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Nonconformity on the Borders of Dictatorship.

Youth subcultures in the GDR (1949-1965)

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(University College London)
Submitted for the Degree of PhD
Abstract

The subject of the thesis is youth nonconformity in the German Democratic Republic, with a particular focus on Leipzig in the 1950s and 1960s. The thesis contains both a political and a cultural studies analysis of what it was like to grow up in one half of a divided country subject to Communist attempts at influence and control. Assessing the competing claims on youth of the East German state, Western media and young people's own socio-cultural milieus, the first section explores the borders not just between state and society, but between East and West as well as those between the two German dictatorships. By exploring these overlaps, the thesis permits a more complex understanding of what young people experienced in terms of shifting boundaries between public and private, personal and political. The second section assesses the combined effect of the various competing influences on youth in creating widespread ambivalence, immunity and escapism. By examining both coercive and cooptive strategies for combating inner conflict, the thesis examines the limits of repression and reform in effectively dealing with youth nonconformity and situates the conflict over youth within wider debates about the nature of (and possibility of controlling) modernity. The last section of the thesis explores three, particularly important, examples of nonconformity ranging from 'respectable' nonconformity on the part of young Christians to fans of Beat music and Rock'n Roll in order to show the differences which existed in motivations for ignoring, challenging and defying the state. Theoretically, the thesis draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham. In assessing the nature and role played by gangs in the 1950s and early 1960s, the thesis also refers back to and expands on the work of Detlev Peukert, Eve Rosenhaft and Arno Klönne. The evidence, on which the thesis is based, ranges from official Party, Police and Stasi files to newspaper articles and interviews with former participants in Leipzig's youth subcultural scene.
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Introduction

What follows is a study of youth nonconformity, a study of young people's struggle for self-determination in the face of an over-determining state. It is an analysis of how young people reacted to and, in some cases, resisted planned attempts to colonise their lifeworlds. More specifically, it is an investigation of how young people were able to challenge, negotiate and resist the impositions of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) regime whether actively through protest and opposition or passively through immunity, imperviousness and withdrawal.

ANGELS OF HISTORY, DEMONS OF CULTURE

For a regime wishing to transform society, youth exercises enormous symbolic importance as society's 'future'. Thus disembodied, youth comes to act as a metaphor for social change onto which repressed fears and desires are projected. In seeking to transform the social conditions they had inherited from the Nazis, the communists created their own myth of youth – seeing young people as the force they would be able to shape, control and use to transform society. Young people were presented as having extraordinary powers to overcome obstacles and to resolve problems which adults, by reason of their stubborn clinging to outmoded outlooks and ideals were unable to contemplate or tackle. In the youth law of 1950, for example, young people were given the right 'to develop unhindered their initiative everywhere, in all questions affecting the situation of youth, the improvement of work in the factories, administration, apprenticeships and other organs as well as in the fight against bureaucratism, sabotage and deficiencies in working practices.' However, the historic role
young people were to play as reformers, revivers and innovators soon became an excuse for intervening in young people's lives. The other side to the mythification of youth was the limitation and reduction of young people's concrete rights to self-determination and autonomy. While the official youth organization, the Free German Youth (FDJ), presented itself as an antidote to the 'cadaver discipline' of the Hitler Youth, in actual fact it deprived East German youth of the freedom from adult control they had enjoyed in the immediate aftermath of the war. Young people's right to take part rapidly became their duty to perform the tasks set out for them. The initial scope provided for youth to decide their own activities and form their own interest circles was progressively restricted until only those activities and interests seen as worthy by the party were accepted and tolerated.

Although the SED saw its policies towards youth as being entirely novel, in fact, the moves by the FDJ to take over and control youth leisure activities fell into a long tradition of controlling, expropriating and instrumentalizing youth culture in Germany.\(^5\) Ever since the Wandervogel movement, attempts had been made to subsume and control independent initiatives to ensure that young people and their free time remained under adult control. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), idealization of the 'interests of youth' coincided with cynical conceptions of young people as a mass to be steered and used for externally-defined goals. Youth were valued for their special 'contributions', 'abilities' and 'achievements'. Yet communist party leaders were unable to understand young people whose conceptions of worthwhile activity or visions of the future differed from their own. In the party's technocratic vision,

The study of social science serves the aim of enabling young people to work as conscious builders of the new society and to apply Marxist-Leninist theory creatively... Every young person... sees the great tasks of the five-year plan and of the future of a progressive Germany.\(^6\)

The expropriation and functionalization of young people's free time and free-spaces took place under the cloak of ensuring that young people used their free time 'sensibly'. The regime encouraged young people to become 'socialist personalities' – 'good, new, but [essentially] boring people.' As Mary Fulbrook puts it, 'Against all the realities of individual difference - for which there was little or no respect - the party sought to achieve uniformity in pursuit of a better future.' Young people who failed to fall into line with the regime's own self-declared political agenda came to be classed as internal enemies, a fifth column undermining and subverting society's achievements from within. On the one hand, young people were conceived as the group most capable of modernizing society. Yet, on the other, they were the group most susceptible to 'imperialist attempts at ideological influencing' through exposure to Western media. The importance to young people of stylistic features as a means of establishing in-group membership meant that youth could all too easily be made to appear as a strange and other tribe with its own 'uncivilised' rituals, totems and taboos.

KNOWLEDGE-GUIDING DEBATES

Dominating academic debate on GDR history are two very different conceptions about how to deal with the East German past 'democratically'. One argument is that East Germans can only begin to adapt to life in a united Germany once they have begun to 'reckon with' their past. The second alternative suggests that all East Germans really need is for the complex, ambiguous and

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ambivalent nature of their individual experiences to be recognised, accepted and understood.\(^{11}\)

The discourse of 're-appraisal' emphasizes the harmful effects of forty years of continuous dictatorship and unmitigated repression in forming and deforming the mentalities and characters of the East German population. It is predicated on the belief that the unremittingly repressive nature of the regime makes it not only feasible, but a political necessity to attribute blame to those who were responsible for instigating, upholding or in any way supporting the SED's dictatorial rule. Hermann Weber, a member of the parliamentary inquiry into East German history, typified this line of argument when, in September 1993, he addressed a conference at the Institute for Contemporary Youth Research:

I do not need to tell you, how dangerous it was that the reappraising of the Nazi dictatorship was 'put on hold' for two decades. It will not be so dramatic this time, while only the smaller part of the German people, the population of the GDR are directly affected. However it appears to me that it would be a catastrophe if [it was left to] the next generation to make a serious assessment about how the dictatorship actually was, what instruments, what structures were created, how people behaved and how they were also partly deformed by them. To find that out is, I believe, not only an academic duty, but also a citizen's duty.\(^{12}\)

Such an approach can seem problematic for a number of reasons: the self-evidence of comparisons between the two dictatorships; the perception that being directly affected was something to be overcome, if need be by the unaffected majority imposing its will on the affected minority; the subordination


of academic to political imperatives and the 'public pedagogical' function which history writing was expected to play.

Many East Germans strongly resent the imposition of the 're-appraisal' claims on their memories of the GDR. As the East German rock musician Klaus Renft put it:

I resist criticism which has already become uncritical because it declares wholesale everything in the GDR to have been bad. It annoys me that a whole society is psychoanalysed – all of us deformed, prisoners in a closed institution… We didn’t only spend forty years on bread and water being whipped. No, we really lived. That’s what they don’t understand in the West, but there’s no reason to suppress it, just because those in the West don’t understand it.13

Behind the grey exterior of the iron curtain, he insists, there was colour, colour which the re-appraisalists and their filters block out.

In the event, the calls for East German history to be ‘reappraised’ became so numerous and so fervent that they led to something of a ‘reappraisal crisis’ in which historians who were seen as ‘not toeing the party line’ were condemned as being tacit supporters of the defunct regime.14 Given the highly politicized nature of much of the history-writing of this period, it is no wonder that many East Germans got the impression that ‘their’ history was being written off as failure in the interests of the victors. Building hegemony after unification did require the deconstruction and dismantling of the previously existing structures of legitimacy.15 But it is more complex than this.

13 Schütt (ed.), Klaus Renft, 160.
Fig. 1. Restoring colour to their cheeks. A participant's eye view of the Young Pioneers.
Following the sudden collapse of Communism in 1989 and the rush to unify in the vacuum it left behind, Germany found itself in an awkward and unusual situation, an experiment for which there were few parallels or precedents. For historians, the effect has been to create a complex ‘field of force’ for academic debate in which the hegemonies of the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) act as alternate, mutually opposing poles. For opponents of the SED-regime and its hegemony, unification has resulted in polarization. Some have found themselves pushed closer to the West German government, becoming in effect responsible for upholding and defending the FRG’s record by subjecting its former ideological rival to extensive criticism and condemnation. They are joined in the ‘total and unrelenting critique’ corner by West German ‘cold warriors’, who upon finding their old foe dead, are eager to settle old scores with their left-liberal critics.\(^{16}\) Others, among them former opponents of the SED, have found the unified but disunited Germany so different from what they had hoped and expected to achieve by opposition that they have ended up siding with their former enemies in the SED, now regrouped under the name of Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). There, they defend the GDR’s record on issues like welfare and social security against what they see as sweeping and ill-informed Western critique.

Among West German historians, too, the effect of unification has been to produce divided loyalties. Some have done very well out of the changes, securing unhoped-for advancement and promotion as the wholesale expulsions from East German universities created a sudden dearth of academics. Others, who had built their reputations on a critical stance to the prevailing West German orthodoxy have found themselves somewhat isolated in the no-man’s land left in the centre, unwilling to embrace the idea that the FRG was, after all, right all along, but at the same time hesitant to join with the defeated, but unrepentant former SED ideologues. Having long enjoyed their position as left-wing critics, sniping from the sidelines, they now find themselves pushed into the centre as the only moderates in a debate dominated by the ideologically irreconcilable. Two mutually exclusive hegemonies, with two contradictory

\(^{16}\) Ibid, 88.
claims on the German past, battle on while non-partisan voices are effectively ignored, dismissed or silenced.

