr 1978/79 Klasse 9A' (1979), Schularchiv Vogelsberg/1979.

⁵⁷ 'Sekretariatssitzung, TOP1: Jahrespläne der Zeitschriften' (15.10.1962), SAPMO-BArch DY25/916.

⁵⁸ On GDR periodicals, see S. Barck *et al.* (eds), *Zwischen 'Mosaik' und 'Einheit'. Zeitschriften in der DDR* (Berlin, 1999). NB: FRÖSI stands for '*Fröhlich sein und singen*', the title of a well-known pioneer song. Eng.: '[We love] being cheerful and singing.'

⁵⁹ 'Funktion und Zusammenwirken der sozialistischen Massenmedien bei der ideologischen Erziehung der Schuljugend, dargestellt an Schülern der Klassen 9/10 – Abschlußbericht' (December 1976), BArch FDJ B 5854. This study concluded that 'pupils's expectations on certain topics [love, friendship, music, spare-time activities, AB] are not sufficiently catered for by our mass media'. Cf. *ibid.*, 92.

marks. I said to myself, this is not difficult. First I took our newspaper *Die Trommel* and copied a few nice sentences for the purpose of embroidery.⁶⁰ Whilst there were of course politically interested pupils wanting to put across political news, and some creative pupils taking this opportunity to exercise their artistic abilities, bulletin boards were mostly mentioned in the reports in a negative connection, either as in this entry from a teachers' meeting at the Salzmannschule from 1965: 'Political information: bulletin board and letter box – pupils show no interest',⁶¹ or in connection with 'provocative actions', i.e. the defacement of photographs of Party leaders or the posting of unacceptable opinions, which could result in a pupil being relegated from school.⁶²

Fourthly, there was the *Zirkel Junger Sozialisten*, an after-school club aiming to introduce its members to the systematic study of Marxism-Leninism. By 1966, over 300,000 young socialists were organised in these clubs which then existed in 84% of all POS and 91% of all EOS.⁶³ Despite these impressive figures, participants tended to see the study of Marxism-Leninism as 'extended tuition', especially as the club was usually run by the civics or history teacher and took place in the same classroom. However, there was at least one benefit for the participants, as was noted in a report from 1967: the *Zirkel* helped them a lot in their civics lessons.⁶⁴

Fifthly, the administration of the class collective fell under the remit of the youth organisation. Annually, pupils elected their class leadership team composed of various 'functionaries' (i.e. secretary, propagandist [*Agitator*], culture and sports secretary, treasurer). On the one hand, this had positive connotations. Not only was this 'societal activity' mentioned in pupils' end of year reports, but there was also an emotional aspect to it: 'Reasons for being elected were academic achievement, sociability, critical faculty, organisational talent and popularity. By being elected into one of these roles I felt accredited and endorsed by my class mates.'⁶⁵ A ZIJ study from 1979 established that occupying these roles 'set the course for future societal activity': from the PO via the FDJ to later occupation of functionary positions in, for example, the SED or FDGB.⁶⁶ Prominent figures who emerged from these 'cadre forges' were the second and third generation of the GDR's political elite: Margot and Erich Honecker, Hermann

⁶⁰ Domma, *Der brave Schüler Ottokar*, 27.

⁶¹ 'Klassenleiterberatung 9. Klassen' (6.12.1965), SArch/Schulleitung 1965-1968.

⁶² See for example 'Eingaben über schulpolitische Fragen' (1962), BArch DR2/6819; 'Information über die Entwicklung besonderer Vorkommnisse im Jahre 1976' (28.1.1977), BArch DR2/A8520.

⁶³ 'Probleme bei der Durchführung der Zirkel Junger Sozialisten und anderer Formen des Studiums des ML' (February 1967), SAPMO-BArch DY24/8521.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Brigitte F. questionnaire.

⁶⁶ 'Neue Ergebnisse der Jugendforschung' (November 1979), BArch DC4/205, 5.

Axen, Egon Krenz and Hans Modrow, to name but a few.⁶⁷ On the other hand, this high continuity of societal activity tended to be monopolised by the few, as the ZIJ recognised: ‘The chances for others to master such demanding situations and prove themselves of value, to be challenged and promoted, are being reduced.’⁶⁸

Another problem emerged when the keen young pioneer functionaries reached adolescence and the FDJ. They were increasingly seen as goody-goodies (more girls than boys)⁶⁹ by their peers and so became distanced from the less committed members. According to a ZIJ report from 1974, 47% of ‘ideologically positively positioned’ youths were reported as having too little spare time compared to 36% of others, presumably due to their commitment to attending FDJ meetings and participating in FDJ organisational activities, although the report does not specify this; and also that aspiring functionaries were more likely to have problems finding friends (24% compared to 16%).⁷⁰ Showing overt sympathy for the state could even result in blows being exchanged with the ‘politically ignorant’ majority in class, as in a case from Frauenprießnitz near Jena from 1959, when a 13-year old ‘positive’ pupil was given a pasting by his fellow pupils with the comment ‘That’s what you get for your old man making great speeches for the communists!’⁷¹ Reports of assaults for this reason however come mostly from the 1950s. For the 1960s and 1970s, there are occasional reports of clashes between ‘rowdies’ and FDJ members on occasions such as the *Pfingsttreffen der Jugend* in Karl-Marx-Stadt in 1967,⁷² or on isolated cases such as one from 1971 of a 16-year old FDJ member from a ‘correct’ home being beaten up on several occasions by his classmates because he had spoken out against watching Western television. This report was classified as ‘top secret’ because officially, such occurrences were not supposed to be happening in the ‘developed socialist society’.⁷³

The formality of much of this first side to the youth organisation as well as its disregard for the youngsters’ own interests led to the fact that many saw it not as *their*

⁶⁷ Nothnagle, *Building*, 13.

⁶⁸ ‘Neue Ergebnisse der Jugendforschung’ (November 1979), BArch DC4/205, 5f.

⁶⁹ For the 1950s and 1960s, I did not find any statistics on the ratio of boys to girls holding positions within the FDJ. The above ZIJ study from 1979 however noted that it was necessary ‘to keep an eye’ on this issue. ‘Doubtless it speaks for the high willingness and activity of the girls that their quota of FDJ functionaries has been rising for years. The tendency of having 65% girls and 45% boys in PO positions continues into the FDJ.’ Mirroring the situation in the world of work however, it was also noted that whilst girls were more numerous in low-level positions, their share in holding the top job as *FDJ-Sekretär* was still seen as too low (no figure given). Cf. *ibid.*, 6.

⁷⁰ ‘Zum Problemlernen von 17jährigen Jugendlichen’ (1974), BArch FDJ B 6293, 10.

⁷¹ ‘Abt. Volksbildung, Rat des Bezirkes Gera an Minister Lemnitz’ (10.2.1959), BArch DR2/6343.

⁷² ‘Bericht über die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung von Straftaten und Vorkommnisse im Zeitraum der Aktion “Treue” vom 7.5.1967 bis 16.5.1967’ (18.5.1967), BStU MfS-HA IX 12731 MF.

⁷³ ‘Information über ein Vorkommnis an der 19. Oberschule ‘Dr. Richard-Sorge’ in Berlin-Johannisthal am 29.3.1971’ (2.4.1971), BStU MfS-HA XX 3897.

organisation. This problem was known in the organisation's headquarters in Berlin early on. Many reports from the late 1950s and early 1960s noted the meagre success of political work, such as this one from 1962:

We must recognise that the necessary amplification of political education work is often translated into boring and dry meetings. Largely, the opinions of adults are put in front of the pioneers and questions that are close to their heart are not being answered. [...] We noticed that a number of topics, such as 'War is not a law of nature and peace is not a gift' are not understood by many pioneers. This led to many meetings becoming lectures in which the pioneers remained passive.⁷⁴

In the course of the 1960s and 1970s, the accounts become noticeably more standardised and formal in their content, generally commenting at length on the 'good success' of political-ideological education for the majority of members and then adding a few paragraphs on 'a small number of pupils' who were yet to be convinced and become sufficiently involved. By the late 1970s, the political side of the youth organisation had become routine and utterly unexceptional. The annual planning of the FDJ leadership of the POS 'Thomas Müntzer' in Vogelsberg for 1977 supports Mark Allinson's conjecture that 1977 was 'the most boring year in GDR history'.⁷⁵ The planning showed nothing but a succession of roll calls, parades, elections, meetings, anniversaries (GDR, October Revolution, PO) and participation in the 'tidy towns competition'.⁷⁶ The young teacher in Uwe Kant's *Klassenfest* summed up the lethargic atmosphere and pupils' indifference of the time:

I can remember how proud I had been when I first got the FDJ membership book and the blue shirt. Boy, I thought, now it's getting interesting. But it only got interesting when a teacher or another imaginative person told us what we could do or when we did something ourselves. Sadly many of our teachers were very constrained with their ideas and so we dozed through until the next meeting. We often complained about teachers to whom pioneers and FDJ only signified when one of us got into trouble. 'And you as an FDJ member are not ashamed to spray your classmate with the garden hose?' Nowadays I myself have had the same thing also on the tip of my tongue a few times. Luckily I swallow it down in time. To be correct I would need to say: 'You as *FDJ-Beitragsentrichter*'.⁷⁷

The other side of the youth organisation was altogether different. In the words of Astrid H., a farmer from Sprötau born in 1958: 'Our FDJ meetings in the village: when the DIN standard programme (e.g. statement of accounts) was dealt with, one proceeded to

⁷⁴ 'Information über einige Probleme, die bei der Verwirklichung der Beschlüsse der 9. Zentralratstagung in der Pionierorganisation auftraten' (5.5.1962), SAPMO-BArch DY25/1115.

⁷⁵ Cf. M. Allinson, '1977 – the GDR's most boring year?'; paper held at a conference entitled 'Playing the rules – or normalisation of rule? Towards a critique of the state-society dichotomy in the GDR, 1961-1979' (14-16 July 2005) in Erfurt, Germany.

⁷⁶ 'Arbeitsplan der GOL der POS Vogelsberg für das Schuljahr 1977/78', Schularchiv Vogelsberg/1977.

⁷⁷ U. Kant, *Das Klassenfest* (Berlin, 1978), 68. (first published in 1969) NB: *FDJ-Beitragsentrichter*: 'payer of FDJ membership fees'.

the cosier part.’⁷⁸ This is the FDJ which the young people made their own, despite, not because of the bi-weekly meetings, nationally set agenda and Marxist-Leninist study clubs. The ‘free time’ activities were not necessarily supposed to be fun; they were supposed to have a positive influence on collectivity and skills, to be ‘meaningful’, and in reality a means of ensuring that youngsters would not stray from the path set by the SED. The notion of ‘*sinnvolle Freizeitgestaltung*’⁷⁹ was obviously open to interpretation as a fictional sixteen-year old in a novel by Helga Königsdorf points out:

The other day we had another of those shit discussions. ‘Explain your definition of “*sinnvolle Freizeitgestaltung*”’. Everytime they start like this I think they really want to know my opinion and promptly fall for it. Okay, when we have to clean the school after the lessons are finished, I don’t want to get out of it since I agree that it can’t be left to get totally filthy. But I wouldn’t call that ‘*sinnvolle Freizeitgestaltung*’. My definition was succinct: what I like and what doesn’t bother anyone else. I can’t say that cleaning the school is enormous fun to me. [...] Our civics teacher absolutely wanted to convince me that ‘meaningful’ equals ‘useful’.⁸⁰

But the important point is that pupils really did have a choice in spending their spare time in a ‘meaningful’ way which was not always as uninteresting as the above example. The youth organisation was generously funded by the state and so able to offer a broad range of activities and facilities at no or very low cost: the *Hort*,⁸¹ libraries, pioneer holiday camps, special ‘*Pionierhäuser*’ in larger towns that offered premises and equipment for a plurality of activities, a pioneer park and a pioneer ‘palace’ in Berlin, even a ‘pioneer republic’,⁸² the FDJ ‘*Singebewegung*’ and youth clubs. The *Jugendklubs* in particular had no difficulties in being accepted by young people. In 1979, there were 5000 of them in the whole of the GDR. Mostly frequented by 14 to 20-year olds, the main activity taking place was discotheques, thus they were considered to be truly ‘orientated towards the youth’ [*jugendgemäß*], with about 70,000 volunteers helping with the running of the clubs.⁸³ To a marginal extent they were also supposed to contribute to the acquisition of ‘political-ideological convictions’ with political

⁷⁸ Astrid H. questionnaire (21.3.2004). In the original: ‘*FDJ-Versammlung im Heimatort: wenn das TGL-Programm (Rechenschaftsbericht usw.) abgehandelt war, ging man zum gemütlichen Teil über.*’ NB: TGL stands for ‘*Technische Normen, Gütevorschriften und Lieferbedingungen*’, the GDR equivalent of DIN standard.