Recently, Klaus Schroeder has attempted to make the position of the centre-left moderates even more uncomfortable by calling for social historians to submit to ‘totalitarianism theory’ by recognising that the GDR was a ‘vermachtete’ rather than a ‘durchherrschte’ society. The precise differences between the two terms are difficult to translate. Essentially the divergence of opinion is over whether certain forms of power and rule can exist only in a one-party dictatorship like the GDR or whether certain types of ‘thorough rule’ can also exist in pluralist democracies. What Schroeder is opposed to is Lüdtke’s description of the GDR as a society ‘drenched in rule (durchherrschte).’ With it, he says, ‘the crucial difference between authority (Herrschaft) approved by a majority and one based on violence and ideological claims can easily get lost.’

Given the widespread references to SED violence and repression in both social history and ‘totalitarian’ accounts, Schroeder’s fears are difficult to understand unless they are taken as a move to force political opponents to accept a position they do not want to. How easy can it be, after all, for professional historians to ‘lose’ the distinction between democracy and dictatorship? To avoid losing their democratic credentials, historians have to ignore potential similarities between the two systems and affirm their abhorrence of Communism. As Jürgen Kocka argues, we would better serve history if we are on our guard ‘against any attempts to justify “the correct” term (such as “totalitarian dictatorship”) or the proper “attitude”.’ The end of the Cold War should allow us to be sceptical about all calls for ‘ideological correctness’.

The main problem with arguments emphasizing the ‘totalitarian’ character of the GDR, Mary Fulbrook suggests, is that ‘their attempts both to classify and to explain (and often also to denounce) the whole of regime and society in one concept... have a built-in tendency to assume rather than explore the

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18 Klaus Schroeder, Der SED-Staat (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1998), 632-33.
interconnections'. It is these *a priori* assumptions that proponents of 'totalitarian' models are so desperate to avoid giving up. And yet, in fact, Fulbrook argues, there is very little to distinguish between the 'durchherrschte' and the 'totalitarian' models:

The term 'durchherrschte Gesellschaft' is seen by some as a surreptitious translation of the totalitarianism model into a more "politically correct" language... Behind it, there still stands a pyramidal conception of history depicting a fairly sharp division between state and society.

Jürgen Kocka, for example, places great emphasis on the extent to which the apparatus of domination (*Herrschaftsapparatus*) penetrated deeply into all areas of society. The key difference, he argues, is the emphasis in social history accounts on the informal structures, unofficial networks and patterns of problem-solving and the practical 'limits' these placed on the way in which power and domination could be exercised in everyday life. In the end, Kocka argues, these limits meant that life in the GDR was shaped, but not determined by dictatorial rule.

The last two years have seen the 're-appraisalists' and the social historians shifting ground to come closer to one another. In tacit recognition of the fact that the SED did not manage to rule for forty years by fear and terror alone, Klaus Schroeder has coined the (rather unwieldy) term 'late totalitarian patriarchal and surveillance state' to describe the latter decades of the GDR dictatorship. Jürgen Kocka, in turn, has accepted that what he calls 'modern dictatorship' is actually 'similar to some definitions of "totalitarian dictatorship"'. After over a decade of wrangling about terminology, it will hopefully now be possible to focus instead on the study of 'social structures and processes, perceptions, actions and encounters which – although seldom entirely

22 Jürgen Kocka, 'Eine durchherrschte Gesellschaft' in Kaelbe, Kocka & Zwahr (eds.), *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, 547-553.
23 Ibid, 551-2.
24 Kocka, 'A special kind of modern dictatorship', 22-23.
untouched by the dictatorship – nevertheless possessed their own inner logic, and often their own intrinsic value'.

The problem with the present debate is that, as Peter Hübner argues, 'The multiple calls for "re-appraisal (Aufarbeitung)" of GDR-history tend with a certain momentum towards studies of political developments and structural contexts and thereby [point] especially towards an analysis of the apparatus of power and repression.' Although it is legitimate to emphasize the awful things that the regime did to people who had the misfortune to be its citizens, if all history written on the GDR was to focus solely on the mechanisms of repression and the supposed 'deformation' suffered by generations of young people who grew up in the GDR then this, in itself, would amount to a 'deformation' of history. As Thomas Lindenberger argues, it would also make for tedious reading:

Most historical depictions are kept in black and white when extremists on either side reach for the pen or grey-on-grey and, at best, melancholic shades of pastel when authors are making a deliberate effort at differentiated 'objectivity'.

While it is difficult to forget or ignore the fact that the GDR was a dictatorship bent on re-forming young people in its own image, it is just as important to recognise the extent to which political and social actors (young and old) were able (whether consciously or unconsciously) to impede, corrupt and in some cases even transform the way in which official policies were implemented. What saved young people from 'deformation' or subjection was often their stubborn sense of self at odds with the messages transmitted by teachers, youth organization leaders and the regime. This sense of self was encouraged by some parents, ministered to, at times, by figures in the church and constantly fed by music and views transmitted from the West.

27 Lindenberger, 'Sonnenallee', 94.
It is in ignoring these hidden senses of self – limited, nuanced and concealed as they were – that the shrill and overpowering calls for ‘re-appraisal’ do a disservice to history and historical writing. Although arguments emphasizing the ‘totalitarian’ character of SED rule are excellent at debunking former Communist myths (while at the same time strengthening those of the West), they are almost entirely silent about what it was actually like to live and grow up in a regime like the GDR. Although presented in the name of the victims, the image of an ‘unlawful regime’ created of the GDR is so monolithic in its scope that it serves to silence and render invisible those who actually stood up to it. The consequence is the ‘unjustified sweeping assumption’ that the history of the GDR was one of ‘general adaptation and subjugation’.28

As Mary Fulbrook argues, while it is important to study the deep impregnation of society by the state, it is also important to examine the ways in which society was resistant to political intrusion or changed in directions which were unintended by the regime. Focussing on the ‘insides’ of structures, Fulbrook points to a symbiotic relationship between the rulers and the ruled, in which the latter failed to be either completely won over or completely opposed, but gradually learned how to play (along with) the system according to unwritten rules and codes of behaviour. Although looking down at GDR society ‘from above’ is a legitimate perspective, Jürgen Kocka suggests, ‘it is merely one possibility among many’:

There were many aspects of life, daily experience, and socialization in the GDR that do not come into view from this angle. Even in the case of the GDR, complex historical realities can only partially be reconstructed if understood as objects of dictatorial and state rule.29

To truly understand social realities in the GDR, we have to stop seeing the GDR as a monolith standing alone and to open our eyes and our ears to a multiplicity of overlapping voices.

A HEGEMONY-LESS ZONE

While those demanding 're-appraisal' erect an impenetrable barrier between East and West – with right and justice on one side and illegality and injustice on the other – a cultural studies approach downplays the importance of the state in relation to the importance of hegemonies. Originally associated with Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist imprisoned by the Fascists and forced to pen his 'prison notebooks' covertly on toilet paper, 'hegemony' implies structures of invisible, 'naturalised' domination which are not even seen by the oppressed. Rather than forcing themselves on the individuals of a society, hegemonies control them subtly through education and media to the extent that people consent to their own domination.30

In 1945, the allied occupiers could count on little in the way of 'natural social authority'. With the intensification of the Cold War and the breakdown of East-West co-operation, post-war Germany saw two radically different attempts to create hegemony on German soil. Whereas East German propaganda and ideology made little impact in West Germany apart from as a bogeyman for what might happen if state-supportive consensus was not maintained, in the East, West German views, ideas, notions and concepts made a much deeper and longer-lasting impact. As a result, young people in East Germany grew up subject to not one but two different hegemonies, both competing for their hearts and minds with their apparently 'common sense' logic, but pernicious underlying manipulation and control. As one interviewee put it:

As a young person, as a fourteen-year-old you're not yet so sure of yourself... you're continually pulled back and forth. There were always so-called "proofs" that the path the state had taken had to be the right one. You were influenced from several sides but with increasing age and increasing possibilities of informing yourself... [It became easier to work out what was true and what was false].31

31 Interview with Hans-Peter D.
What is particularly interesting about East Germany in the 1950s and the 1960s is the absence of a dominant hegemony. Although the SED was desperate to develop state-supportive notions as a means of gaining the population’s support, or at least their acceptance, in contributing to the project of building socialism, these efforts to construct and impose a single, unifying vision stood in marked contrast to the diversity of ideologies and belief-systems still active among the population. Young people growing up in East Germany found themselves sandwiched between the claims of two mutually exclusive ideological systems, both vying for their loyalty. They were bombarded from all sides by different interpretations and labels. As ‘socialists’, as Christians, as Germans, they were forced to make choices about how to live their lives, what to do, what to believe, what to think, what to listen to, how to dress and how to behave. The competing messages, claims and ‘takes on reality’ forced them to think more intensely about where they belonged and to pose more questions about their identity than other young people.

DETAILED ANALYSES

The key contribution that a thesis like this can make is to take account not just of the frontier of concrete and barbed wire surrounding the GDR, but of boundaries and borderlines which existed within East German society. Although from its official pronouncements, it is clear that the state did seek to impose a would-be total claim on youth, its ability to do so was severely restricted by the counter-hegemonic challenges of cultural continuities, on the one hand, and youth subcultures inspired by Western media penetration on the other.