⁷⁹ Cf. ‘Die Entfaltung eines kulturvollen Lebens der Jugend’, § 27, *Jugendgesetz der DDR vom 28. Januar 1974*, cited in Baske, *Bildungspolitik*, 387. See also G. Irscher, ‘Freizeitleben. Muße, Feierabend, Freizeit’ in Badstübner, *Befremdlich anders*, 350-73.

⁸⁰ H. Königsdorf, *Der Lauf der Dinge*, 70f.

⁸¹ *Hort* was the facility whereby children could arrive at school early (6am) and leave late (5pm) and would be supervised by special *Hort* staff whilst they either did fun activities or their homework, thus enabling parents to have full-time jobs.

⁸² Founded in 1952, the *Pionierrepublik ‘Wilhelm Pieck’* on lake Werbellinsee was part international holiday camp, part school, where in the course of its existence over 150,000 of the country’s ‘best pioneers’ imbibed political indoctrination and enjoyed a privileged six-week stay with excellent catering and ‘meaningful’ spare-time activities. Cf. Tenorth, *Politisierung*, 150-3.

⁸³ ‘*Jugendklubs in der DDR 1979*’ (October 1979), BArch DC4/653, 5f.

discussion rounds and lectures; an aspect which in reality did not nearly play as large a role as made out in the reports for the SED leadership.

The *Arbeitsgemeinschaften* [AG or after-school clubs] were the principal basis of organised spare-time activity and usually took place twice a month. Most common were the sports clubs, which from 1961 every POS was obliged to offer to pupils.⁸⁴ Other forms of AG ranged from purely fun ones like AG ‘Cosmetics’ to AG ‘Cabaret’,⁸⁵ to educational ones like the *Stationen Junger Naturforscher und Techniker* whose members learned about things like meteorology and botany, to AG ‘Maths’ and AG ‘Chemistry’ for strong pupils who wanted to study beyond the school curriculum. In the late 1970s, just when punk music began to make its mark on young people, the emphasis was placed on the latter kind of AG in particular as an attempt to arouse pupils’ interest for a future career, with AG for ‘Elementary Statistics’, ‘Applied Set Theory’ and ‘Livestock farming and animal feed’.⁸⁶ The AG could have a far-reaching and lasting influence on young people, as two of my interviewees testified. Erika P.’s son learned to play chess in the *Hort* in the 1960s and today, ‘he still plays chess in competitions and is a chess trainer for children.’⁸⁷ Adelheid K., who was a teacher at the POS ‘Werner Seelenbinder’ (named after a successful wrestler and communist killed by the Nazis in 1944) in Orlamünde, said that the school had an AG ‘Wrestling’ which for some children was the beginning of a career in sports, in one case producing a European champion.⁸⁸

Every AG membership and success in competitions was mentioned in a pupil’s report, since extracurricular activities were highly valued for the development of a pupil’s personality. For Ulla M., participating in the activities offered left a positive mark on her personality. She chose what she wanted to do: singing in the choir, dancing, playing the flute and swimming three times a week (‘Everything was free, except for the swimming, for which I paid 30 pfennigs per month.’) and said: ‘I loved it and was educated to have a certain discipline. I learned to organise my time, fit in certain obligations (homework, helping with the housework) and also, when my enthusiasm for singing or swimming was a bit low, to continue nevertheless. I kept up with all these activities even as a student.’⁸⁹ The list of Dietrich E.’s ‘spare time’ activities shows the wide scope available in Guben in the mid-1970s:

⁸⁴ Thomas in Puhle, 81f.

⁸⁵ Both attended by Brigitte F. in Eisenach in the 1960s.

⁸⁶ ‘Weitere inhaltliche Ausgestaltung der POS’ (8.4.1976), BArch DR2/A.4311/1.

⁸⁷ Erika P. questionnaire.

⁸⁸ Adelheid K. questionnaire.

⁸⁹ Ulla M. questionnaire.

In the afternoons, I was nonstop on the go: Chemistry AG in the laboratory of the *Chemiefaserwerk*, Maths AG with pupils from all over the town, Measurement Technics AG where we designed and soldered circuits, Highjump AG and Chess in the DTSB. Plus I went to the children's choir, trombone ensemble, *Christenlehre*, *Konfirmandenunterricht*, *Junge Gemeinde*, piano and organ lessons. Within the AG there was quite a lot of fun and freedom. But of course there were also some things like the opening ceremonies of *Spartakiaden*, that were ideologically loaded.⁹⁰

Such a range of activities was only possible from the late 1960s onwards and tended to be limited to towns. The SED focussed attention and financial resources on the new socialist environment that developed in the high-rise urban housing areas in order to make them more attractive. Young people living in the countryside were far less spoilt for choice. Renate W., who grew up in the Rhön in the 1970s, said: 'Many things simply didn't apply for us because of the rural way of life. There wasn't a *Pionierhaus* and in any case, we couldn't do many extracurricular activities because we had to help a lot on the farm.'⁹¹ A ZIJ study from 1979 noted that 'helping at home and in agriculture' took up 'a great amount' of the countryside youth's spare time (particularly for girls), but also that they enjoyed a 'greatly diversified spare time'. However, the 'main activities' consisted, as for the urban youth, in 'watching television, listening to music and dancing'. Other principal activities were going out, sports, reading and repairing and enjoying 'their set of wheels' (scooter, motorbike, car), pointing to the 'significant transport problem' that existed for young people in accessing spare-time facilities.⁹² It was not only the case that young people could not get to the FDJ; often, the FDJ did not come to the villages either. Potholed roads and rare bus connections were significant. People from the village Sprötau (around 400 inhabitants in the 1960s and 1970s), situated only 11 kilometres from the nearest town Sömmerda and 25 kilometres from the regional capital Erfurt, do not recall being bothered by FDJ officials conveying political messages. Steffen S., speaking of the 1970s, said that 'FDJ meetings were normal meetings with friends, i.e. drinking sessions. There were no constraints, we elected our FDJ representative ourselves, never talked about politics, but earned money through collecting stuff for SERO and organising discotheques, which financed our holidays.'⁹³ For Doris P., who is nine years older, there was no differentiation between her circle of friends and the FDJ, nor was there anything remotely political about it: 'The FDJ in the village was great. We helped when there were events in the village, like cleaning everything before the *Kirmes* [village fête]. On bicycles and scooters we

⁹⁰ Dietrich E. questionnaire. *Chemiefaserwerk*: factory producing sythetic fibres.

⁹¹ Renate W. questionnaire.

⁹² 'Zur Entwicklung der Landjugend in der DDR' (19.11.1979), BArch FDJ B 6058, 23.

⁹³ Steffen S. questionnaire.

followed our favourite band around who played Rolling Stones music. Pure freedom! Nobody cared about anything we did.’⁹⁴

It goes without saying that some young people also spent their spare time completely independently from the youth organisation. ZIJ studies which involved more than 25,000 young people of 14 to 25-years old from 1969 to 1979 found that between one third and half of them spent their spare time completely outside the youth organisation.⁹⁵ The preference of ‘meaningless’ over ‘meaningful’ activities was particularly pronounced here, which the ZIJ explained with the fact that ‘the enemy does not leave anything unattempted in order to propagate in the realm of spare time the personality-deforming models of the bourgeois way of life’.⁹⁶

My interviewees had overwhelmingly positive memories of their time with the pioneers, generally not differentiating between the imposed and discretionary sides. The community spirit existing in the pioneer groups and the cheerful pioneer songs were said to have been the best thing. Brigitte F. even remembered the pioneer laws as having accompanied her ‘all the time’: ‘We found them correct and good. Somehow we were brought up in this way: A good pioneer is also a good human being.’⁹⁷ In the 1950s, AG were just about the only organised spare time activity available to children, but their popularity persisted into the age of television and discotheques and, perhaps, because they were not generally political, they left a positive impression on the people who benefitted from them. In the same way that most were happy to receive the blue and then red neckerchief, most were also happy to exchange it for the blue shirt in year 8. For FDJ also meant: events in the evenings, torches instead of lampions, to come a bit closer to adulthood. As both archival material and my interviewees revealed however, initial enthusiasm began to wane fast. The good pioneer Brigitte F. gave one of the main reasons: ‘We didn’t always take part in the FDJ meetings; the promenade with the first boyfriend was much more interesting.’⁹⁸ i.e. the ‘natural’ shifting of interests. Adolescents retreated from the FDJ because they naturally began to find all forms of authority irritating. ‘At a certain age, in their own ways many become fed up with the whole show and want to counter the external pressure to conform to a pre-determined “us” with a self-determined “us” and “me”.’⁹⁹ Long-term commitment to the FDJ

⁹⁴ Doris P. questionnaire.

⁹⁵ P. Voß, ‘Forschungen zur Freizeit der Jugend. Entwicklung des Forschungsgebietes’ in Friedrich, *Das Zentralinstitut*, 353.

⁹⁶ ‘Die Herausbildung der sozialistischen Lebensweise bei Schülern in der Freizeit und ihr Einfluß auf die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung’ (December 1977), BArch DC4/366.

⁹⁷ Brigitte F. questionnaire.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Haase, *VEB Nachwuchs*, 63.

tended not to occur because much of the political-educational content was plain boring and irrelevant to young people. Where it did win active participation was on the non-political social side. The youth organisation's mission to cultivate socialist personalities and to control them at the same time ultimately failed.

'New forms of enemy endeavours in disguise': church youth work

The way in which Christian children and young people chose to spend their spare time was equally of great interest to the authorities. This is shown by the large number of files concerned with church youth work, which expose the significant level of infiltration by employees of the *Abteilung Inneres* of the Ministry of the Interior as well as by Stasi IM into the church organisations.¹⁰⁰ Church youth work was generally perceived as meddling and inspired by enemies of the state and documented as such.¹⁰¹

The strongest campaign by the state against church youth work in the lifetime of the GDR resulted from the 2nd SED Party Congress in 1952, which proclaimed the establishment of socialism. 'Church without offspring' was the goal for the socialist future.¹⁰² The *Jungen Gemeinden* were, according to the more extreme SED propaganda, 'Eastern branches of the CIA';¹⁰³ its members were perceived as anticonstitutional members of an illegal organisation and persecuted. Only Stalin's death, the events of 17th June 1953 and the 'New Course' decreed by Moscow curbed the SED's attempts at finishing off this rival to its own youth organisation. The animosity however continued. By the late 1950s, the SED's strategy for dealing with the Christian youth demanded that the FDJ leadership 'conspicuously demonstrate that we do not sneer at them and that we do not shut ourselves away from them', but stressed the necessity to 'lead the battle against their perception that they are martyrs for a "good cause",' and it continued that 'this does not rule out that all party and FDJ leaders fight

¹⁰⁰ Young IM assigned to the Churches were 'ideally the children of denominational IM, sociable, knowledgeable, agile, members of the *Junge Gemeinde* or with good connections to facilitate their successful infiltration into bodies of church youth work.' Cf. Oberleutnant Werner G. Fachschulabschlußarbeit *Die Gewinnung, Qualifizierung und der Einsatz von IM unter konfessionell gebundenen Jugendlichen zur wirksamen Bekämpfung des politischen Klerikalismus* (23.1.1979), BStU MfS JHS VVS 651/79, 6ff.

¹⁰¹ An example of the lumping together of various 'enemies of the state' is given here by the head of the MfS, Erich Mielke: 'The youth in the GDR constitutes a particular point of attack. A coordinated interplay of the state apparatus in Bonn, Western secret services, agents' headquarters, centres of ideological diversion, West German youth organisations, film and star clubs, institutions of the Church, and the media is geared to isolate the youth in the GDR from the influence of socialist ideology.' Cf. 'Generaloberst Mielke: Dienstanweisung Nr. 4/66 zur politisch-operativen Bekämpfung der politisch-ideologischen Diversion und Untergrundtätigkeit unter jugendlichen Personenkreisen in der DDR' (15.5.1966), BStU MfS-HA VIII 1074.

¹⁰² Hertzsch, *Sag meinen Kindern*, 75.

¹⁰³ Dieckmann in Döring, *Fröhlich*, 9.

against the reactionary forces and those elements who seduce this part of the youth and use them for their own aims.’¹⁰⁴ What did these ‘aims’ consist of then?

The Protestant Churches offered five principal types of youth work.¹⁰⁵ Firstly, children in years 1 to 6 went to *Christenlehre* on one afternoon per week. These meetings were conducted by a deacon or deaconess and consisted of getting to know Bible texts, painting pictures with a biblical reference, and other activities such as preparing a nativity play for the Christmas service. Some children were told by their parents to be wary of telling anyone at school how they spent this particular afternoon, others did not see the necessity. Steffen S., who grew up in a small Thuringian village in the 1970s, remembered: ‘The fact that we went to the *Christenlehre* interested none of the teachers at school. We openly talked about it.’¹⁰⁶ Secondly, the *Konfirmandenstunden* for pupils in years 7 to 9 were based on a similar structure and prepared the children for confirmation, with the difference that the teenagers were instructed by the vicar himself and that discussions about biblical texts often had references to current issues of life in the GDR, problems at school or in the family, or environmental concerns.

Thirdly, after confirmation, they formed the *Jungen Gemeinden*, usually until they got married and settled into a home life in their mid-twenties. It is important to point out that the term *Junge Gemeinde* is deceptive and should really be used in its plural form when making general statements, for it describes the totality of the youth work of the eight Protestant regional Churches, which differed in form and content. They were not a single organisation with a single aim, as the SED often suggested.¹⁰⁷ Their meetings were informal get-togethers held with or without the local pastor or the *Jugendpfarrer*. The SED was throughout the decades on the lookout for illegal activities within the JG, but they did not become cells of opposition: ‘There are no negative, class-related tendencies amongst the pupils. But parts of the *Junge Gemeinde* disguise themselves most cunningly and no longer appear openly. Unfortunately there are no concrete clues for the work of the *Kugelkreuzler*.’¹⁰⁸ This term referred to the JG’s symbol, a small metal badge of a cross on the globe which was worn on jumpers and was often a cause for confrontation at school. Activities within the JG differed widely,

¹⁰⁴ ‘Zur Arbeit mit allen Schichten der Jugend der DDR’ (14.1.1959), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV2/16/4.

¹⁰⁵ A sixth type were the Protestant and Catholic *Studentengemeinden* [Christian students’ communities], which will not be addressed here. For more information, see Ohse, *Jugend*, 253-63.

¹⁰⁶ Steffen S. questionnaire.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. R. Henkys, ‘Die Opposition der “Jungen Gemeinde”’ in Henke, *Widerstand*, 150f.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Konzentrationen von Erscheinungen nach Berichten der Bezirksschulräte’ (October 1961), BArch DR2/6355.

ranging from earnest discussions of biblical texts and questions of *Weltanschauung*, science, and ethics, to rehearsing songs or amateur plays for church services, to playing table tennis, going to the cinema, motorbike tours, cooking together, and excursions.¹⁰⁹

An interesting outsider's view of the JG was given by Viola S. who got to know young Christians in Berlin in the late 1960s as a teenager. 'They engaged in interesting youth work. But I always had the impression that they worked conspiratorially. Everything was kept to small groups and their behaviour was kind of hush-hush. Back then I couldn't understand why they behaved like that.'¹¹⁰ The reason for this may have been the particularly close eye that the MfS kept on the JG in the capital and hence the mistrust of anyone from outside trying to join in. Despite this surveillance, the authorities were still complaining in the late 1970s about the 'patchy knowledge our EOS headmasters have of pupils' participation in activities of the JG and in their spare time'.¹¹¹

The fourth type of church youth work offered an alternative to the pioneer holiday camp. 'Under the camouflage name of *Rüstzeiten*, the Church organises very differentiated holiday activities. For young men camping holidays, cycling tours, church rallies, walking tours in the Harz Mountains, as well as mixed *Rüstzeiten*, choir, mission, and theater holidays, and harvest help.'¹¹² Not only were the *Rüstzeiten* (called *Exerzitien* within the Catholic Church) a chance for city youths to get away and relax in nice surroundings, but these 'periods of reflection' were a chance to discuss things with like-minded people. Time and again, especially in the early 1970s, the SED attempted to proscribe them or at least reduce their attractiveness by making them subject to authorisation,¹¹³ but the Churches successfully defended themselves against restrictions.¹¹⁴

The fifth part was the so-called *Offene Jugendarbeit* [open youth work], which began to develop in the late 1960s.¹¹⁵ This was the part that the SED felt most threatened by, for it was the most difficult to control. Young pastors such as Walter Schilling in Thuringia ventured outside the congregations and sought to involve non-

¹⁰⁹ Cf. 'Information über neue Formen und Methoden der politisch-religiösen Einflussnahme der Kirchen auf die Jugend' (23.12.1968), BArch DR2/D1695. See also Wierling, *Geboren*, 243.

¹¹⁰ Viola S. questionnaire.

¹¹¹ 'Bericht des Bezirksschulrates von Potsdam zum Stand der politisch-ideologischen und kadermäßigen Situation in der Abiturstufe' (26.4.1977), BArch DR2/A5888.

¹¹² 'Einschätzung der Aktivität der Kirche unter der Jugend' (ca. 1959), BArch DO4/94.

¹¹³ See E. Ueberschär, 'Der lange Atem der kirchlichen Jugendarbeit. Repression von Freizeiten und Rüstzeiten' in Dähn, *Und führe*, 174-81.

¹¹⁴ Reiher in Dähn, *Und führe*, 118.

¹¹⁵ On this topic, see H. Pietzsch, *Jugend zwischen Kirche und Staat. Geschichte der kirchlichen Jugendarbeit in Jena 1970-1989* (Cologne, 2005).

Christian young people into church activities, especially those living at the fringes of society for whom any hope of turning into socialist personalities was lost. Marc-Dietrich Ohse has described the work of the Churches in this respect as not unlike that of Western social workers.¹¹⁶ In 1979, a Stasi captain had to concede that:

Church circles of both denominations, especially though of the Protestant Church, have understood well how to tune in to the problems of young people, particularly of the 'harried and stressed' youth. They primarily attend to negative-decadent young people, whose existence and problems are often ignored in the factories, schools, and also by the FDJ.¹¹⁷

Pastors organised open discussions on everyday problems and philosophical questions, supported *Bausoldaten*, and held church services that were tailored to young people, featuring modern music and lyric recitals.¹¹⁸ 'Thus some of these young people feel they have a home in the Church without actually being a member.'¹¹⁹ This also applied to a loose crowd of young people who emerged in the early 1970s calling themselves *Kunden*, *Blueser* or *Tramper*,¹²⁰ who hitchhiked around the Republic to follow their favourite bands or visit folk festivals such as Weimar's Onion Market and sometimes caused a 'public nuisance' in the process.¹²¹ Having decided not to live according to socialist or indeed any norms, the *Offene Jugendarbeit* was the only interface between them and society. The politicised groups concerned with peace, human rights and the environment that would characterise the Church in the 1980s developed out of the various people gathered together in the *Offene Jugendarbeit* in the 1970s.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Ohse, *Jugend*, 271-4.

¹¹⁷ 'Hauptmann Rainer H., Diplomarbeit: Die Einleitung zielgerichteter, differenzierter, politisch-operativer Maßnahmen zur Umsetzung der Aufgabenstellung des Gen. Minister vom 14.1.1978 - VVS 008-8/78 - zur Sicherung der Jugendpolitik von Partei- und Staatsführung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik; dargestellt an Beispielen, operativen Erfahrungen und Erkenntnissen der Bezirksverwaltung Leipzig, Abteilung XX, bei der Sicherung von Großveranstaltungen' (1.10.1979), BStU MfS JHS VVS 320/79, 15.

¹¹⁸ To a lesser extent, the Catholic Church also practiced *Offene Jugendarbeit*, usually in cooperation with the local Protestant Church. An MfS-report from 1979 stated: 'In order to increase the effectiveness of the manipulation and winning-over of young people, a cooperative and joint procedure has emerged in the some Catholic and Protestant parishes. In Worbis for example, joint mass and events were organised. In Birlingen, the Catholic convent was transformed into a kind of youth discotheque.' Cf. 'Hinweise über gewonnene Erkenntnisse und Erfahrungen bei der operativen Bearbeitung und vorbeugenden Absicherung Jugendlicher des Bezirks Erfurt im Alter von 14 bis 25 Jahren' (11.4.1979), BStU Außenstelle Erfurt, KD Worbis/516.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ And who were known as '*Gammler*' or '*Asoziale*' [loafers] by the MfS.

¹²¹ 'Information über politisch-operative Erfahrungen bei der inoffiziellen Kontrolle und Beeinflussung negativer und dekadenter Jugendlicher' (16.10.1974), BStU-MfS Arbeitsbereich Mittag, Nr. 169; 'Hinweise über gewonnene Erkenntnisse und Erfahrungen bei der operativen Bearbeitung und vorbeugenden Absicherung Jugendlicher/ Jungerwachsener des Bezirkes Erfurt im Alter von 14 bis 25 Jahren' (11.4.1979), BStU-Außenstelle Erfurt, KD Worbis/516. On this topic, see M. Rauhut, *Rock in der DDR 1949-1989* (Bonn, 2002), 68-81. See also M. Rauhut, T. Kochan (eds), *Bye bye, Lübben City - Bluesfreaks, Tramps und Hippies in der DDR* (Berlin, 2004).

¹²² T. Auerbach, 'Jugend im Blickfeld der Staatssicherheit' in Vollnhals, *Der Schein*, 208f.

Changes in the youth work of the Churches began in the mid-1960s due to three main factors: increasing secularisation;¹²³ the need to keep up with Ulbricht's liberalisation process between 1963 and 1965; and a generational change within the ranks of ministers and deacons. These induced the Churches to open up their doors to new proposals which had greater appeal for non-religious young people: 'The efforts of reactionary Church circles, who "modernise" church youth work and organise Beat music and slide-show afternoons and sports events are new, camouflaged forms of endeavours of the enemy.'¹²⁴ Older parishioners sometimes felt alienated by unconventional ideas, such as the the introduction of the '*Gottesdienste einmal anders*' [church services with a difference] in 1963 with their modern structure, by young pastors, some of whom had themselves been socialised within the GDR.¹²⁵ Yet despite the Churches' endeavours, GDR society did become detached from its Christian roots, not only in reports destined for SED leaders' desks. The success of the state's atheistic education on young people is indicated in a letter from 1960, in which a vicar from a small town in Thuringia complained about an incident which happened when his wife went to fetch the first-year children from school to take them to the *Christenlehre*: 'Three boys, probably from year 10, blocked their way, tried to hinder the children, and shouted: '*Wer glaubt heute noch an einen lieben Gott mit Dackelbeenen!*' (sic) [Who still believes in a God with sausage dog legs these days].¹²⁶ Walter Friedrich, the director of the ZIJ, concluded from the surveys undertaken from the early 1960s onwards that the decisive changes in young people's attitudes to religion and their outlook on life had already taken place in the 1950s.¹²⁷ The proportion of religious 14 to 18 year-olds and apprentices remained constant from the 1960s at between 12-15%, and did not differ much until the late 1980s, when a slight increase to 16% was noted amongst apprentices and young workers, testifying to the renewed appeal of the

¹²³ The JG had an estimated membership of 125,000 in 1955; 104,000 in 1959; and 63,000 in 1965. The Catholic Youth had 32,000 members in 1959 and 27,000 in 1967. Cf. 'Einschätzung der Aktivität der Kirche unter der Jugend' (ca. 1959), BArch DO4/94 and Wierling, *Geboren*, 244.

¹²⁴ 'Einschätzung der wesentlichen Ursachen, begünstigenden Bedingungen und Umstände für negative Verhaltensweisen sowie staatsfeindliche und andere kriminelle Handlungen jugendlicher Personen bis zu 25 Jahren aufgrund von Ergebnissen der politisch-operativen Arbeit des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit' (6.9.1967), BStU MfS-HA IX 12011 MF.

¹²⁵ On this topic, see C. Halbrock, *Evangelische Pfarrer der Kirche Berlin-Brandenburg 1945-1961. Amtsautonomie im vormundschaftlichen Staat?* (Berlin, 2004).

¹²⁶ 'Pfarrer Hohmann an Johannes Dieckmann, Präsident der Volkskammer' (27.11.1960), BArch DR2/6411.

¹²⁷ Cf. W. Friedrich, 'Jugend und Religion – in der DDR und nach der Wende in Ostdeutschland' in A. Bolz *et al.* (eds), *Jugendweihen in Deutschland. Idee, Geschichte und Aktualität eines Übergangsrituals* (Leipzig, 1998), 222. See also K. Thöns, 'DDR-Jugend auf "sozialistischem Kurs". Zwischen Anpassung und Opposition am Ende der 50er Jahre' in H. Timmermann (ed.), *Diktaturen in Europa im 20. Jahrhundert – der Fall DDR* (Berlin, 1996), 183f.