The first accounts written after unification tended to emphasize state attempts to influence and control young people. Authors like Sonja Häder, Gert Geißler and Ulrich Wiegmann have been able to uncover vast amounts of previously inaccessible archival evidence revealing all the twists and turns in the SED’s attempt to impose its blueprint on the education system.32 Ulrich

Mählert, Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan and the authors connected with the (sadly
defunct) Institute for the Contemporary History of Youth (Institut für
zeitgeschichtliche Jugendforschung, IzJ), which was headed by Helga
Gotschlich, provided similar deconstructions of the FDJ. Mählert and Geißler,
in particular have been instrumental in bringing out edited source collections
filled with interesting vignettes about life in the GDR. Other authors have
focussed more on individuals, carrying out interviews with former ‘new
teachers’, youth organization functionaries and ordinary young people. Yet, in
many ways, the sudden access to mountains of documents (and interviewees)
has had a swamping effect, replacing clarity with confusion. The sheer scale
and range of documentary evidence imposes difficulties on authors of selection
and organization. Although the prospect of providing an overview is daunting,
given the fact that new documents contradicting old ones emerge almost every
day, forcing us to constantly revise the picture we have been building up, an
overview is precisely what is necessary for us to avoid falling into
antiquarianism or ‘document fetishism’. Although heavy with footnotes, tables
and addenda, many of the accounts written after unification lack the
comprehensiveness and insightfulness of Freya Klier’s critique of the East
German education system written immediately after the Wende. Written in an
entertainingly direct and readable style, with perspicacious commentaries
written from an insider’s perspective, Klier’s analysis was actually based on
hundreds of interviews the author, a GDR dissident, had carried out as she
toured the GDR performing at church-based opposition events. Klier described
the education system and the youth organization as they were seen by young
people and as they had described them to her in their own words. As such, her
account makes up in vividness and immediacy what it lacks in academic
paraphernalia and cold, clinical dissection.

Jugendausschüssen zur SED-Massenorganisation: Die Erfassung der Jugend in der
Sowjetischen Besatzungszone (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1995); Leonore Ansorg, ‘Die
frühzeitige politische Formierung der Heranwachsenden. Zur Gründung der Pionierorganisation
durch die FDJ’ in Helga Gotschlich (ed.), Links und links, 157-169.
35 Barbara Giessmann offers a similarly nuanced and grass-roots analysis for the late 1980s:
Barbara Giessmann, ‘Jugendliche an den Schulen – ein Leben als Schüler und Mitglied der
Entwicklungsperspektiven im vereinigten Deutschland, Vol. 3, Die Neuen Länder Rückblick und
Although the SED attempted to use education and the youth organization to transform and re-engineer society, the party was severely impeded in implementing and realizing its blueprint by the persistence and inertia of alternative traditions and cultures. Far from finding youth malleable and easily influenced, the SED was faced with a diverse and heterogeneous youth population which proved reluctant to imbibe its messages. In its attempts to extirpate milieu-based immunity, the regime embarked on 'struggles' and campaigns against Social Democracy and the Junge Gemeinde (which included attempts to exclude Christian and middle-class children from Oberschule).

A major obstacle to regime attempts at influence was Eigensinn. Eigensinn denotes 'wilfulness, spontaneous self-will, a kind of self-affirmation, an act of (re)appropriating alienated social relations on and off the shop floor'. In standard parlance, the word Eigensinn has pejorative overtones, referring to "obstreperous, obstinate" behaviour, usually of children. A number of recent works, most notably Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn, edited by Thomas Lindenberger, have removed the term from its immediate associations with workers' pranks and used instead the 'discompounded' version of Eigen-sinn as a concept for explaining the behaviours of a wide range of social groups in the GDR. The "discompounding" of writing it as Eigen-sinn stresses its root signification of 'one's own sense, own meaning'.

In addition to the 'own sense' or Eigen-sinn provided to them by their socio-cultural milieus, young people also acquired 'immunity' from influence by listening in to Western media. Not only was the GDR within broadcasting range of the American Forces Network (AFN) and other Western stations – thus

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39 Thomas Lindenberger, Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999).
providing young people with a steady stream of Rock’n Roll hits regarded as too ‘hot’ and ‘primitive’ for British and German radio stations – but until 13 August 1961, the ‘dens of iniquity’ in West Berlin were physically accessible to young people from the East. Exposure to new forms of youth culture from the West not only offered them alternative information and outlooks, but aided young people in withdrawing from official incorporation strategies by submerging themselves into their own separate worlds of hobbies, youth-specific interests and subculture. Authors like Michael Rauhut, Dorothea Wierling, Uta Poiger and Peter Wicke have played a key role in exploring and revealing the Rock’n Roll and Beat-music subcultures which also developed in the GDR.\(^{41}\) While Rauhut, Wierling and Wicke have focussed on GDR-specific bottom-up reconstructions, Uta Poiger has focussed her attention on a comparison of official reactions to and mediated discourses about Rock’n Roll in East and West Germany. While the studies of Beat music focus on the relationship between young people and the East German authorities, Poiger uses a cultural studies approach to analyse the use of racial and sexual stereotypes in constructions of deviant and nonconformist youth in both German states. Poiger’s study thereby reveals surprising similarities between the cultural pessimism of Catholic conservatives in the West and their otherwise ideological opponents, the hard-line Communists in the East. Although Poiger offers a highly perceptive analysis based on a close reading of newspaper articles and other contemporary texts (including photographs and other illustrations) what is missing from her exploration of the images so garishly projected onto youth is a sense of what constituted the actual reality. As Hilary Pilkington argues, in her excellent study of post-Soviet youth cultures, while it is important to ‘deconstruct’ attributions and notions about youth, it is equally important to engage in ‘reconstruction’.\(^{42}\)

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A number of studies have pointed to the fact that the struggles for youth were also struggles over modernity. As Dorothee Wierling and Uta Poiger have noted, the SED did, on occasion, tolerate certain changes in social and cultural mores in an attempt to harness youth as a modernizing force. For Mario Stumpfe, the ambivalence and pendulum swings between reaction and reform are indicative of a conflict between modernism and anti-modernism which is the key to understanding the dynamism and stagnation of development in the GDR.

According to Stefan Hradil, one of the key features of post-war modernization has been 'the growth of individual options and of freedom in the sense of the loosening of ties'. In the GDR, the SED sought to achieve modernization 'objectively' from above by dictating 'what progress meant, what individual options should look like [and] what means should be used for what ends'. By contrast, the 'Western model' allowed greater opportunities for modernization to occur 'from below', in the process, giving it a more 'subjective' character. But although it is true that the GDR lagged behind in pluralization and possessed a much more socially and ethnically homogenous population than the FRG, it is important to recognise that urbanization together with changes to the education system and the spread of mass media did foster the development of perspectives and outlooks more common in Western, 'individualistic' societies. In the East as in the West, young people increasingly expected to be valued as individuals and not just 'lumped together (über einen Kamm geschoren)'. As Dorothee Wierling perceptively notes, both the Church and the Youth Organization felt obliged to implement 'modern' methods and to create 'spaces of relative autonomy... in spite of formal leadership and regular

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47 'Befragung von Schülern (19.11.64)', BArch. SAPMO DY6/3944.
attempts to implement discipline. Like their contemporaries in the West, they expected to be free to make their own choices in their private lives. They placed increasing emphasis on intimacy in their personal relationships and on casualness in speech and style of dress.

The struggles over youth which occurred in the GDR were similar in essence to those which were happening throughout the developed world during the 1950s and 1960s. This was the period in which the traditional gave way to the modern in relation to youth. Young people won for themselves a degree of freedom and autonomy in terms of sexuality and self-determination and expressed their growing difference from adults through their clothing and haircuts. A culture in which parents were expected to act as autocratic dictators, and their children obsequiously to obey, gradually gave way to one in which children were seen more and more as equal partners in decisions affecting their future. Although it may seem strange to use terms like 'freedom' and 'self-determination' in relation to the GDR, East German youth did experience similar changes to their counterparts in the West. It was young people in the subcultures who were at the forefront of changing and re-negotiating the subjectivities and identities of youth. They acted as a visible manifestation of the pluralization of values and lifestyles which although given less discursive exposure nevertheless did, to an extent, occur in the GDR. While the structures and techniques of influence and repression available to the state remained essentially static and unchanging, changes were afoot in culture and society which made the state and its pathos-laden claims appear increasingly irrelevant to youth. Although they took place predominantly in the social and cultural rather than the political sphere, these changes had a major impact on young people’s outlooks and identities. Notions like self-realization and self-expression, personal freedom and alternative lifestyles became important concepts for young people, often with more importance and significance than the political issues presented to them by the Party.

48 Wierling, 'Die Jugend als innerer Feind', Note 9, p. 422 and Note 22, p.424.
If the SED was to stand a chance of appealing to them, it had to recognise their altered aspirations. At times, it sought to stand in the way of changes in youth culture and identity which were occurring across Europe and America. But at other times, the Party recognised the impossibility of turning back the tide and sought to enhance its legitimacy by making the changes its own. Although the strategies the regime adopted in relation to youth were often coercive and manipulative, studies which focus solely on political structures and the fundamental opposition they engendered fail to adequately understand or explain the range of attitudes and positions young people adopted in relation to the regime and to its ambivalent shifts of policy.50

Young people who deviated rather than deliberately opposed the SED regime have tended to be marginalized in 'representative' anthologies of resistance and opposition in the GDR presumably, Thomas Lindenberger argues, for want of political dignity.51 With the notable exceptions of Alfons Kenkmann and Patrik von zur Mühlen, few people writing about youth nonconformity in the GDR have attempted to inform their analyses with the work on youth nonconformity and subcultures in the Third Reich.52 The focus in this thesis was heavily informed by the groundbreaking work by Detlev Peukert and Arno Klönne on youth nonconformity and resistance during the Third Reich.53 Not only do such comparisons reveal interesting similarities between the ways in which youth nonconformists were perceived and handled in the GDR and the ways in which they were cajoled and repressed during the Third Reich, but they also provide access to important and insightful debates about the nature of nonconformity as a form both of resistance and fun.54 One contribution this thesis can make is to provide an explanation for how it is that young people could mount highly effective challenges to the regime and its attempts to control them and yet, in many cases, still consider themselves and

50 See Pilkington, Russia's youth and its culture, 197-8.
51 Lindenberger, 'Sonnenallee', 95.
their actions to be 'non-political'. Although a few instances of 'fundamental resistance' to the regime did occur (for comparative purposes these are discussed in Chapter Seven), apart from the stubborn immunity of Christian youth groups, the main threat to the regime's attempts to mould and influence young people came from the dissident subcultures which ignored and defied the state's cultural and ideological hold over them. Anti-political in outlook, these groups nevertheless acted as an important source of immunity, opposition and protest. As Klaus Renft put it, 'we didn't get out of bed in the morning thinking "right, how are we going to bring down the state".' But having found themselves on the wrong side of boundaries of taste and behaviour imposed by the SED, they nevertheless acted as an important and highly visible source of defiance and opposition to the regime. Pride, over-excitement, peer pressure, loss of self control, a desire to impress the opposite sex, the search for popularity or the need to maintain 'image' or face could all lead them to cross the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Once over the line, they rapidly challenged the regime's authority, thereby subverting its claims to legitimacy and undermining its professed ability to control societal development.