Churches at this time.¹²⁸ That said however, the SED worried in the late 1960s about a notable decline in the number of young people who considered themselves atheists in ZIJ surveys (53% in 1962 and 43% in 1969), and a rise of those who put themselves into the category of having ‘other views’ (24% in 1962 and 28% in 1969).¹²⁹ The ZIJ researchers warned:

We don't pay enough attention to intelligent discussions and scientific instruction on questions of *Weltanschauung*. Thus we cede the field too easily to the other side. We especially underestimate the problems of younger pupils between twelve and sixteen. But precisely at this age the adolescents ask questions about *Weltanschauung* and have problems. It is probably no coincidence that the largest movements away from the atheist position were for pupils in years 8 and 10. The positive tendencies which were observed for years 12 can probably be put down to the systematic engagement with philosophical and worldview problems at school.¹³⁰

Whether or not one is inclined to believe that pupils gave honest opinions in these surveys, the fact that by the late 1960s many EOS pupils tended to be either genuinely convinced atheists or merely knew the way the wind blew,¹³¹ indicates that the ‘correct’ societal norms were being internalised and young people knew what to say in order to get ahead or be left alone, as discussed in the previous chapter.

What rankled most with the SED was that church youth work, as Reinhard Henkys put it, ‘largely succeeded in doing what became more and more difficult for the FDJ because of its ideological and political involvement: to combine meaningful engagement with youthful fun.’¹³² ‘*Frohes Jugendleben*’ was a term used by the FDJ to describe its work and was meant to snatch young people away from the talons of the Churches. In many cases however, it was the other way around.¹³³ The files are full of unfavourable comparisons between the ‘weak and ineffective FDJ work’ and the youth work of the Churches that included ‘music evenings, sports events and games’:¹³⁴

Younger clergymen and laymen are working very skillfully with the young, employing appealing youth-orientated methods of influencing, tying in with existing interests and problems of young people, and using individual dialogue, detecting situations of conflict and acting as counsellors.¹³⁵

More than a hint of envy is discernable here. Both informants at the grassroots in schools and the Stasi correctly assessed the situation that arose of a deficient FDJ and

¹²⁸ Cf. Friedrich in Dähn, *Und führe*, 222-5.

¹²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 222.

¹³⁰ ‘Zur politisch-ideologischen Lage der Jugend der DDR. Eine Zusammenfassung von Ergebnissen aus Untersuchungen des ZIJ von 1966 bis 1968’ (no date), BArch DC4/311, 105f.

¹³¹ See the statement on the proportionally more atheist attitude of EOS and BmA pupils in ‘Abschlußbericht der “Umfrage 69”’ (ca. 1970), BArch FDJ B/6249, 25.

¹³² Henkys in Henke, *Widerstand*, 154.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹³⁴ ‘Bericht über Probleme der Jugendweihe...’ (17.4.1968), BStU-BVfS Cottbus AKG Nr. 024.

¹³⁵ ‘Zur politischen Lage der Jugend in der DDR. Eine Zusammenfassung von Ergebnissen aus Untersuchungen des ZIJ vom 1966 bis 1968’ (no date), BArch DC4/311, 105.

flourishing church youth work. In 1963, year 10 pupils from Berlin argued that most pupils would go to the JG, because ‘it’s “A1” there, you don’t have to make a contribution to trips and dance evenings, and simply because there’s more going on than in the FDJ’.¹³⁶ An indication as to what was ‘going on’ is given by pupils from Scharfstädt, Kreis Merseburg, from the same year: ‘We don’t go to the FDJ anymore, but rather to the JG. There is more action, for example twist evenings with original records from the USA and tea afternoons.’¹³⁷ In 1965, the Stasi pointed to the fact that ‘recently, both Churches go after the youth particularly in areas where the influence of the FDJ is missing. [...] In the region of Oranienburg, an active JG member was appointed head of the *Jugendklub*, which led to its control by the JG.’¹³⁸ From the reports, it seems that young people were quite forthcoming when asked why they spent part of their spare time in the bosom of the Church. For example, in 1968 the members of a guitar band, amongst them the sons of local SED officials, lamented that both the FDJ and their factories had shown no interest in the band. After some aggravation with the neighbours, they relocated their rehearsals from the family laundry to the premises of the Catholic Church in Lauchhammer. There they would, amongst other things, play some songs by the *Oktoberklub*, ‘so the priest also gets the chance to listen to progressive lyrics.’¹³⁹

A report on a church concert in 1978 exemplifies the suspicious attitude of the SED.¹⁴⁰ Many of the 800 young people present at the concert carried on their clothes symbols and flags of the FRG ‘and other imperialist states’. The concert was opened with the scripture reading of the month: ‘The human being was made by God and shall always live according to God’s will, and in doing so, shall always remain his or her own human being’.¹⁴¹ Singer and songwriter Bettina Wegner (who was a former member of the *Hootenanny-Club* and later *Oktoberklub*) and Andreas Reimann ‘vilified, insulted, and slandered our socialist society in both hidden parable form and openly’. Life in the GDR was portrayed as ‘gloomy, hopeless, and in need of change’. Wegner’s ‘*Kinderlieder für Erwachsene*’ [children’s songs for adults] complained about the socialist education system and of her frustration at the inner conflict between ‘one’s own opinion and official opinion’.

¹³⁶ ‘Zusammenstellung der Argumente von Lehrern, Schülern und Eltern’ (27.9.1963), BArch DR2/6343.

¹³⁷ ‘Analyse der Kreisberichte über die politisch-ideologische Situation in den Schulen’ (July 1963), SAPMO-BArch DY24/1375.

¹³⁸ ‘Bericht über Gruppierungen Jugendlicher in der DDR (Nov. 1965), BStU MfS-ZAIG Z 4608.

¹³⁹ ‘Bericht über Probleme der Jugendweihe’ (17.4.1968), BStUBVfS Cottbus AKG Nr. 024.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Jugendveranstaltung des evangelisch-lutherischen Jugendpfarramtes Leipzig in der Bethanienkirche am 3.12.1978’ (4.12.1978), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IV 2/2.036/39.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Nor did the battle for the hearts and minds of young people by the FDJ and the Church abate in the 1980s. A 17-year old apprentice gardener described the situation for young people early in the GDR's last decade:

Going to church is kind of in fashion right now. The FDJ itself is to blame, offering us nothing but some dancing. The Church is the only place where you can exercise your brain a little bit. I went to Bible class. Nobody must know that, I'm head of my FDJ group. But I want to educate myself, you know? I feel sorry for those who don't understand that. They just think so completely different there. [...] Our educator always says: 'This is a socialist boarding school. Here you're being brought up to be socialist personalities.' This is all empty twaddle to us. He doesn't know any other way of thinking.¹⁴²

Detlef Pollack summed up the SED's problem: 'if the limits of what is allowed are narrowly defined, then even the slightest aberrations are automatically classified as protesting behaviour'.¹⁴³ The SED was experiencing what many had before, namely that increasing the level of persecution makes that which seems forbidden all the more interesting to young people.

Working for society: polytechnic education

In accordance with the Marxist emphasis on production, the education system had always taken care not only to develop pupils' intellectual abilities, but also their practical ones. In the lower years this was done through elementary courses in woodwork and metal work, gardening and needlework. In 1958, following the example of the Soviet Union, polytechnic education lessons in the form of the '*Unterrichtstag in der Produktion*' (UTP) were introduced into the curriculum.¹⁴⁴ Every other week, pupils in years 7 to 12 had theoretical instruction lessons [*Einführung in die sozialistische Produktion*, ESP], technical drawing [*Technisches Zeichnen*, TZ] and a course of practical work in production [*Produktive Arbeit*, PA]. UTP was intended to strengthen the bond between academic learning and the world of work, to familiarise pupils with the economic basics of socialist production and to promote work-related virtues of a socialist personality, i.e. 'a socialist attitude towards labour through close contacts between pupils and the teams of working people and through independent, responsible execution of production tasks'.¹⁴⁵ The contents differed according to geographical

¹⁴² Cf. Imke's account in Eckart, *So sehe ich*, 58.

¹⁴³ D. Pollack (ed.), *Zwischen Verweigerung und Opposition: politischer Protest in der DDR 1970-1989* (Frankfurt/Main, 1997), 9.

¹⁴⁴ On polytechnic education in the GDR, see Anweiler, *Schulpolitik*, 58-74; G. Lenhardt, M. Stock, *Bildung, Bürger, Arbeitskraft. Schulentwicklung und Sozialstruktur in der BRD und der DDR* (Frankfurt/Main, 1997); and also an older, but nevertheless most informative work, H. Klein, *Polytechnische Bildung und Erziehung in der DDR. Entwicklung, Erfahrungen, Probleme* (Hamburg, 1962).

¹⁴⁵ *Bildungsgesetz*, part 4, § 16.

location, so pupils in industrial areas had their polytechnic lessons in local factories whereas pupils from rural areas went to their local LPG and MTS and learned about animal husbandry and agriculture as well as agricultural machinery.¹⁴⁶

During an experimental phase unique in German educational history between 1962 and 1966, EOS pupils studying for their *Abitur* also received full vocational training. The ‘class enemy’ commented on this development ‘These young people will become either bad sixth-formers, bad skilled workers, or probably both.’¹⁴⁷ Maybe the *Bonner Rundschau* was right because the idea was abandoned when it became obvious that the demands were too great intellectually and physically and contradicted the Education Act which stated that the EOS there to prepare pupils for university education.¹⁴⁸ ‘To expect them to qualify as lorry-drivers or post-office technicians, when none of them is likely to pursue these occupations, is an over-generous interpretation of the principle of “linking the school with life”.’¹⁴⁹ After this defeat, a subject called ‘scientific-practical work’ [*Wissenschaftlich-praktische Arbeit*, WPA] was introduced for EOS pupils in 1969, which continued polytechnic instruction but, as the name suggests, focused on introducing pupils to scientific research methods as a preparation for their further studies.

Meanwhile in the POS, UTP received both criticism and compliments. Comments made at the time of its introduction by parents illustrate that traditional notions with regard to girls’ education still existed in the late 1950s and early 1960s: there were demands for a differentiation between polytechnic education for boys and girls (‘Where are needlework classes for the girls? This is more important than metalwork for them.’)¹⁵⁰ and calls for the inclusion of home economics and baby care into the curriculum.¹⁵¹ Polytechnic instruction had a bad press in the Federal Republic initially, as the title of a lurid article in the *Berliner Morgenpost* from 1959 indicates: ‘They have to toil in the kolkhoz “Dawn” – Children from East Berlin know no holiday bliss – Pupils must fulfil utopian plans – Dearth of workers in the Zone sees a return to 19th century practices.’¹⁵² The western view of polytechnic education as inhumane child labour had moderated by the mid-1960s and changed to an attentive observation of the

¹⁴⁶ MTS = *Maschinen-Traktoren-Station* [machine and tractor deposit].

¹⁴⁷ ‘Argumentationen in der Westpresse und NATO-Sendern zur Einführung der Berufsausbildung an den EOS’ (5.12.1962), BArch DR2/6630.

¹⁴⁸ *Bildungsgesetz*, part 4, § 21.

¹⁴⁹ N. Grant, *Society*, 221.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Stand der Diskussion über die neue Schulordnung’ (24.12.1959), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, V02.

¹⁵¹ ‘Beschwerdeanalyse Abt. Oberschulen 1.1. bis 15.6.1961’ (19.6.1961), BArch DR2/6829.