Those who appear in this study made up only a small minority of East German youth, but they constitute an interesting minority nonetheless. Some of those who appear would not consider themselves as particularly heroic, or even all that oppositional, but they all found themselves caught up in the machinery and mechanism for dealing with 'troublemakers'. In examining the various forms of behaviour which clashed or simply contradicted with the regime's goals, I differentiate between 'fundamental resistance' of the sort designed to topple the regime and the various forms of 'effective resistance' which limited and constrained the party in its attempts to influence and control young people. Broadening the definition of resistance to include protest and immunity reveals 'a spectrum of behaviours ranging from non-participation, from standing out in the cold, through forms of verbal criticism and the maintenance of social-spatial milieu contacts through to conspiratorial acts of

55 Interview with Klaus Renft.
By focussing on 'effective' rather than fundamental resistance, the thesis allows 'a multifaceted picture of spheres of conflict between rulers and ruled to emerge'.

In seeking to analyse and assess this broad range of youth nonconformities, the approaches developed by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham have proved particularly useful. Angela McRobbie, in particular, has criticised the heavy male bias of the early CCCS studies (in which the subjects of analysis were almost exclusively referred to as 'he') together with their blindness to the racism often present in subcultures described as being 'resistant' to the ruling hegemony. Male ethnographers have rightly been criticised for being more interested in reading 'cultural history from the soles of a teddy boy's shoes' than in actually talking to them. As a result, the 'less visual, interpersonal realm... was almost entirely eliminated...
The private world of home, as well as the more intimate world of boys' heterosocial/hetero-sexual relationships were silenced, along with the girls who inhabited them. The consequence, Valerie Hey argues, was that subcultural writers not only ignored the fact that 'it's different for girls', but they also condemned any boy who was not a 'spectacular disaffiliate' to theoretical and political oblivion. Feminists have since focused attention on the less overt, but no less important expressions of nonconformity among girls, their private deviation from gender norms within the cocoon of their bedroom – the space in which they could overcome feelings of homeliness and awkwardness to experiment with sexuality in the form of make-up, dressing up and dreaming of unattainable, inaccessible pop stars. But attention has yet to be paid to the

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62 Hey, The Company She Keeps, 16-17.
'normals' who made up the majority of young people or to the private lives of boys. As Hey suggests, maybe it is just as important to discover the 'desires and pains of male adolescence... the masculine insecurities and anxieties...'.

Although the CCCS approaches to the study of youth subcultures are not without flaws, they do, nevertheless, offer much more purchase in understanding the most widespread and infectious forms of youth nonconformity than approaches which can only perceive opposition as being a suitable subject of enquiry if it was overtly political and 'anti-totalitarian'. In the CCCS approach, resistance takes place not just against the system of rule, but also against society and the dominant (hegemonic) culture. Taking account of McRobbie and Hey's criticisms, I have tried to focus as much attention on private forms of resistance and opposition (by boys and girls) as on the loud, highly public and often quasi-criminal forms of 'rough' protest revelled in by 'rowdies' at the annual fair (Kleinmesse). Using a wider definition of opposition, the thesis shows that 'resistance' occurred not just to dictatorial conditions of rule, but also to middle-class notions of respectability, gender roles and other forms of age domination.

**HISTORY FROM BELOW**

The aim of this thesis is to explore and examine the various youth cultures and 'lifestyles' which were perceived by the regime as being 'hostile to the state (staatsfeindlich)'. It is an attempt to assess the nature of these various 'threats' posed to the regime and to trace them back to their sources and origins in society, in order to assess what motivated those concerned to stand up to the regime. Using an everyday history approach, the attempt has been made to reconstruct young people's lifeworlds from the bottom up. As a local study, it focuses on how youth nonconformity developed in Leipzig and examines the impact of state attempts to counter the threat in reducing or exacerbating the problem. By using local, biographical and oral history approaches a more complex and nuanced picture of East German society emerges, one which

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64 Hey, *The Company She Keeps*, 16-17.
renders the populations' fates less exceptional, but at the same time more understandable and comparable.

Leipzig's prominent role in the book trade and as an academic centre lent weight to its claims to openness to new ideas and outside influences. The town's associations with Bach and Mendelssohn, Goethe and Schiller bolstered its claims to be a city of music and culture. Leipzigers were proud of their city's reputation for being a cosmopolitan city, a smaller version of Paris as described in Goethe's Faust. Although severely damaged by allied bombing, Leipzig strove to regain its reputation as a cultural and a trading centre as soon as the war was over. Twice a year visitors poured into the town, described as the 'showcase of the world', bringing with them examples of the latest music, literature and fashions together with unorthodox ideas and hard currency. By hosting the GDR's trade fairs, Leipzig came to act as a showcase for the regime as well as the backdrop to official celebrations and initiatives such as the MMM (Messe der Meister von Morgen) movement designed to show youth's ingenuity and commitment to the regime.

For all its claims to worldliness and cosmopolitanism, however, the outlooks of many of Leipzig's inhabitants stretched no further than their allotments. Ties to local neighbourhoods remained strong, helped by the insulation they had provided against National Socialist penetration, and were the object of intense loyalty and local patriotism.

In spite of the breaking of many traditions and the destruction of institutions by National Socialism, war and Stalinization, milieu-specific elements of lifestyle, forms of community socialization (Vergemeinschaftungen) and social moral norms remained.

68 Renft Interview.
Leipzig had always been a divided city, both politically and geographically. Fanning out from the centre were its various different middle- and working-class milieus. For the middle-classes and ‘intelligentsia’, there were the houses in the musicians’ and theatrical quarters to the south together with the villas in Gohlis to the north. For the working classes, there were the heavily industrialized districts of Reudnitz and Sellenhausen in the East which produced printing machinery and Plagwitz in the West producing cranes and other heavy machinery. Although power had traditionally been exercised by middle-class liberals and conservatives, Leipzig was the birthplace and a major stronghold of Social Democracy. The working-class districts had also long played host to the communists and Leipzig was famous in the GDR of the 1950s and 1960s for being the birthplace of Walter Ulbricht, who was a frequent visitor.

There are three main parts to the thesis. The first explores the impact of the three main influences on the formation (and undermining) of hegemony: the impact of the state, Western media and continuities of culture and milieu. The second part assesses the combined effect of these three competing influences in fostering inner conflict, escapism and immunity together with the state’s attempts to overcome ambivalence by means of policies of cooption and coercion, Zuckerbrot and Peitsche. The last section focuses on forms of nonconformity and ‘effective resistance’, assessing them both on their own terms and in relation to youth opposition and resistance which occurred in the Third Reich.

Broadly speaking, the (sub)cultures and events analyzed in the thesis fall within the period 1949 to 1969, but these are not rigid cut-off points. Although a thematic structure was chosen over a chronological account, the chapters become progressively less broad and theoretical in scope with the last section

72 The fact that Poiger, Wierling and Rauhut all use the building of the wall as their starting- or end-point is unfortunate because 13 August 1961 acted as a political rather than a youth cultural caesura.
offering an analysis charting the development of dissident youth subcultures in Leipzig in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

EVIDENCE AND METHODOLOGY

Qualitative material on youth nonconformity in the GDR is plentiful if patchy. Ranging from school inspectors' reports to letters from little girls to their teachers, it nevertheless offers plenty of opportunities not just for analysing youth nonconformity from above or below, but also from within. A wide range of different organizations were involved (at both national and local level) in collecting information about young people: schools, the youth organization, the departments for youth, culture and sport, the agencies for welfare and youth protection, youth researchers, together with the police and the secret police.

Much of the evidence for nonconformity can be succinctly described as 'snap shots' and 'mug shots'. Overviews were provided by inspection teams, youth research surveys, reports in response to demands from the centre and policy-making initiatives. Descriptions and characterisations of 'offenders' emerged through the study of individual case histories, reports on nonconformist incidents and records of interrogations with participants. In addition to the reports produced for internal consumption, newspaper articles provide succinct summaries of the publicly expressed views of politicians, social commentators and other critics together with hegemony-building condemnations of 'outrageous haircuts' and wild music. Lastly, a series of oral interviews were carried out with people who were once participants in the various 'scenes' and 'incidents'. By allowing them to explain their perceptions and feelings in their own words, an attempt was made to bring back the subjective dimension left out in official reporting.

Clifford Geertz writes that ‘doing ethnography’ is like trying to read ‘a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in
conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour.\textsuperscript{73}

In attempting to work out what the meanings of such texts are, one is forced to ask both what is going on in this precise incident of transient, shaped behaviour and what are the conventions which govern the way in which it has been selectively transcribed, codified and preserved. More often than not, one is confronted with overlapping frames of interpretation. These require analysis more akin to that of the literary critic, sorting out the structures of signification and determining their social ground and import. Through thick description one attempts to make intelligible the context in which events and symbols acquired meaning and without which remain meaningless.

On the rare occasions when information about the thoughts, beliefs and aspirations of young people in the GDR reaches us through the written sources, it has almost always passed through a series of distorting viewpoints and intermediaries. In assessing written evidence, the questions one has to ask are how many intermediaries has this information passed through and how far does it appear to have been distorted?

It is obvious from the formulaic nature of these reports, that style and technique were often more important than content. Party conferences, plans and world events come and go, but the frustratingly imprecise references to 'a few', 'some' and 'the vast majority' stay the same. The writers evidently seek a compromise between showing that things are going 'really quite well', but at the same time 'not everything is quite yet as it should be'. The 'evidence' marshalled to fit this picture of pessimistic over-optimism usually shows a mixture of wholehearted approval and support, cynicism and outright rejection and statements lying somewhere in between.