¹⁵² ‘Zeitungsausschnitte (“Lügenpropaganda”) des VEB Zeitungsausschnittdienstes Globus’, here: *Berliner Morgenpost* (6.8.1959), SAPMO-BArch DY25/1946.

theoretical and practical implementation of the Marxist idea.¹⁵³ It was internationally recognised that, perhaps, this new approach was the way forward in a ‘technological age’,¹⁵⁴ and the GDR was seen to be in the vanguard of polytechnic education in the eastern bloc.¹⁵⁵ So much for the theory. For those on the receiving end of UTP it was experienced primarily as a welcome and mildly exciting break from sitting on the school bench and was inevitably subject to the law of unintended consequences. Actress Regine H., who was at school in the 1960s, said:

UTP was for us pupils hardly inspiring, but we learned to work with different materials, to make something with our hands, and perhaps also unconsciously to appreciate what dirty and boring jobs those people, especially the women, were doing day after day. I am glad that I experienced it though, if only to know that this will never be my life.¹⁵⁶

Dietrich E., speaking for the 1970s, mentioned another aspect: ‘Partly, we experienced socialist production in all its absurdity and paltriness, also in its slackness – workers playing skat all morning! Overall rather repugnant. But at times also humanely impressive or enthralling for those boys interested in technology.’¹⁵⁷ Steffi K.-P., also speaking for the late 1970s, pointed to another problem of the planned economy, saying that during UTP she met many ‘normal workers’ with whom the idea of the ‘FDJ as the vanguard of the Party’ didn’t wash. ‘They were more interested to know why there weren’t any power points available once again.’¹⁵⁸ These examples explain why UTP was also known amongst pupils as ‘*Unterschied zwischen Theorie und Praxis*’ [difference between theory and practice]. Another criticism was that pupils were often made to do menial jobs, for example boxing bicycle dynamos or filing the tips of soldering irons, which the factory manager was glad to be able to pass on to the youngsters instead of using his paid workforce, with no regard for educational value. Ottokar satirised it thus: ‘At the moment we are making key boards. But there aren’t enough keys around for the number of key boards that we’re making. [...] Our teacher said that he always has to think of the Soviet cosmonauts and that one can’t conquer space with key boards.’¹⁵⁹ Whilst not quite building space crafts, sometimes pupils would be entrusted with ‘carrying out repairs for customers’ in retail and trade, as was

¹⁵³ Subject to revision: Writing in 2002, John Rodden, for example, described the GDR’s polytechnic school system as ‘a faceless, hulking, centralised bureaucracy mired in inefficiency and incompetence’. Cf. Rodden, *Repainting*, 15.

¹⁵⁴ A. J. Peters, ‘The changing idea of technical education’ in *British Journal of Educational Studies* (November 1963), no. 2, 142-66. Quoted in Anweiler, *Schulpolitik*, 59.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁵⁶ Regine H. questionnaire.

¹⁵⁷ Dietrich E. questionnaire.

¹⁵⁸ Steffi K.-P. questionnaire.

¹⁵⁹ Domma, *Der brave Schüler Ottokar*, 31.

the case for the UTP course in electrotechnology and car mechanics in Gotha.¹⁶⁰ And there are even reports of pupils actually enjoying their productive day out: ‘We like working here because we can see that we can actively help to fulfil the *Wohnungsbauprogramm* [housing construction programme] with the results of our work. Apart from that, we enjoy the work because we are respected by the colleagues and can prove what we have to offer.’¹⁶¹ When a survey was carried out by the *Institut für Schulentwicklungsforschung* of the University of Dortmund in 1991, polytechnic instruction received strong approval, ‘with only 13% of East German parents who were asked saying that it had *not* proved its worth’.¹⁶²

Young people were also acquainted with working life through summer camps ‘for work and relaxation’ [*Lager für Arbeit und Erholung*]. These were open to anyone from the age of fourteen to eighteen and often involved working in agriculture and forestry. As the work tended to be physically demanding, boys largely outweighed female participants. They spent on average six hours a day doing (paid) work and the rest of the day doing ‘meaningful recreational activities’ that were dominated by the FDJ agenda of any particular year. For 1967, ‘relaxation’ consisted in ‘events around the campfire, visits of places of revolutionary tradition of the working class, friendship meetings, solidarity meetings, sports competitions, military exercises, readings, television and film evenings, slide shows and dancing’.¹⁶³ On a different scale, there were the ‘*Zentrale Jugendobjekte*’, giant FDJ undertakings utilising young workers’ theoretical knowledge for the benefit of society. These projects ranged from land reclamation by draining moors (‘Friedländer Große Wiese’, 1958-1962) to building a section of the ‘Druzhba’ gas pipeline in the USSR (1974-1979).

Another way of introducing pupils to societal life and work was through the partnership of every school class with a ‘*Patenbrigade*’, a team of workers from local factories, cooperatives or army base. They were supposed to have a positive influence on pupils’ career choices, pupils visited their place of work, prepared cultural programmes and sent congratulatory cards on their partners’ official honorable day. This idea initially met with little sympathy and a great deal of incomprehension on the workers’ side who were unsure of their role as ‘godparents’ to the children. The bosses

¹⁶⁰ ‘Schuljahresanalyse 1960/61 der Abt. Volksbildung, Rat des Kreises Gotha’ (ca. 1961), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes, V41/1.

¹⁶¹ ‘Bezirkstag Erfurt, Ständige Kommission Bildung und Erziehung: Stand und Probleme der Produktiven Arbeit’ (1977), BArch DR2/D129, Bd. 1.

¹⁶² Pritchard, *Reconstructing education*, 34.

¹⁶³ ‘Information über die Lager der Erholung und produktiven Tätigkeit im Schuljahr 1966/67’ (6.3.1968), SAPMO-BArch DY24/8513.

also had problems accepting their workers' engagement as *Patenbrigaden*, as in this example from 1962: 'The EOS "Heinrich Mann" in Erfurt informed us that the director of their *Patenbetrieb*, the Bau-Union Erfurt, stands against the formation of friendship contracts, giving as a reason that the strain would be too large due to production requirements that need fulfilling'.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, over the years the idea of *Patenbrigaden* became an integral part of the socialisation process, but the usefulness of this partnership varied widely. Not only were there workers' brigades whose behaviour made them unsuitable as role models for pupils; the joint activities undertaken also depended on the enthusiasm of individual members. A report on the *Patenarbeit* of two classes from the Salzmannschule from 1969 shows this. Class 10B had drawn the short straw with a *Patenbrigade* who were clearly not a contender for the title 'Activists Collective', did not come to the school once, and where the only contact was limited to a meeting on their honourable day [*Tag des Chemiefacharbeiters*]. Class 10C on the other hand had hit the jackpot. Their *Patenbrigade* had organised two cultural events and a coach outing, participated in parents' meetings and the end-of-year ceremony, and provided support in the renovation of the classroom.¹⁶⁵ In general, the *Patenbrigaden* were most appreciated in their capacity of presenting book vouchers to the best pupils and financing class excursions or Christmas parties. The effect on pupils' career choices was limited, as Ulla M. summarised: 'We had a very good relationship with our *Patenbrigade*, but no one in our class became a tram driver.'¹⁶⁶ An official assessment of the *Patenarbeit* in 1976 covered all of the above aspects and noticed another thing. Schools in the Thuringian countryside were having difficulties in finding partners for the higher years, with LPG brigades citing 'formal reasons' (hygiene and contagious disease guidelines) for being unforthcoming.¹⁶⁷ Perhaps this was the truth, or the peasants were simply too busy or too lazy to engage in societal activities. But it seems odd that they only objected to older pupils. Could this be an indication that the peasants had inhibitions about meeting the higher-educated young generation?

With productive work being a cornerstone of GDR society, there was absolutely no question that any pupil would not earn a living after leaving school.¹⁶⁸ The SED

¹⁶⁴ 'Einschätzung der Arbeit an den EOS unseres Bezirkes' (15.1.1962), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, V139.

¹⁶⁵ 'Klassenleiterbesprechung 13.5.1969', Sarch/Schulleitung 1968-1969.

¹⁶⁶ Ulla M. questionnaire.

¹⁶⁷ 'Information über die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Betrieben, Kombinat, LPG und Schulen bei der klassenmäßigen Bildung und Erziehung der Jugend' (15.3.1976), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, Nr. 013785.

¹⁶⁸ Asked what he did not want to become in life, EOS pupil Ulrich K. from Eisenach said: 'Party bigwig', on the grounds that 'they just sponge off others without doing any work.' Ulrich was removed

claimed: 'A formulation that expresses the capitalist work ethic like "*Arbeit adelt, aber wir bleiben bürgerlich*" undermines the dignity of a socialist worker.'¹⁶⁹ In this light, the SED's policy to send unruly pupils to 'work in production to prove their worth' [*Bewährung in der Produktion*] seems very strange: equating work with punishment?¹⁷⁰ The Party failed to make traditional, 'true working-class' jobs involving hard physical labour, at an open cast mine or blast furnace for instance, seem attractive. Agriculture in particular was extremely unpopular with both pupils and parents.¹⁷¹ In 1963, the reason for this was seen to be that they let themselves be guided by 'prejudices against professions in animal and plant production and not by the true perspective of socialist agriculture'.¹⁷² Especially in the 1950s and 1960s, pupils were encouraged to see it as 'an honourable task' to take up an agricultural profession.¹⁷³ A book dating from 1958 providing wide-ranging guidelines to adolescent girls asked 'Is it not much more satisfying to work in a place where one is needed strongly?' and devoted three pages to arguing that the country youth should stay put since they already knew many things which the urban youth would have needed to learn.¹⁷⁴ Despite recruiting problems, the transformation processes in the socialist villages did sometimes manage to instil enthusiasm in young people, as is evident from this letter written by a pioneer from Mecklenburg to Ulbricht and Khrushchev on the occasion of the 6th SED Party Congress in 1963:

We pioneers are the heirs to our LPG. This is not a trifle. We want to become good collective farmers, that is why all pioneers and pupils are striving to learn well. To the joy of our LPG we have a pioneers' project: the piggery. All pioneers from years 1 to 8 are helping diligently to care for our four pigs. Year 5 cleaned and painted the new pigsty. Year 6 built a bin for the potatoes and two feeding troughs. During UTP, year 8 extended the pigsty's electrical system. We collected, steamed and stored forty decimal tons of potatoes. [...] We are amazed at all the things one needs to know as a pig farmer. [...] We will also heed the advice of our great friend Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev and grow lots of maize.¹⁷⁵

from the school immediately. Cf. 'Kurzinformation EOS' (19.12.1961), ThHStAW, Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt, V139.

¹⁶⁹ Eng.: 'Work makes you noble. We prefer to remain middle-class.'

¹⁷⁰ 'Pupils who show such wrong political attitudes have no right to prepare themselves with the *Abitur* for responsible tasks in state and economy. They have to prove themselves in the socialist production.' Cf. 'Relegung von Schülern' (June 1978), BArch DR2/A7361/5.

¹⁷¹ For an insight into living and working conditions in the countryside, see C. Nehrig, 'Das Leben auf dem Lande: die Genossenschaften (LPG)' in Badstübner, *Leben in der DDR*, 195-218; J. Wohlgemuth, *Das Puppenheim in Pinnow* (Berlin, 1983).

¹⁷² 'Eingaben an das Ministerium für Volksbildung im II. Quartal 1963' (6.9.1963), BArch DR2/7783.

¹⁷³ See for example 'Argumentation für die Berufswahl der Absolventen der EOS' (19.3.1962), BArch DR2/6978.

¹⁷⁴ S. Walter, *Zwischen vierzehn und achtzehn: ein Buch für junge Mädchen* (Berlin, 1958), 33-6, here 36.

¹⁷⁵ 'Berichte von Pionieren an die Delegierten des VI. Parteitages: Sabine E., Nossentiner Hütte, Kreis Waren/Müritz' (January 1963), SAPMO-BArch DY30/IVA2/9.05/60. NB: Maize was *the* new crop in the GDR in the 1950s, and Chrushev's rather bizarre description of it as 'the sausage on a stick' [*Mais* -

When it came to choosing a career generally, it was inevitable that the economic requirements did not coincide with young people's aspirations. The workforce tended to be recruited where it was needed and this caused much frustration. For those young people who fled to the West before 1961 and tried to do so afterwards, this was a principal factor for their desire to leave the GDR. Although career guidance staff tried their best to interest pupils in careers as toolmakers or a long-term career in the army, the ZIJ stated in 1973 that 'in lots of areas, personal career aspirations and societal requirements have not coincided for many years now'.¹⁷⁶ Pupils continued to have 'unreal' ideas of taking up 'fashionable' or 'dream' careers as doctors, pilots, actresses or were 'wrongly' influenced by parents and friends to make their choice on 'wrong criteria': 'gaining kudos, having an easy life, earning lots of money, having a clean job and learning skills that were "useful" in life outside work in household and family'.¹⁷⁷ A large number were disappointed with the world of work; about one in three young people followed a 'vocation' for which they had no personal interest,¹⁷⁸ resulting in deception, discontent and later regular changes of jobs.¹⁷⁹

'Boys shouldn't always think that we're incapable': girls growing up

The issue of gender in relation to the concept of the socialist personality is remarkable insofar as it is completely absent. None of the definitions or literature on the subject refers to any difference, or differentiations to be made, between boys and girls.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, a brief section on girls is included here since socialist education and socialisation did contribute to the emergence of a new breed of women:

In the GDR, the mother was a hybrid of a Red Guards woman, Madame Curie, Annemarie Brodhagen, activist and mother sow, i.e. there *were* endeavours to overcome the classical role understanding. Indeed the demand was for children (plenty), but at the same time the woman was also supposed to be employed, spruce and sensual, with a steadfast class standpoint and able to knock up tasty cabbage dishes'.¹⁸¹

die Wurst am Stengel] during a visit in 1957 captured the imagination of the East German public and was widely reported.