Oral evidence is often criticised and is completely rejected by some for being an overly subjective and completely unrepresentative account – just one person's view – too vulnerable to the vagaries of memory, hindsight, wishful thinking and personal bias to be of any use. Elements of all of these factors did, on occasion, surface in the interviews as did other problems not described in

\textsuperscript{73} Clifford Geertz, \textit{The Interpretation of Cultures} (London: Fontana, 1993), 10.
the textbooks, like an interviewee who halfway through the interview revealed himself to be a right-wing extremist in charge of a gun club. But although people’s memories do occasionally play tricks on them and there are always those who seek to exaggerate and embellish, interviews are also capable of providing insights and glimpses into the past which would otherwise be impossible to discover.\textsuperscript{74}

Where possible, I sought to ensure that the people I interviewed were involved in cases for which a sufficient amount of written material existed in order to be able to crosscheck and corroborate what they said. This also provided a useful opportunity to check the veracity (or otherwise) of the written material itself. Although I was primarily interested in using interviews as a means of finding out how people had experienced and viewed the events in which they had been participants rather than as ‘sources’ with which to establish what exactly happened, by providing me with access to their Stasi files, copies of trial transcripts, correspondence and private photos, several of the interviewees were able to provide considerable assistance in the reconstruction of particular events.

An important benefit of an oral history approach is the degree of self-reflexivity and humility it requires of the interviewer. Interviews were important not just as a counter to the often wildly exaggerated and inaccurate written sources on youth nonconformity, but in order to challenge my own notions and preconceptions. Lutz Niethammer argues that by approaching ‘otherness’ reflexively, we can reveal as much about our own self-perceptions and presumptions as observers as about those we are observing.\textsuperscript{75} There is a danger for researchers of projecting onto people in the past ideas of how we would like them to have been. Reading a file, one can have an impression of them, an image of how they might have been. But it is a completely different experience to be sitting opposite them, to be able to ask questions about what happened and how they felt, but also to be questioned by them in turn about one’s reasons and motivations for writing about their past. It is also useful for

historians, concerned as they are with 'typifying' and categorizing people and things, to be confronted by individuals determined not to be pigeonholed. As a general rule, even in old age, former youth nonconformists do not tend to be shrinking violets in expressing their views. While the responsibility lies with the historian to decide what to write about and how, it has been more than useful to have received the advice and encouragement of my interviewees in addition to sharing their memories.

One statement that came out again and again during the interviews was that they were glad that a non-German was taking interest in and talking to them about their history. Although one interviewee's wife saw my detachment from the events as a potential source of worry – 'for you it's so far away it's like theatre' – several of the interviewees seemed to think that it was preferable when compared to the dangers of being misinterpreted and misunderstood by a German, from either East or West. My aim in writing this thesis has been to make GDR culture and society accessible and understandable for outsiders while at the same time giving an honest and fair account of the understandings of people who grew up in and passed through the system. The thesis will hopefully show that once the lens of top-down 'totalitarianism' is taken away, young people in the GDR cease to appear 'deformed' and corrupted by their experience, but instead appear familiar and recognisably human.
CONFLICTING INFLUENCES

Youngsters growing up in the GDR were faced with competing attempts to influence them. The state’s attempt to direct and mould them through its control of educational and leisure opportunities was tempered by the power of the mass media borne over the airwaves from the West. As a result, its impact on youth was incomplete and contradictory. In spite of attempts to create a new identity for them, youngsters remained conscious of their Germanness, their feeling of belonging to a community greater than the GDR. The new East German State was characterized not just by its intolerance and dictatorship, but by its altered education system, its antifascism and its attempts to overcome social inequality. Through education, young East Germans acquired a new understanding of their nation’s ambivalent and destructive past so that in place of the old certainties, new, incomplete and overlapping identities began to form. But although the SED claimed that its version of socialism was essential as an antidote to the past, young people remained aware of other possible routes to the future. As well as being influenced by the Cold War division of Germany and changes occurring in mass media and entertainment in the West, they were also marked by continuing differences in culture and social experience between milieus.
1) The impact of the State

The Socialist Unity Party (SED) hoped that one day all 'its' young people would become the socialists of the future. It was only 'by mobilizing the whole of youth for the realization of this programme' that the construction of socialism could be successfully achieved. As befitted the Party's blueprint for the future, youth was conceived in functional terms as the means by which to achieve the revolutionary transformation of society. Young people were perceived as the all-important future generation, the 'successors (Nachwuchs)' who would one day take over and carry on the work started by the previous, pioneering generations. The correct education of youth was vital to the future of industry, agriculture, government, public service and defence. Young people were conceived as the helpers and 'fighting reserve' of the Party. They represented the reservoir of future revolutionaries who would succeed in overcoming the obstacles to the creation of a new and genuinely more equal society. To ensure their active collaboration, it was imperative for the SED to achieve the radical alteration of the education system in order to bring it into line with Party aims and objectives (and to denazify it). Education was both the means and the end of the regime's pursuit of influence over youth.

This chapter analyses the ways in which education and leisure were politicized in an attempt to control and influence youth. It argues that the regime was unable to secure effective control over 'its youth' because it made too many arbitrary interventions in the education system. In spite of the array of rites and rituals which were designed to develop loyalty among young people, their effectiveness remained limited and unequal. Given the importance the regime placed on educating young people as antifascists, the ambivalence they

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1 'Analyse über die Lage unter der Jugend und die Wirksamkeit der staatlichen Jugendpolitik', BArch. SAPMO DY6/3940; Paul Fröhlich, 'Die Erziehung der Jugend zu sozialistischen Menschen - unser aller Sache' in the Leipziger Volkszeitung (LVZ), 30.10.60.
2 Der Minister für Staatssicherheit: Dienstanweisung Nr. 4 /66 'Zur politisch-operativen Bekämpfung der politisch-ideologischen Diversion und Untergrundtätigkeit unter jugendlichen Personenkreisen in der DDR (15.5.1966)'. Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), ZA, AGM 474, 153-180 [my emphasis].
3 As stated at the 16th conference of the Central Council of the FDJ, 25 April 1957 in Karl Heinz Jahnke et al. (eds.), Geschichte der Freien Deutschen Jugend (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1976), 5, 131.
continued to manifest, in their attitudes to the Nazi past, demonstrates that there were clear limits to the SED's ability to mould and influence youth.

EDUCATION AND LEISURE

The SED sought to achieve a lasting hold over young people by replacing direct coercion with ‘symbolic violence’. Symbolic violence is distinct from overt coercion in that it entails the creation of ‘moral’ or ‘affective’ obligations rather than the real or implicit threat of force. The way teachers and educators win pupils’ consent, Paul Willis argues, is by generating a sense of indebtedness based on the moral superiority of the teacher. This is achieved by invoking the ‘teaching paradigm’ – the idea that teaching is a fair exchange – with the commodity of knowledge given in return for respect and guidance for control. For education to be successful, the teacher’s authority has to be won and maintained on moral not coercive grounds. ‘There must be consent from the taught.’ Underlying the ‘teaching paradigm’ and pupils’ consent is the exercise of symbolic violence. Pierre Bourdieu describes symbolic violence as ‘the gentle, invisible form of violence which is never recognised as such, and is not so much undergone as chosen’, obviating the need for overt coercion. Through the creation of symbolic violence, overt exploitation is transmuted into ‘misrecognised, “socially recognised” domination, in other words, legitimate authority.’

Through the development of moral claims, the SED sought to develop a lasting debt of loyalty and obedience among youth. In this idealised vision, ‘The Party gives youth its trust and they answer with new deeds for Socialism.’ By convincing young people of the opportunities which had been made available to them, the regime sought their willing contribution to the project of construction. The most significant claim the Communists could make was having helped free young people from the domination of National Socialism and having rid the

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5 Willis, Learning to Labour, 64.
7 Bourdieu, Outline of A Theory of Practice, 192 [emphasis in the original].
8 ‘Lage der Jugend im Bezirk’, StAL, RdB Volksbildung, 3723, 9.
education system of discrimination against lower-class groups. Only in the GDR could young people from all social backgrounds enjoy such unprecedented opportunities of access to education and social advancement. To underline its commitment to 'moral' as opposed to direct violence, the SED banned the use of corporal punishment in schools. In this way, the SED sought to convince young people of the debt of gratitude they owed to the Party.

To make sure that young people used these opportunities wisely in the interests of the Party, it was essential that both teachers and pupils had a clear sense of their political and moral duties. Great emphasis was placed on the role which would be played by new working-class teachers, educated in the workers' and peasants' faculties, in imbuing the teaching profession with working-class consciousness. To teach young people of their duties and commitments as future citizens of the GDR, the Party took 'class conflict' to the classroom. Whatever their privately held political beliefs, teachers were "functionaries of the workers' and peasants' state'. As such, they were responsible for ensuring the political and moral education of their pupils in the interests of the working class. To aid them in performing this duty, specific political requirements were built into their training and the curriculum they had to teach. Overlapping systems of educational and political inspection and control existed to ensure that they taught in line with the rules laid down for them. Adherence to the Party line was placed on a par with professional competence. Without it, young people could not be educated to become the citizens the SED so desperately required.

All education systems are, to some extent, governed by political imperatives. The difference in the GDR was the overtness and extent of politicization. In

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9 'Dienstordnung für Leiter und Lehrer der allgemeinbildenden Schulen' (ca. 1953), BArch. DR2/5187, 43.
order to produce convinced young socialists, it was vital to ensure that both the educational material and teaching reflected official goals. By saturating the education system with materialistic and Marxist-Leninist ideology, the Party sought to develop in young people a belief not just that socialism was possible, but that it was inevitable. *Staatsbürgerkunde* (or civics) lessons were designed to provide young people with an intimate knowledge of concepts like superstructure and surplus value as well as regular discussion of current political themes. History classes were aimed at inducing loyalty to the working class and its political representatives while geography lessons and *Heimatkunde* were to provide young people with feelings of love for the GDR as their socialist fatherland. Music lessons introduced them to the musical legacy of the working-class movement and practice singing the GDR National Anthem and the *Internationale*. Foreign language lessons exposed them to ‘the suffering of working-class children in imperialist countries forced to search through rubbish bins to find food’.