¹⁷⁶ 'Probleme der Berufsvorbereitung und Berufswahl bei Jugendlichen' (1973), BArch Bibliothek FDJ/6291, 3.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* Cf. also 'Zum Problemerleben von 17jährigen Jugendlichen' (1974), BArch Bibliothek FDJ/6293, 3.

¹⁸⁰ Considerable attention has been devoted to the subject of women in the GDR; for a bibliography since 1989, see <<http://www.womanandthewende.de>> [accessed 20.5.2005] (bibliography). Two particularly insightful works dating from before 1989 are: M. Wander, *Guten Morgen, du Schöne* (1977); I. Uhlmann (ed.), *Kleine Enzyklopädie: Die Frau* (Leipzig, 1973).

¹⁸¹ [emphasis in the original] Jan S.* questionnaire. NB: Annemarie Brodhagen was a popular GDR television presenter.

Right from the start, the education system was co-educational, thus opening up the same career prospects for both girls and boys. From the school's side, everything was done to enable and encourage girls to pursue academic excellence. It took a little more than a decade before girls were academically on a par with the boys who were traditionally favoured by education and so, initially, better achievers at school. In 1961, the girls of a POS were asked to write an essay on the question: 'What do you expect from the boys in your class as part of the completion of the societal demand for the sexual equality of women?' Most demands were for respect, comradely attitude and helpfulness: 'The boys should carry the heavy boxes in UTP'. 'They should stop treating us like little girls, but they should also support us when we can't advance in certain subjects like physics.' They shouldn't put things past us. Even if many things are easier for them, they should be proud when we work hard to understand the subject matter. The boys shouldn't always think that we are incapable.'¹⁸² The radical change in traditional thinking that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s is apparent from these essays. Thanks to the approach of the school system, girls became academically very strong and consequently more self-assured. In fact, girls did so well at school and applied so numerously for the EOS that often boys with lower marks were taken in simply to keep the parity in numbers.¹⁸³ Long-term studies by the ZIJ found that many girls showed a better attitude to learning than boys, more willingness for self-improvement, and later as women, more energy in order to accommodate and accomplish all demands in the best possible way.¹⁸⁴

By the early 1950s, it was taken for granted that after graduation from school, girls would either learn a trade or go on to gain higher qualifications. In most cases, their profession was not just seen as an interim solution until marriage.¹⁸⁵ Sonja Walter asked in 1958: 'What would one be without work? Nothing. One would not even exist. [...] Yet the technical revolution cannot be accomplished with the professions preferred by many girls. [...] We cannot leave it solely to the boys to shape the future, can we?'¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Cf. 'Schüleraufsätze POS Glashütte' (March 1961), Barcg DR2/6772. NB: There was no indication as to the age of the girls.

¹⁸³ See ch. 3.

¹⁸⁴ 'Forschungsbericht: Zu Fragen der sozialistischen Persönlichkeitsentwicklung von Mädchen und jungen Frauen in der DDR' [henceforth *Frauenstudie*] (June 1975), BArch DC4/234, 15. For an overview of ZIJ results on gender issues, see U. Schlegel, 'Geschlechter- und Frauenforschung' in Friedrich, *Das Zentralinstitut*, 373-91.

¹⁸⁵ An interesting study showing the favourable comparison between women's role in society in the GDR and the United States was undertaken in 1977, highlighting East German women's emancipation from the 'Kinder, Küche, Kirche' [children, kitchen, church] model to include a fourth K, *Karriere* [career]. D. Grund-Slepack, M. J. Berlowitz, 'Sex role stereotyping in East German versus U.S. textbooks' in *The Reading Teacher*, vol. 31, no. 3 (December 1977), 275-9.

¹⁸⁶ Walter, *Zwischen vierzehn und achtzehn*, 16f. and 31.

Whilst the problem that girls were influenced by their parents to learn a traditional female vocation and themselves preferred areas such as administration, retail and education persisted throughout the four decades, by the 1960s girls increasingly also took up atypical jobs as construction engineers or crane operators, although by no means to the extent desired by the SED. The equalisation of gender roles however took a back seat to economic requirements, demonstrated by the fact that men were missing from typical female professions and that there continued to exist badly paid female labour in spinning mills or the textile industry generally.¹⁸⁷ Also, there were far fewer women in higher positions;¹⁸⁸ Margot Honecker as the *Volksbildungsminister* (note that this was her form of address, lacking in the feminine suffix *-in*) being an exception. An opinion expressed by a girl in the above mentioned essays underlines the difficulties that girls had in being accepted in a managerial capacity: 'I think that with sexual equality, a girl could be elected to become FDJ secretary, too. But only if she has the knowledge necessary for that.'¹⁸⁹

In comparison to the education system, it was socialisation in the family which clung on to handed down patterns.¹⁹⁰ Parents usually granted sons greater autonomy in their spare time earlier than daughters, acting out of an 'awareness of greater responsibility for adolescent girls regarding sexual challenges'. Daughters were more strongly integrated into household chores than sons, in anticipation of their future double role as mothers and working women. Sons not only benefitted from an advantageous allocation of household tasks, but also presents and pocket money. The father as the role model was regarded as crucial to educating socialist personalities at home, and in this respect the ZIJ spoke of a 'success of a socialist reconfiguration of norms', for in two thirds of families both parents made joint efforts to bring up their children instead of leaving the bulk of this task solely to the mother.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ See A. Schüle, *'Die Spinne': die Erfahrungsgeschichte weiblicher Industriearbeit im VEB Leipziger Baumwollspinnerei* (Leipzig, 2001).

¹⁸⁸ Cf. K. Zachmann, *Mobilisierung der Frauen. Technik, Geschlecht und Kalter Krieg in der DDR* (Frankfurt/Main, 2004).

¹⁸⁹ 'Schüleraufsätze POS Glashütte' (March 1961), BArch DR2/6772.

¹⁹⁰ One shortcoming of the education system however was shown in a study that explored the perception of women and girls in textbooks for children in year 1 from 1950 to 1990. Women appeared throughout these forty years in their role as housewife, mother, educator and, from the beginning, also as a working person. The professions occupied however clearly followed a traditional pattern (shop assistant, teacher, nurse), with the *'Volkspolizistin'* [policewoman] being the sole exception. The portrayal of spare time activities was similarly gender-specific: whilst boys built small boats and did fretwork, girls sewed and embroidered. Cf. B. Mager, 'Zum Mädchen- und Frauenbild in Kinderliteratur der DDR – am Beispiel der Fibeln und der "ABC-Zeitung" 1950-1990' in P. Drewek *et al.* (eds), *Ambivalenzen der Pädagogik. Zur Bildungsgeschichte der Aufklärung und des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Weinheim, 1995), 281-8.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *Frauenstudie* (1975), 69. Still, studies undertaken between 1965 and 1970 showed that on average, women spent 37.1 hours per week on household chores such as cooking, cleaning, washing and shopping.

‘The women as competent tractor drivers, long sighted mayors and skilled engineers which populated East German newspapers, DEFA films and novels’, to quote Gunilla-Friederike Budde,¹⁹² were not merely propaganda creations, but reality. Already by the mid-1950s, half of all the women in the GDR had a job; and this proportion increased by about ten percent in each following decade, so that by the late 1980s, 91.2% of women were working.¹⁹³ But a closer inspection of the GDR media images might reveal another characteristic of these East German ‘super women’ – how tired they looked:

It is plain obvious what comes out of the overloading of women. My neighbour, mother of four children, working, divorced, complained of that only recently. ‘When I come home from work I feel absolutely whacked. Then it’s off to the kindergarten, then to the supermarket, and in the remaining two hours until the children have to go to bed, the daily routine unreels: “Why haven’t you?” – “Have you forgotten again?” – “You still have to do...!” Why are the days always too short for us? Why does one do so much telling off instead of singing with the children from time to time?’¹⁹⁴

Despite the state’s provision of industrial laundries, factory and school canteens (and very modern ideas such as a shopping service and meal-delivery services existing in the early 1960s)¹⁹⁵ that were supposed to alleviate mothers’ workload, throughout the lifetime of the GDR it was the case that women bore the brunt of everyday organisation of family life. So it should have been no surprise for the ZIJ researchers that whilst young men went in for sports in their spare time, women preferred to sleep and rest.¹⁹⁶ And yet, for women as well as for men, working in the GDR was more than a way of earning money. The community spirit of a *Kollegenkollektiv* played a role here, but also the fact that Adelheid K. mentioned: ‘There was no special “mother role” in most families. After having children, mothers quickly took up their work again, i.e. they *wanted* to work again. Work for women was not only important as an income source, but they worked because it added to their sense of self-worth.’¹⁹⁷ An indication of how far emancipation had progressed is that by the 1970s, two thirds of divorce petitions were filed by women, suggesting that women were financially independent from their husbands and did not need to fear material disadvantages.¹⁹⁸

Whilst ‘traditional housewives’ worked 51.5 hours per week, full-time employed women worked only (!) 30.8 hours for their families. *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁹² G.-F. Budde, *Frauen arbeiten. Weibliche Erwerbstätigkeit in Ost- und Westdeutschland nach 1945* (Göttingen, 1997), 11.

¹⁹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 10. NB: This figure is inclusive of female students and apprentices. Less those, the figure stands at 80%.

¹⁹⁴ E. Brüning, *Partnerinnen* (Halle, 1978), 89.

¹⁹⁵ H. Ulbricht *et al.*, *Probleme der Frauenarbeit* (Berlin, 1963), 13.

¹⁹⁶ *Frauenstudie* (1975), 10 and 15.

¹⁹⁷ [emphasis in the original] Adelheid K. questionnaire.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. *Frauenstudie* (1975), 82.

Despite the high demands made of them by societal life, women generally responded more positively to political demands and the realities of life than men: a more pronounced pride in the GDR, acceptance of the leading role of the SED, a better relation to the Soviet Union, and a better attitude to the FDJ and societal involvement.¹⁹⁹ In this respect, the state's endeavours to improve women's societal standing by means of legislation and material help, most notably in the form of free pre-school education, bore fruit in ensuring women's loyalty. The first generation of women who had been socialised solely under socialist conditions had internalised new mindsets and attitudes by the late 1960s. Halfway through its lifetime, the GDR had made great societal progress, which, according to Marx, can be 'measured exactly by the societal status of the fairer sex, including the plain ones'.²⁰⁰ Nevertheless, from the mid-1970s on fewer children were being born, resulting in a declining population; and this prompted the SED to improve its social policies to take account of a woman's family life and her societal duties, for example by a rise in child benefits and maternity leave for the second child.²⁰¹ Despite the success of emancipation with regard to overcoming traditional patterns in both professional and private life, the ZIJ was realistic enough to estimate that in socialism, only an 'extensive approximation to full sexual equality' was possible, full equality only being obtainable in the future classless society of communism.²⁰²

Conclusion

The chief purpose of education and socialisation was to benefit society. The school taught the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to build this new society. Away from school, these were reinforced in the state's youth organisation, which channeled the energies of young people to work together for the common good. Although this meant the partial subordination of individual interests under the parameters given by the SED, young people could also experience a sense of fulfilment by working together. Whilst children enjoyed the activities offered by the PO, young people's enthusiasm for the FDJ did not always last. This had two main reasons. Firstly, the entry into the FDJ at the age of fourteen coincided with puberty, which is often characterised by adolescents

¹⁹⁹ Along with those positive positions, the ZIJ also stated that beliefs in 'fate' and 'talismans' still persisted in women. *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰⁰ In the original: 'Der gesellschaftliche Fortschritt läßt sich exakt messen an der gesellschaftlichen Stellung des schönen Geschlechts (die häßlichen eingeschlossen).' Cf. Marx in a letter to Dr Kugelmann (1868). Cited in *Frauenstudie* (1975), 94.

²⁰¹ S. Tippach-Schneider, 'Sieben Kinderwagen, drei Berufe und ein Ehemann. DDR-Frauengeschichten im Wandel der Sozialpolitik' in Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, *Fortschritt*, 129.

²⁰² *Frauenstudie* (1975), 5.

retreating from organised activities and setting off to explore their individuality. Secondly, the staleness of political education was much more apparent in the FDJ than the PO. The spare-time activities proposed by the Church catered more successfully for young people's desires and the *Jungen Gemeinden* were serious contenders in the battle for hearts and minds. Generally, young people exploited the non-political side of the youth organisation by using it as a provider of free tuition; but the largest part of their spare time was spent engaging in, according to the SED, 'meaningless recreational activities' like watching television, reading, or seeing friends.