Politization also seeped into other subjects. Maths problems, for example, required pupils to calculate how many National People’s Army soldiers would fit into a given number of tanks. By the end of their schooling, pupils were expected to be thoroughly versed not only in the classic works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Walter Ulbricht, but also to have absorbed progressive works from the German and Soviet literary canon. Even science teachers were not exempt. Their subjects were used explicitly to reinforce the Marxist-Leninist view of societal development by emphasizing the scientific laws governing the natural and physical world. In line with the declared aim of producing young socialists, young people not only received politicized schooling, but also early and direct involvement in production. The end goal was a population imbued with the ‘spirit of peace and of socialism’ —‘well-rounded, educated people strong in character and physically steeled’.

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12 Inspection report in BArch. DR2/3410, 143.
13 ‘Material zur Diskussion über die Arbeit unter den religiös-gebundenen Jugendlichen (Berlin, 31.01.1958)’, BArch. SAPMO DY 24/3710.
14 Commandment eight of ‘Das moralische Antlitz eines jungen Sozialisten’ a list of ten commandments for young socialists. See ‘Meine persönlicher Kompaß’ held in the West Saxon School Museum in Leipzig (B21-076).
The overlapping and reinforcing claims of the education system and youth organization (the Free German Youth or FDJ) served to create a would-be all-encompassing system of moral influence and political indoctrination. The combined effect of school and youth organization was supposed to be the creation of emotional highpoints and life-shaping experiences. Youth’s wholehearted commitment to building and strengthening socialism in the GDR was to be achieved by fostering repugnance to all forms of capitalist exploitation and a belief in the essential importance of the development of communism. When it came to highlighting differences between the two ideological systems, education in the GDR was deliberately designed to be emotive in order to have a maximum impact on pupils. Young people were not just encouraged to gain knowledge and experience of weapons and military technology in the FDJ and its paramilitary sister organization, the Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik (GST). Preparing them for the day when they might have to defend the republic by force of arms also required the creation of a deep sense of love for the GDR and hatred of its imperialist enemies.\(^\text{15}\) ‘You should love your fatherland and always be ready to apply your whole strength and ability to defend the workers’ and peasants’ state.’\(^\text{16}\) Defending the fatherland began not just at the border with West Germany, but with the development of the correct attitudes and behaviour in everyday life.

Effective education required teachers not just to transmit the SED’s message, but to bring it alive. When they stood in front of their classes, they not only embodied the Party, to all intents and purposes they were the Party. As such, teachers were encouraged to make education an emotional, almost spiritual experience, capable not just of instilling belief, but of imbuing young people with faith. To do this, teachers had at all times to demonstrate as perfect an example as possible of how a functionary of the workers’ and peasants’ state should behave. Trainee teachers were urged not just to teach ‘objectively’ and ideologically, but emotively and psychologically, using their physical presence and tone of voice to convey conviction and strength of character.\(^\text{17}\) Novels like Nikolai Ostrowskij’s Wie der Stahl gehärtet wurde were important in

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\(^{15}\) BArch. DR2/3410, 154, 166.

\(^{16}\) The second commandment of ‘Das moralische Antlitz eines jungen Sozialisten’.

\(^{17}\) Inspection report in BArch. DR2/3410, 145, 156, 172.
representing the dedication and persistence required of a true socialist and in conveying a sense of the heroic struggle in which young people were engaged. Accounts of life under imperialism served to illustrate the dire fate from which the population had been saved by the creation of the GDR.\(^8\) The important role played by antifascism in the regime’s self-conception and legitimization was reflected in the study of accounts by working-class veterans and talks by concentration camp survivors.\(^9\)

A number of symbols and rituals marked the transformation of school from a place of learning to a hothouse for the production of future socialists and revolutionaries. Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker gazed down from the classroom walls flanked by portraits of Wilhelm Pieck, Ernst Thälmann and their Soviet counterparts. The founding fathers of Socialism were represented in busts and giant posters. Veneration of Communist martyrs and heroes was reflected in the erection of monuments, laying of wreaths and naming of schools (such as the exotically named Ho-Chi-Minh Oberschule). Young people were set to work generating the appropriate ‘consciousness of victory’, ‘sense of solidarity’ and debt of gratitude to the Party through the production of banners, painting of slogans and production of propaganda for the class ‘wall newspaper’ (Wandzeitung).\(^20\)

The aim was to create an enclosed ideological system which completely reflected the political imperatives of the Party leadership thereby preventing any contradictions with the logic of SED rule. By making the system of propaganda and influence as omnipresent and all-encompassing as possible, it was hoped to make it appear normal and natural and thereby invisible and self-reinforcing. Young people set out on a lifepath marked out for them by the state. Positioned at intervals along the way were rites of passage designed to mark their altered consciousness as well as their changing status and position in society. In

\(^8\) Nikolai Ostrowskij, *Wie der Stahl gehärtet wurde* (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1947-).


\(^20\) Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig (StAL), Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes (Bt&RdB) Leipzig 24312, 58, 90; See Ulrike Mietzner & Ulrike Pilarczyk, ‘Die erzieherische Funktion von Wandlosungen in Schulräumen der fünfziger Jahre in der DDR’ in Hader & Tenorth (eds.), *Bildungsgeschichte einer Diktatur*, 383-400.
addition to the events marking important dates in the socialist calendar with obligatory march-pasts, flag-waving or torchlit parades, the SED strove to create smaller-scale, more intimate rituals and ceremonies which served not just to punctuate the school year, but to mark out a young person’s changing status in becoming a fully-fledged citizen of the Socialist state.  

On average once a month, the whole school dressed in the white or blue uniforms of the young pioneers and FDJ and paraded outside to pay allegiance to the GDR flag. In GDR times, assemblies differed from today. It was like in Prussia here, we stood in a square with the flag and the class spokesman had to report ‘Prepared (Bereit), etc. and everyone had to stand still. At the age of fourteen, youngsters were expected to mark their passage between childhood and adolescence by taking part in the Jugendweihe ceremony (introduced in 1954 as an overtly atheist alternative to Christian confirmation). After attending preparatory lessons designed to reinforce their belief in the materialist foundation of nature and society, they pledged their allegiance to the state at a special ceremony attended by their parents and relatives and received a certificate attesting to their altered status.

Overlapping with and extending beyond school, the official youth organization provided the regime with a means of ensuring that young people spent their free time in a way which was both politically worthy and societally useful. Through camping trips and excursions, extracurricular activities and events, young people were to develop the all-important sense of collective identity and responsibility as they grew up. In addition to furthering their mental,

23 Interview with Reiner P.
physical and cultural development, officially provided free-time activities were important in developing young people's initiative and creativity.

By means of its control over leisure opportunities, the regime hoped to reinforce the message young people received in school and to make sure that outside school their energies were channelled in a suitably positive and productive direction. Through sporting and cultural opportunities, the SED aspired to produce young people who in addition to being willing and obedient were healthy in body and mind, well-informed, cultured and active. Young people were given the opportunity to join an array of theatre and film clubs, interest circles and after-school societies together with the chance to take part in music and dance evenings, lectures, slide-shows, trips and excursions. The goal was to combine interesting activities with politically useful messages. Young people were expected to bolster their basic political knowledge by attending intensive courses on Marxism-Leninism, as well as improving themselves by visiting exhibitions and museums and reading progressive newspapers and literature. Through its control over mass media in the GDR, the SED ensured that a range of radio and television programmes, magazines and newspaper articles were specifically directed at youth. They were designed to portray problems and describe events in a language and tone which were both suitable and interesting for youth.26

Young people were expected not just to receive education and leisure passively, but to be directly involved in the process of creating loyalty. They were encouraged to demonstrate their allegiance to the Party and the youth organization by volunteering to take on functions arranging activities, co-ordinating events and ensuring that other youngsters demonstrated the requisite discipline and behaviour at all times. As early as primary school, young people became acquainted with the first hierarchies of organised activities and positions.

They voted for the Group Council and Friendship Council, chairman and deputy, treasurer and secretary, wall newspaper editor and cultural

26 'Meaningful free-time activity of youth (28.11.1960)', Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Stadtverordnetenversammlung und Rat der Stadt (Stv&RdSt) Leipzig (2) Nr. 2311, 69-75.
Fig. 2: Pyramid Structure of the Young Pioneers Organization.

- **Full-time Pioneer Leader**
- **Friendship Council (Freundschaftsrat)**
- **Elected Group Council Chairpersons**
- **Pioneer Group Leaders** Usually class teachers
- **Elected Group Councils**
- **Pioneer Groups** representing each school class
representative. There were pennants, uniforms, medals, reports, elections of functionaries, resolutions and inspections. Making sure that the Pioneers fulfilled their task was the Friendship Council, which in turn distributed tasks to the various groups, commissions, administrative staffs and committees. These in turn were controlled by the pioneer leader, the FDJ and the Council of Friends as well as teachers and parents.\(^\text{27}\)

The SED created an extensive and interlocking network of opportunities and activities designed to educate and influence young people, to keep them healthy and occupied and to create a moral debt of loyalty towards the regime. The politicization of education was supported by the creation of various symbols and rituals aimed at reinforcing young people's loyalty, gratitude and sense of dependence on the state. The ultimate aim of the regime's educational and leisure policies was the creation of a system of disguised, 'symbolic violence' so that young people would willingly serve the interests of the state without the necessity of compelling them to do so by means of overt threats of force or coercion.

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EDUCATIONAL CLAIM**

Writing in 1969, researchers from the Central Institute for Youth Research in Leipzig were able to report that boys and girls were 'ever better at acquiring socialist values and norms'. No less than three-quarters of the 14- to 19-year-olds they had surveyed had been prepared to affirm their support for the regime's goals. This was proof, they believed, of the progress which had been made in the development of young people's consciousness.\(^\text{28}\) Statistics on participation in the FDJ and Jugendweihe tend to confirm a shift in attitudes. From the late 1950s onwards, there was an increasing willingness on the part of young people and their parents to accept, at least outwardly, the duty of support and obedience through participation in officially-sponsored rituals and activities.\(^\text{29}\)

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\(^\text{27}\) Klier, Lüg Vaterland, 127.