This chapter also explored three areas in which socialist education contributed to remarkable societal changes over the course of two decades: a levelling of class differences, greater sexual equality and combining academic and practical work by virtue of polytechnic instruction. These processes were not a smooth run, but involved their fair share of upsets and injustices. The final result however was that the pupils who left school in 1978 were noticeably different from those who did so twenty or even ten years earlier. Through their socialisation in the GDR education system they had imbibed a number of societal values: collectivity, community spirit, helpfulness, respect for their fellow human beings irrespective of class origins, a thirst for knowledge and a desire to work – all of these values did become engrained, but (for there is of course a but) within limits, as archival evidence and oral-history findings showed. Two points must be remembered with such a sweeping statement: how does one measure these changes, and how could one possibly speak about 'the' young people as a whole? As I have underlined on several occasions, my intention is not to paint a picture of 'the GDR socialised personality', for this is a chimeric a notion as 'the socialist personality'. My aim is to show the 'many different shades of grey' that existed in the East German dictatorship.

A more general remark on East German society beyond the realm of 'youth' should be made here. It seems necessary to clarify a particular term that is, in my opinion, often misunderstood in relation to GDR society. The term 'niche society' is usually understood to mean the existence of small and secret enclaves of privacy into which East Germans retreated from the state, ranging from the much-maligned allotment garden to simple family life in one's own four walls.²⁰³ Günter Gaus popularised the term '*Nischengesellschaft*', the existence of which the SED refused to admit. This was of course not the case; niches did exist, however not outside, but inside

²⁰³ For an in-depth discussion of this term, see M. Fulbrook, 'The creation of a niche society? Conformity and grumbling', ch. 5 in *idem*, *Anatomy*, 129-50.

the framework of the ‘socialist society’.²⁰⁴ Gaus’s use of the word niche describes the ‘retreat into privacy, the fulfilment of individual needs which were not sufficiently met by collectivism’, providing a ‘*Ventilfunktion*’ [acting as a valve].²⁰⁵ A closer reading of his chapter on the niche society in his book *Wo Deutschland liegt* (1983) reveals that his is a subtle analysis of GDR society. Whilst in the decades preceeding the cautionary rapprochement of the two German states, West German propaganda had painted ‘the primitive picture of the GDR as a perfect machine of violence that hardly leaves its people room to breathe’, the ‘reactionary’ circles in the 1970s had to admit that there were ‘*Freiräume*’ in the GDR. However, in order to preserve the general picture, these were depicted as a ‘special feature of the communist regime’, an ‘enforced flight into privacy’ from a control-freak dictatorship.²⁰⁶

This interpretation of the niches was not limited to politicians, but was and is also used by historians.²⁰⁷ But, as Gaus pointed out, identical behaviour in the East and West was interpreted differently: in the Federal Republic, people enjoyed the ‘freedom’ to visit their allotments, whereas in the GDR they were ‘forced’ by circumstances to do so. Historians who look at the social and everyday history of the GDR cannot fail to see that this interpretation is erroneous. In the same way that the majority of East Germans did not feel the shackles of dictatorship in their daily lives, as I have argued in chapter 5, the private niches were in fact not exceptional. Gaus himself made this point quite clear: ‘The niches are precisely not a peculiarity of GDR society.’²⁰⁸ So in fact, the term ‘niche society’ has been pinned to an outdated and simplistic interpretation of life within the GDR. To use Gaus’s words one last time to clarify the point: ‘The West German population too – and where would it be different? – has their central point of existence in the private sphere.’²⁰⁹ Always and everywhere, in dictatorships and democracies alike, privacy is the locus of people’s lives (if one discounts the very few ‘110-prozentige’ enthusiasts for a political cause). Although the urge to withdraw to one’s allotment usually hit people at a later stage in life than that covered by this thesis, it is important not to exaggerate the dichotomy between the private and societal realms in people’s lives. An long-overdue analysis of the significance of ‘privacy’ in the GDR

²⁰⁴ G. Gaus, *Wo Deutschland liegt. Eine Ortsbestimmung* (Hamburg, 1983), ch. 4 ‘Nischengesellschaft’, 156-233, here 156. NB: Gaus was the FRG’s first permanent representative to the GDR from 1974 to 1981.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 157.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 158f.

²⁰⁷ See for example T.G. Ash, ‘*Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein...*’ *Die DDR heute* (Hamburg, 1981), 76; Häder, *Schülerkindheit*, 11; K. Jarausch, ‘Die gescheiterte Gegengesellschaft. Überlegungen zu einer Sozialgeschichte der DDR’ in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, vol. 39 (1999), 17.

²⁰⁸ Gaus, *Wo Deutschland liegt*, 159.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

will be made by Paul Betts in his forthcoming book and will hopefully bring the discussion of the GDR as a 'niche society' on to the right track.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ P. Betts, *The tyranny of intimacy: a history of East German private life* (forthcoming).

Chapter 7. Emergence of the *homo germanicus orientalis*: conclusion

Growing up in the socialist education system of the GDR could not fail to leave traces in young people. The experiment of trying to mould young people into utopian socialist personalities did not, could not succeed on all fronts; yet the outcome was indeed a particular type of ‘East German human being’. The ‘end products’ of the GDR education system were much more manifold than the woodcut-like model of the intended socialist personality. The point in time when distinct East German ‘new human beings’ – albeit not the envisaged one-hundred percent socialist ones – began to appear can be placed in the mid-1960s. This coincides, hardly surprising, with the time when the first generation socialised solely in the GDR reached maturity. They grew up exclusively in a socialist world and acquired their ideological and general attitudes under stabilised political conditions. They took for granted their country’s orientation towards and connection with the socialist camp with the Soviet Union at its helm. They were more likely to cheer for the East German than the West German football team.¹ Up until the 1970s, to some extent the international situation with the worldwide liberation movements seemed to follow what they learned at school about the ‘natural laws of history’ and humanity’s development towards socialism. Archival evidence such as this contemporary report by a British observer summarises this change: ‘To the young who have never known anything but the present regime, the years of living in a different social system with a different vocabulary, different political principles and a different economic organisation are beginning to create a feeling of separateness.’² Those who were teenagers in the early 1960s displayed an identity that was utterly different from that of the previous generation, who had still been marked by post-war scarcities and stronger moral constraints. Young East Germans did not necessarily ‘ape any rubbish that came out of the West’, to paraphrase Ulbricht, nor did they dismiss everything that was home grown in the GDR as ‘rubbish’. The new generation was confident enough to decide for themselves how they wanted to live, albeit within the limits given by the regime.

¹ Cf. ‘Hauptergebnisse des Forschungsvorhabens “Das Verhältnis zwischen Körperkultur und Sport sowie Formen, Bedingungen und Problemen seiner Realisierung“’ (1978), BArch DC4/650. 59.

² Major General Peel-Yates, General Officer Commanding, British Sector, Berlin: ‘Report on the present mood of East German population’ (14.8.1965), PRO FO 371/183002 RG1016/31. Thanks to Merylyn Thomas for this information.

The appearance of a distinct East German identity however did not indicate that young people had been moulded as the SED had hoped; nor did it encompass everyone. With regard to the civic demands made of them, many strongly rejected the day-to-day presentation at school of a black and white worldview on the grounds that both familial connections to West Germany and, increasingly from the mid-1960s onwards, Western television put the claims of the 'Big Bad Wolf' into question. Parental opinion also prompted pupils to have their doubts as to the validity of these claims. A joke was told behind closed doors: 'A GDR citizen asks for permission to leave the country: he wants to go to the GDR portrayed in the newspaper.'³ The GDR's own media and textbooks gave an over-rosy portrayal which denied and suppressed the problems and conflicts existing in a socialist society too. By adding to this the practice of penalising those who dared to speak out, the regime produced generations of Janus-faced young people.

The ZIJ undertook numerous studies of young people's mindsets regarding their 'political-ideological awareness'. They reveal that positive attitudes towards socialism reached their peak in the mid-1970s, but this result might be deceptive. It is often forgotten that the ZIJ first conducted their surveys in 1966, and hence that there is no comparative basis for the early Ulbricht years. Asked when they felt most happy in the GDR and at ease with its political system and everyday life, the answers of my interviewees could not have been more diverse. Numerically, both the 1960s and 1970s came out on top, but there were also some who named the period after Stalin's death and the abolition of food tokens until the building of the Wall as the most liberal and enjoyable period, when post-war hardship had gone, people's expectations were still modest and the freedom to travel to the West still available. The 1980s were nominated very rarely as an enjoyable period, although some felt that by then the regime had slackened the reins regarding issues such as reception of the Western media. A feeling of happiness is of course not only related to societal circumstances, but perhaps primarily to personal life experiences; so any attempt to pinpoint a 'golden age' for the GDR is futile.

To form young Christians according to the socialist image was a particular challenge for the SED. Officially, the Party took the same line as Frederick the Great who said 'In my state everybody may go to Heaven in their own way, but the Church is not to meddle in state affairs.'⁴ However, given the clash between Marxist-Leninist principles and Christian teachings, the SED attempted to steer young people away from

³ Erika P. questionnaire.

⁴ Popularly attributed.

competing convictions. The 1950s were a confrontational phase that had both Party and Churches engaging in a tug of war. Although church youth work often catered better to young people's interests than that of the FDJ and was more readily adopted; by the early 1960s, to the chagrin of the Churches, most young Christians too had internalised the norms that were required of them in order to get ahead in the system. Being societally active and showing proof of one's commitment to the GDR via participation in socialist rituals such as the *Jugendweihe* and membership of the youth organisation had become second nature to them, too. Those who were so committed to their faith that they would not compromise in any way suffered the hard grip of the state authorities and were forced either to live their lives within the confines of the Church or to apply for permission to leave the country.

The slogan from the Ulbricht days '*Ohne Gott und Sonnenschein fahren wir die Ernte ein*' [Without the Lord or rays of sun, we will get the harvest done] sums up the SED's attitude towards religion: derision, arrogance, animosity, and the conviction that their own progressive attitude would triumph over belief. To be a good socialist citizen and a Christian was an equation that for the SED could not be balanced. By holding on to the image of the Church as an old foe, the Party often deprived itself of young people who were both Christian *and* proponents of socialism. The Church itself also had problems accepting the state's attempt to attach the character of people's personality to class struggle, ideology, and politics. It disagreed with the goal of the 'socialist personality' because it implied that a human being's personality was valued in terms of its ideological conviction and that an individual's interests must agree with those of society. According to Christian belief, human dignity is inherent and not bestowed by society, hence the Church opposed the state's exertion of influence in spheres of human life that were none of its business. Whilst the SED did not quite destroy Christianity in the GDR, it did succeed in the atheisation of large parts of the population. In 1989, only 11 percent of all pupils still said they were Christian.⁵ The notion of an active, powerful Christian community in the GDR had by then become only the wishful thinking of the Church leadership and the paranoid thinking of the SED rather than reality. At that time, the State Secretary for Church Questions Klaus Gysi had told West German journalists: 'In the GDR, the true Christians are, with 3 million people, a marginal phenomenon on

⁵ Cf. Schneider in Deutsches Jugendinstitut (ed.), *Was für Kinder*, 317.

the one side; but the true Marxists are, with 2.5 million people, a marginal phenomenon on the other. Most people believe neither in Marx nor in God.’⁶

Several determining factors would have been necessary for young people to live up to the idea of the ‘socialist personality’: parents with a socialist and atheist worldview; no ‘contamination’ with a different worldview through relations in the FRG or Western media; ideologically sound teachers; peers coming from a similar home; success at school; and plenty of positive distraction in their spare time in order to prevent them from straying from the path. The ingredients of this ‘recipe’ for a socialist personality are by no means exhaustive, but give an idea about the complexity of factors involved in making the outcome successful. My interviewee replies also showed that school in the GDR was just one out of many factors of socialisation, the potency of which is often overestimated. A number of them however said that they had not experienced any ideology in their education, which is perhaps an indication of success in the socialisation process: it went unnoticed because it saturated all areas of life, and its consequences remain unnoticed even till this day, for example with regard to limited freedom of movement: ‘We lived a quiet life in our village. I never felt constricted. As far as the freedom to travel is concerned, we never had any money for holidays anyway because we built our house.’⁷

An important point with regard to civic attitudes must not be forgotten: age played a crucial role. Most young children accepted political indoctrination, unless parental opinion prompted them to do otherwise. For the most part they did not call into question the worldview presented in school, and they also enjoyed the activities offered by the pioneer organisation and thought military education in the form of mock manoeuvres and visits to the local army base exciting. The onset of puberty, which roughly coincided with admission to the FDJ, meant however that many adolescents began to have other interests and thus lost their infantile enthusiasm and regarded their collective organisation as a necessary evil or a waste of valuable spare time.

Although it is extremely difficult to make generalisations, it may be concluded that socialist education was most successful in reaching young people’s hearts and minds when it came to sweeping across-the-board values and qualities such as love of peace, antifascism, solidarity, helpfulness and collectivity. A majority of them did internalise the ‘good’ moral and societal values inherent in socialism as a theory;

⁶ A. Freiburg, ‘Schüler, Ordnung und Disziplin. Deutsch-deutsche Fakten und Überlegungen zur Erziehung und zum Schulalltag’ in B. Hille, W. Jaide (eds), *DDR-Jugend. Politisches Bewusstsein und Lebensalltag* (Opladen, 1990), 279, footnote 1.

⁷ Doris P. questionnaire.

honestly participated in societal life as proposed by the state beyond a simple outward conformity; whilst stubbornly refusing to be used by the SED for ends other than those they desired for themselves, especially so in their private lives once they had left the education system with its many constraints. By the early 1960s, young people had learnt to play by the rules imposed on them in order to get ahead or to be left alone. Least successful were the SED's attempts at instilling civic values, i.e. the politicisation and militarisation of young people. This can be deduced from the fact that at no point in time during the forty years of the GDR's existence did the SED feel that it could release the pressure of civic education on young people. It was never confident that they had sufficiently internalised the values of political-ideological education and militarisation for it to do so.

For most people born after 1945, the GDR became not only their geographical, but also their emotional *Heimat*. To the proponents of the thesis that the GDR never did nor never could become the home of a people imprisoned by mental and physical borders I put the counter-argument that the majority of people did not feel as if they were living a daily nightmare in a dictatorship because, increasingly, they knew no other form of government. True, there were young people who came to feel the iron fist of the state because they openly voiced their opposition to the regime, and they got to know the ugly side of the GDR, involving very unpleasant confrontations with the Stasi or the police. I do not want to whitewash this aspect of the GDR by any means. For the great majority of the GDR's populace at any time in her four decades of existence however, the following principle applied: Those who do not move do not feel their chains.⁸ This explains why so many people have rosy memories of life in the GDR, despite it being undeniably a dictatorship. With hindsight, many former GDR citizens have asked themselves 'How was it possible that we ever lived in these conditions?', but at the time of living in the GDR, this question simply did not arise.

The inherent construction defect of the concept of the 'socialist personality' was that for real human beings, it could only be an unobtainable ideal personality designed to live in the halcyon days of a future communist society. The SED had succeeded in achieving young people's outward compliance to its plans. Beyond this, genuine enthusiasm for the social engineering project of the new human being in a new society remained what the idea had been all along – a utopia.

⁸ Original: '*Wer sich nicht bewegt spürt auch keine Ketten.*' Popularly attributed to Rosa Luxemburg.

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Bundesarchiv, Berlin (BArch)

DC4 Amt für Jugendfragen
 DO4 Amt für Kirchenfragen
 DR2 Ministerium für Volksbildung

Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv, Berlin (SAPMO-BArch)

DY12 Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund
 DY24 Freie Deutsche Jugend
 DY25 Junge Pioniere
 DY30 Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
 Abteilung Jugend beim ZK der SED
 Abteilung Sicherheitsfragen
 Abteilung Volksbildung beim ZK der SED
 Büro Erich Honecker
 Büro Kurt Hager
 Büro Paul Verner
 DY59 Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik

Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR, Berlin (BStU)

Auswertungs- und Kontrollgruppe (AKG)
 Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit (BVfS), ASt. (Außenstelle) Erfurt and Cottbus
 Hauptabteilungen (HA) VIII, IX, XX
 Juristische Hochschule (JHS)
 Zentrale Auswertungsgruppe (ZAIG)

Deutsches Tagebucharchiv, Emmendingen (DTA)

Kreisarchiv Gotha (KArch Gotha)

Rat der Stadt Gotha
 Rat des Kreises Gotha

Kreisarchiv des Landkreises Eichsfeld, Heiligenstadt (KA L-EIC, EA-RDK HIG) Rat des Kreises Heiligenstadt

Schulchronik, Grundschule 'Pestalozzi' Weimar (Schulchronik POS Pestalozzi Weimar)

Schularchiv, Spezialgymnasium für Sprachen Salzmannschule Schnepfenthal (SArch)

Schularchiv, Staatliche Regelschule 'Thomas-Müntzer', Vogelsberg (Schularchiv Vogelsberg)

Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar (ThHStAW)

Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes Erfurt

II. ORAL HISTORY: QUESTIONNAIRE and INTERVIEWEE STATISTICS

Questionnaire

1. When and in what context did you encounter the term 'socialist personality' in the GDR? How would you, in very general terms, describe the personality characteristics with which 16- to 18-year olds left the GDR education system (please pay attention to any changes in the timeframe 1958-1978)?
2. Did the demands directed towards personality development of the young generation change over time (e.g. were there different demands made in the early 1960s / more freedom granted than in the late 1970s)?
3. Did young people have a 'double identity' ('two facedness': public and private sphere)? When, historically and age-wise, had this been learned and under what circumstances did this character trait manifest itself? Inhowfar was one able to voice one's own opinion? Where were the limits?
4. What kind of teachers did pupils have, and vice versa, in the 1960s and 1970s?
5. How did you experience any military influence in kindergarten and school (toys, meetings with NVA and Soviet soldiers, promotion for GST and NVA)?
6. How do you remember extracurricular education and socialisation (e.g. *Schulhort*, after-school clubs, pioneer organisation, *Pionierhaus*, FDJ? Were they characterised by freedom, constraints, political indoctrination?
7. How much Marxism-Leninism do you think stayed with the average pupil during and after his or her schooldays?
8. How did you experience the astronaut (*Kosmonauten*) and *Sputnik* euphoria?
9. Inhowfar were you influenced by western and West German youth culture? How 'western' were you allowed to be in your schooldays? What programmes did you watch on GDR and West German television?
10. Did the state lack the sincere support of the young generation? If yes, why and from when onwards?
11. Did the empty, abstract language of the Party present a basic problem for the dichotomy between state and society?

12. How did the endeavours of the state for total control of education and socialisation collide with the human striving for individuality and self-determination? Where existed the greatest degree of freedom, where control? Did you ever hear of the existence of the Ministry of State Security in GDR times?

13. Comparison of different social origins of children: What ambitions did the state, parents and children have for the last mentioned's journey through life? Did social origin lose or gain in importance as a factor during the timeframe under investigation?

14. Did you experience or witness any discrimination against Christian children? Did you feel the necessity to deny your identity as a Christian in the GDR education system or feel a danger of losing it?

15. Importance of family / home in comparison to education in school: Which was the stronger influence? How would you describe the role of the mother in GDR society? What did you think of all-day care as a child or parent?

16. Equality and gender roles: Was the education of girls and boys the same in school and family? Was gender a factor when choosing a profession? Did the attitudes of state and parents with respect to equality in education change during the timeframe under investigation?

17. How did you experience the working world as a child and adolescent (*Patenbrigaden*, polytechnic education, working in factories with workers)? Did polytechnic education classes have any influence on your choice of profession?

18. What differences were there between Berlin and the provinces?

19. Did you feel any emotional bond with the state GDR as a child and adolescent? Were there feelings like pride, gratitude, obligation?

20. How did you experience important milestones in GDR history?

- 1961: erection of the Berlin Wall (How long would it last?)
- 1963: Youth Communiqué and liberalisation
- 1965: Eleventh Plenum
- 1968: suppression of the Prague Spring
- 1971: change of power from Ulbricht to Honecker
- beginnings of *Ostpolitik*
- 1978: introduction of Military Education classes in school

21. Do you feel that there were periods of time when personal restrictions increased or were relaxed?

22. What did you think of school, the GDR, your future and that of the state as a child and adolescent? Which things were completely inconceivable in your childhood?

23. What influenced you most in your childhood: school, teachers, pioneer organisation, television, parents, friends?

24. Which values of the GDR education system and ideas for the 'new human being' have remained with you until today?

25. When assessing your life in the 1960s and 1970s, what would you say about the relations between: education and socialisation, teachers and pupils, school and parents, state and society?

Personal questions:

- A few words on your background (born when and where; social origin; religious affiliation; membership in any parties and mass organisations)
- Education and formation; profession(s) pursued in the GDR
- Place(s) of residence in the GDR

Interviewee statistics

Name	Born in	Bezirk	Profession	Religious affiliation	Party	Interview date
Adelheid K.	1934	Erfurt	teacher	none	none	24.2.2004
Alfons G.	1938	Erfurt	teacher	Catholic	none	6.6.2003
Almut M.	1958	Erfurt	chemical laboratory assistant	Protestant	CDU	25.3.2004
Annemarie W.*	1951	Erfurt	economist	Protestant	none	23.2.2004
Annerose R.	1964	Karl-Marx-Stadt	electrician	none	none	29.3.2004
Astrid H.	1958	Erfurt	farmer	none	none	21.3.2004
Bärbel B.	1936	Erfurt	teacher	Protestant	none	10.8.2004
Brigitte F.	1954	Erfurt	teacher	Protestant	none	8.3.2004
Christa H.	1948	Erfurt	teacher	none	none	8.3.2004
Christian D.	1965	Erfurt	vicar	Protestant	none	28.4.2004
Dietrich E.	1961	Cottbus	church musician	Protestant	none	22.5.2004
Doris P.	1955	Erfurt	administrator	Protestant	none	21.3.2004
Elfriede W.*	1961	Halle	agricultural engineer	none	none	25.3.2004
Erika P.	1932	Erfurt	teacher / scientific assistant	none	SED	10.5.2004
Gundit Z.	1958	Erfurt	site manager	Protestant	none	15.3.2004
Gunter U.*	1962	Erfurt	agricultural engineer	none	none	26.2.2004
Hans W.*	1955	Erfurt	metalworker	Protestant	none	25.3.2004
Harald M.	1940	Dresden	vicar	Protestant	none	17.3.2004
Heidi B.	1949	Erfurt	industrial manager	none	none	12.3.2004
Heidrun K.	1941	Erfurt	vicar	Protestant	none	7.5.2004
Henning S.	1968	Cottbus	electronic technician	Protestant	none	25.3.2004
Hermann B.	1949	Erfurt	accountant	Protestant	none	21.5.2004
Ingrid A.*	1951	Erfurt	primary school teacher	Protestant	none	10.2.2004
Jan S.*	1959	Erfurt	physician	Protestant	SED	3.2.2004

(continued)				(on paper)	(1979-1988)	
Jürgen P.	1942	Berlin	engineer	Protestant	none	21.6.2004
Karin K.	1939	Erfurt	kindergarten teacher	none	none	29.2.2004
Liane J.*	1952	Erfurt	primary school teacher	Protestant (till 1977)	none	10.6.2004
Lothar M.	1951	Erfurt	toolmaker	Protestant	none	21.3.2004
Ludger H.	1962	Erfurt	teacher	Catholic	none	29.3.2004
Maria H.	1941	Rostock	medical laboratory assistant	Protestant	none	18.2.2004
Matthias W.	1964	Rostock	theologian	Catholic	none	19.4.2004
Monika F.	1951	Magdeburg	kindergarten teacher	Protestant (till 1977)	none	21.4.2004
Petra R.*	1960	Berlin	graphic designer	Protestant	none	23.4.2004
Rainer W.	1948	Halle	engineer	none	none	30.3.2004
Regine H.	1951	Dresden	actress	Protestant	none	14.2.2004
Renate W.	1964	Suhl	teacher	Protestant	none	19.3.2004
Rolf N.*	1956	Erfurt	teacher	none	none	10.6.2004
Stefan G.*	1972	Berlin	pupil	none	none	28.5.2004
Steffen S.	1966	Erfurt	electrician	Protestant	LDPD	18.3.2004
Steffi K.-P.	1959	Erfurt	freelance copywriter	none	none	24.2.2004
Susanne E.,*	1950	Erfurt	physician	Protestant	none	10.5.2004
Ulla M.	1950	Erfurt	kindergarten teacher	none	none	22.2.2004
Ulrike V.*	1945	Erfurt	paediatric nurse	Protestant	none	10.5.2004
Uta K.-L.	1943	Erfurt	theologian	Protestant	none	2.5.2004
Viola S.	1954	Berlin	actress	none	none	9.3.2004
Walter S.	1926	Erfurt	teacher	Catholic	SED	10.6.2003

* Name anonymised

Letters

Elisabeth H. (10.2.2005)

Dr Werner Leich, Bishop emeritus (22.5.2004)

Hans-Joachim Marchio (31.1.2005)

Dieter Müller (3.2.2005)

Almuth Noetzel (21.5.2005)

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