\(^\text{29}\) See Walter Friedrich, 'Weltanschauliche Positionen der Jugend' in Friedrich et al. (eds.), Das Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung, 184-205, here 185; Edeltraud Schulze, 'DDR-Jugend im Spiegel der Statistik' in Gotschlich (ed.), Links und links, 268-275, esp. 273; Edeltraud Schulze
By making political education integral to formal education, academic success became dependent on a mastery of Communist history and ideology. Repeated tests in the form of essays and exams ensured that those who could not bring themselves to give the answers required of them were downgraded. The evaluations and qualifications that citizens in the GDR required to find employment provided the Party with a potent means of rewarding loyalty and punishing non-compliance. Increasing numbers of young people were prepared to submit to such mechanisms of symbolic violence in order to take advantage of the opportunities available in return for conformity. By 1967, the SED believed it was winning the battle. Reversing the old claim that ‘He who has the youth, has the future’, Horst Schumann declared ‘We have the future [and] we have youth’. But although the evidence from youth research surveys and other sources suggests that with the passage of time, young people increasingly began to take the regime and its rituals for granted, the regime was unwilling and unable to relinquish its resort to overt and highly visible intimidation and coercion.

Even if youth research surveys show repeated increases in the percentages of affirmative responses young people were ready to make, these belie the continued existence of inner distance. Although obviously biased towards exceptions rather than observance of the rules, the voluminous ‘special incident’ files (detailing information about nonconformist events and their perpetrators) nevertheless testify to the existence of widespread and ongoing feelings of opposition to the SED’s overt manipulation of education. Although pupils were increasingly able to repeat the appropriate formulas and phrases, this did not mean that they had internalized the regime’s message. As one headmaster reported in 1962, they were quite capable of shutting their ears to attempts at manipulation and manifesting their scepticism to one another.

Peter Förster recognises that there was a major difference between young people’s ability to repeat Party statements and what they actually believed. He nevertheless stands by the youth research evidence in arguing that it reflects genuine changes in young people’s outlooks and ideals. Peter Förster, ‘Die Entwicklung des politischen Bewusstseins...’, 135, 141.

StAL Bt&RdB, 24312, 24788, 22370; Stadtarchiv Leipzig Stv&RdSt (2), 1666, 1679, 1680, 1682.
through ‘deliberate and malicious’ smiles and winks. When nobody was looking they demonstrated the regime’s failure to influence them by attacking the symbols of state control adorning their classrooms. Wall newspapers were defaced. Comments were added to desks, textbooks and membership cards. Portraits of regime leaders were attacked with compasses, ink and occasionally used as targets for shooting practice. Although a minority of pupils were prepared to act as policers and enforcers for the Party, informing on their classmates, even when they held functions in the youth organization, many young people found it difficult to escape or ignore the implicit irony and pressure exerted by their peers (described in official reports as ‘false comradeship’).

Many of the means used by the SED to generate loyalty had a highly divisive impact, barely concealing the threat of violence. When it was first introduced, the Jugendweihe sparked bitter opposition from the churches and particularly among religiously-minded parents. But the coupling of participation in the Jugendweihe with access to higher education meant that it was increasingly difficult for parents to refuse. Between 1956 and 1959, the proportion of young people who were confirmed in a religious ceremony sank from three quarters to one third. As Christians increasingly eschewed conflict by means of ‘double participation’ in Jugendweihe and confirmation, the ceremony began to lose its importance as a signifier of loyalty to the regime. By the 1980s it had become for many young people a popular, but not overly significant rite of passage. As one veteran organiser described, ‘On such a day, the young people are always very excited, because they are the centre of attention. As a result, many a high-flung literary speech may be noticed, but is not internalized and is quickly once again forgotten.’ For the children of committed Christians, however, the onset of preparations for the Jugendweihe often meant being pulled between their

33 BArch. DR2/6298, 13.
34 StAL, BDVP 24.1/420, 332.
35 See Fulbrook, Anatomy of a Dictatorship, 95-7.
37 Einbeziehung der konfessionell gebundenen Bevölkerung unseres Bezirkes Leipzig beim sozialistischen Aufbau’ (4.2.1963), StAL, Bt&RdB. 1771, 17-27.
38 StAL Bt&RdB, 22370, 205.
Ein Höhepunkt im Leben unseres Kollektivs - unsere Jugendweihe

Fig. 3: The Jugendweihe, a 'highpoint in the life of the collective'.
parents' beliefs and their own desire to fit in with everyone else in the class.\textsuperscript{39} Because, by the 1980s, nearly everyone in each school class took part in the ceremony, those young people whose parents continued to refuse to let them participate became more and more lonely and exposed, in one case even leading to suicide.\textsuperscript{40}

Convincing young people of the regime's message by force of persuasion alone proved very difficult to achieve. Far from being submerged and concealed by symbolic violence, the threat of coercion remained a visible feature of the East German education system. Although purges and show trials were largely confined to the 1950s, the threat of persecution for breaches of behaviour continued to hang over young people.\textsuperscript{41} Questioning or overtly disputing certain of the regime's assumptions was officially interpreted as treasonous slander \textit{(staatsgefährdende Propaganda und Hetze)}. The SED was repeatedly prepared to envisage using its politicized justice system as a means of altering young people's behaviour. As suggested in a report on the 'political and moral development' of school children and apprentices produced by the Central Institute for Education, 'the concrete opportunity for the strengthening of the fight against Western radio and television should be trials against young people who have been induced by these stations to act against us.'\textsuperscript{42} In spite of symbolic violence already exerted by means of exams and overtly political selection procedures for admission to the Sixth Form and University, Party and education officials repeatedly made additional, exceptional demands on young people to demonstrate their loyalty. Failure unanimously and 'willingly' to sign officially-drafted petitions, to accept additional impositions or to make sacrifices and pledges led to investigations and sanctions.\textsuperscript{43}

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\textsuperscript{39} The conflict can be seen in the film 'Da habt ihr mein Leben / Marieluise - Kind von Golzow' (1996) one of a series of eleven DEFA documentaries directed by Barbara and Winfried Junge, chronicling the lives of children who grew up in the East German village of Golzow following the construction of the wall.

\textsuperscript{40} Incident (24.4.1975), StAL, Bt&RDb, 24788.

\textsuperscript{41} See Chapter Seven. See also Joachim Petzold, 'Zum Verhältnis zwischen FDJ und Junger Gemeinde bis 1953' in Gotschlich (ed.), \textit{Links und links}, 127-140; Christian Stappenbeck, 'Freie Deutsche Jugend und Junge Gemeinde 1952/53' in \textit{"Links und links"}, 141-156.

\textsuperscript{42} Dt. Pädagogischer Zentralinstitut, 'Bericht über eine Untersuchung zum Stand des Polit-moralischen Bewußtseins von Schüler und Lehrlingen (Berlin, 1963)', BArch. SAPMO, Bibliothek, FDJ/6255, 30.

\textsuperscript{43} See, for example, Leipzig Stadtarchiv, Stv&RdSt (2) 1666, Band 1, 195.
Although in the short term, such methods provided the regime with a means of identifying and excluding potential enemies, their arbitrariness and overt coerciveness undermined the regime’s efforts to make its influence effective in the long term. The repeated resort to the threat of coercion meant that the regime failed to make its claims appear natural and invisible. By putting young people on their guard, the threat of coercion widened the gap between pupils and teachers. Pupils were less willing to reveal what they truly thought and were liable to mask their failure to internalize the regime’s messages behind outward conformity. As a result, in spite of the regime’s efforts to bridge it, a gulf continued to exist between what the regime tried to teach them and what young people knew to be true. Instead of replacing overt with symbolic violence, the SED created a system in which the two forms of violence increasingly merged and overlapped. From the mid-1960s onwards, young people were subjected to increased surveillance by both educational functionaries and the East German secret police, the Stasi. In attempting to identify covert disbelievers, the SED subjected young people and their teachers to ever-greater control and coercion. A series of high profile incidents in the early 1960s led to the creation of an additional reporting structure within the education system designed to record and punish any instance of nonconformist behaviour or utterances.

Evidence from the 1969 survey suggests that as many as a fifth of boys and a quarter of girls were prepared, at least overtly, to display their unwavering support for the state and its political objectives by declaring themselves to be ‘very proud’ to be young citizens of the GDR. A smaller, but no less significant minority of young people demonstrated that the regime had been unable to influence them. Youth researchers estimated that the proportion of young people with a ‘generally negative attitude’ was between 12 and 15 percent. Between these two minorities lay the majority of young people. Because of the

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44 Klaus Behnke & Jürgen Wolf (eds.), Stasi auf dem Schulhof. Der Mißbrauch von Kindern und Jugendlichen durch das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Berlin: Ullstein, 1998); Dienstanweisung Nr. 4166 vom 15.5.1966; See also Walter Süss, Zu Wahrnehmung und Interpretation des Rechtsextremismus in der DDR durch das MfS (Bonn: BStU, 1993).
45 Klier, Lüg Vaterland.
46 See the ‘Anklam decision’ of 13.10.61 and the letter from Margot Honecker to all school inspectors in the republic (9.5.67) in Leipzig Stadtarchiv, Stv&RdSt (2), 1666, Band 1, 223-8.
47 Förster, ‘Die Entwicklung des politischen Bewußtseins’, 82.
48 ‘Umfrage ‘69’, 70.
highly affirmative nature of the questionnaires used (asking young people, for instance, how ready they were to die for their socialist fatherland) and the artificial context in which young people gave their answers (never being completely sure that their anonymity would be respected) they are a poor indicator of the extent to which the regime was genuinely successful in fostering conviction, gratitude and loyalty among young people. Nevertheless, teachers’ assessments and inspectors’ reports tended to confirm the existence of three basic groups of young people – the overtly supportive, the overtly nonconformist and the broad cross-section who tried their best to avoid being classified as either one or the other. Most young people belonged to this unobtrusive middle group. Although they did not reject the GDR and increasingly came to identify themselves with it as the state in which they lived, they failed to show much interest in internalizing certain of its values.

A small group of politically conscious pupils, who represent and can also justify a class position, a large group of pupils who admittedly see themselves as citizens of the GDR, but who are not in a position – and who also don’t always bring sufficient interest – to get involved in political arguments. They make no difference between GDR- and West German television. An overtly sceptical and objectivistic behaviour (e.g. those who consciously inform themselves using Western radio and television) is to be found only in a few very small groups of pupils.  

As we will see in subsequent chapters, the Western media and memories of Nazism transmitted by older generations provided important chinks in the supposedly ‘all-encompassing’ system of political indoctrination. Although young people could find themselves being influenced by the regime in ways they were not fully aware of, the combined effect of media, memory, and young people’s own experiences of life in the GDR, was to induce scepticism about SED politics and ideology, thereby significantly weakening the Party’s attempts to influence youth. Young people’s parents were far more important than the state’s institutions in determining what they thought and believed. Asked by Party officials who influenced them the most, the overwhelming majority of young people replied that it was their parents. Unfortunately for the SED, the same report noted that too few parents cared enough to ensure that their

49 StAL, Bt&RdB, Abt. Vb., 5410, 22.
children were correctly influenced. As a result, young people were vulnerable to 'contradictions' which could have negative effects on their consciousness. Next to indifference and mistrust shown by the parents to socialist development, their false or inadequate knowledge of the basic questions of socialist education hinder the positive educational influencing of the children.

How successful the Party was in influencing a particular young person depended on the precise time and circumstances in which they grew up. Bernd Lindner distinguishes between three basic generations of GDR citizens: the generation of 'construction or early exit', born between 1930 and 1949; the 'generation with relatively stable ties', born between 1950 and 1960; and the generation of those, born between 1961 and 1975, who took the GDR for granted and increasingly 'refused to get involved'. But as Karl Mannheim argued, within a youthful generation are groups which 'work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways.

Although the attention of this thesis is focussed primarily on those young people who resisted and refused the Party message, in every generation, there were significant numbers of young people who grew up believing in the importance and realizability of socialism. For the children of Communists, but also Social Democrats, their parents' political beliefs could reinforce the messages transmitted by the Party. Other young people embraced the Party in spite or out of opposition to what their parents stood for, rejecting what they saw as their complicity or cowardice under National Socialism. For yet others, the Party served an emotional function, filling the vacuum left by absent, weak or distant parents. Acceptance of Marxism-Leninism brought them into a community of believers. Whole-hearted participation in one of the parties or mass organizations provided opportunities for support, recognition and an end to ideological uncertainty. As one schoolgirl wrote to her teacher shortly before the wall was built, 'I want to break free from my whole environment. Only there's nobody there to help me, nobody to give me a foothold... I must find the way to

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50 StAL RdB, Abt. Vb., 5410, 29.
51 'Report on the state of political-moral consciousness', StAL, IVA2/16/461, 29.
54 On the role played by parental political beliefs, see 'Umfrage '69', 4-5.
you, Herr W., and that means to the Party and to the workers and to our state. It will be difficult as I’ve become a stranger to you. Even if the gift of charisma could not be decreed to all, teachers and youth functionaries with the personality and the commitment to bring the Party’s message alive did exist.

Whatever path they had taken to reach that point, once they had made the all important leap of faith, they were able to look beyond the all too obvious absence of democracy in the GDR, seeing it as an unavoidable (and hopefully temporary) necessity on the road to socialism. One interviewee talked of how, given his parents’ liberal and relaxed attitude to upbringing, he had looked to the state to provide him with a structure to his life. Although he had suffered imprisonment for a political error committed in his youth, the same search later led him to become an informer for the Stasi, believing that the state had a right to defend itself. Providing there was an opening in a young person’s defence-mechanisms, the Party could exploit its guise as a critical, but benevolent parent to develop a long-lasting sense of duty and attachment.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT

Although the SED could claim some apparent successes in the implementation of its claims on youth, the evidence suggests that in their concrete application and impact, these claims were much less total and binding than their architects had originally envisaged.

The majority of our youth are convinced that worldwide socialism belongs to the future, this conviction is, however, in many cases still not firmly embedded. But on the other hand, there are still a lot of young people who let

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55 BArch. SAPMO, DY30/IV2/905/15, 128-132.
56 Interview with Wolfgang V.
57 Interview with Siegfried N.
58 Wierling cites one woman’s account of why the Party’s message appealed to her in ‘Die Jugend als innerer Feind’, 417-8.
59 Sources on what life in schools looked like to young people can be found at the West Saxon School Museum in Leipzig. See, for example, Der Rote Oktober und die jungen Revolutionäre unserer Heimat. Schulschrift der Oberschule Ehrenburg, 1969 (B8-143-2900); Chronik des Kinderlagers der BGZ Unterricht und Erziehung Leipzig, 1969-1971 (B20-198); Brigadetagebuch Lagerchronik ‘Georg Schumann’ (B20-199-8391); ‘Deutschlandtreffen der Jugend in der Hauptstadt der DDR’ (B21-083-6313).
themselves be led astray by shiny facades and surface appearances in their judgement of the situation in West Germany.\textsuperscript{60} 

Far from demonstrating the uniform application of political influence and control as the leaders of the SED would have hoped, youth research surveys revealed significant disparities between different types of school and different areas. In fact, so damaging were the results of the '1969 Survey' for the reputation of the education ministry that Margot Honecker, the Minister responsible for education, banned youth researchers from carrying out any further surveys on the pupils in her schools.\textsuperscript{61}

The most significant disparities found by the youth researchers were between young people of different ages, school types, and milieus.\textsuperscript{62} Not only was the impact of the state uneven and unequal, but rural areas which experienced a lower degree of state intervention actually showed more positive results than urban centres in which the state should theoretically have been able to make more of an impact. In spite of the ongoing influence of the Church in the countryside and the limited leisure opportunities the FDJ was able to offer to rural youth, young people in these areas nevertheless consistently came out with more positive answers than their counterparts in the cities and large towns.\textsuperscript{63}

Significant disparities also existed between young people who planned to go on to university, and apprentices training to work in industry. In spite of the Party's emphasis on the positive virtues possessed by members of the working class, young people who were actually preparing for working-class jobs showed significantly more negative responses than pupils studying for their A-Levels (or \textit{Abitur}).\textsuperscript{64} Although, based on their answers to youth research surveys, the \textit{Oberschule} would appear to have been more successful at producing 'socialist

\textsuperscript{60} Beitrag zur Intelligenz-Einschätzung (11.12.1963)', StAL, IV A-2/9.01/341, 107.  
\textsuperscript{62} 'Umfrage '69', 2, 16.  
\textsuperscript{63} 'Umfrage '69', 32; ZIJ: 'Jugendstudie zur Effektivität der Jugendweihe' (1968), StAL, IV B-2/16/706, 15-63; F82/41 Dr. Helfried Schmidt, ZIJ: 'Ausgewählte Einstellungen und Verhaltensweisen Jugendlicher in Abhängigkeit von der Wohnortgröße - Teilbericht zur Komplexstudie U 79'. Unpublished research report (Leipzig, Juli 1982).  
\textsuperscript{64} 'Umfrage '69', 2, 68.
personalities', the higher schools were viewed with most suspicion by the regime because of their attractiveness to young people from middle-class professional and Christian backgrounds (in spite of attempts to discriminate in favour of working-class youth).65

Most alarming of all, instead of becoming more susceptible to the Party's influence, the longer they spent in the education system and the older they were, the less willing young people became to give the answers expected of them.66 As young people grew more independent and mature, both teachers and youth researchers recorded a growing reluctance and resistance to accept the debt the Party claimed they owed it. As one inspection noted, 'the pupils in the lower forms are easiest to enthuse whereas in the upper forms it often comes to discussions and disputes.'67 Another inspection report stated that 'with pupils in the sixth class, their knowledge and convictions still reflect a certain belief in the opinion of the teacher. There then begins [a period of] highly critical evaluation.'68

Inspection reports provide important evidence about the difficulties faced by the regime in attempting to realise its objectives with regard to education and leisure. Although the FDJ was of central importance to the SED's attempts to win over young people, the survey carried out by the Central Institute for Youth Research in 1969 found that only half of young people found life in the FDJ interesting and varied. 'It is clearly difficult for many leaderships to organise meetings which are effective and suitable for young people.'69

It cannot be acceptable that c.85 percent name [spontaneous, non-organised] leisure groups, rather than the FDJ group, as the place where their needs are fulfilled.70

Major disparities existed between the participation figures on paper, and reports of the actual activities and opportunities on offer to young people. Far from

65 See Chapter Three.
66 'Umfrage '69', 2.
67 'Information report (1961)' Stadtarchiv, St.V.u.R.S., Nr. 2311, 27-29.
69 'Umfrage '69', 16.
70 'Umfrage '69', 20, 84.
seeking to extend and complete their political education, the majority of young people pursued leisure activities as far away from politics as possible. One in two were members of a leisure club or society – with most belonging to a sport organization, a music or amateur dramatics society. Asked what group they would join if they could, those questioned expressed least interest in joining a political discussion circle.\(^{71}\)

The degree of independence young people were allowed differed greatly depending on their age and gender. The 1969 survey found that more boys than girls said they spent their free time in informal groupings. Girls, they concluded, 'are likely to be more in demand at home.'\(^{72}\) Girls may have been more appreciative of the FDJ and its activities for longer, because it provided them with an escape from domesticity. In the early decades of the GDR at least, the opportunities for girls to be with other young people were far greater in the FDJ than elsewhere. In the youth organization, they were on equal terms with the boys. They were free to fraternise and socialise and had ample opportunities for taking on roles which were far more challenging and stimulating than the drudgery and chores demanded of them by their parents. In later decades, parents gradually became less oppressive and unequal in their treatment of girls. This relaxation of attitudes combined with the increasing politicization of the youth organization meant that the FDJ began to lose any of the attractiveness it might once have had for girls.\(^{73}\)

Some of the activities organised by school and the FDJ were capable of having a lasting impact on young people. The most effective experiences of collective activity were those which took place well away from the routines of daily life.\(^{74}\) During class harvesting expeditions and FDJ-sponsored youth

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\(^{71}\) 'Umfrage '69', 20.

\(^{72}\) 'Umfrage '69', 20.


\(^{74}\) See Peter Hübner, 'Die FDJ als politische Organisation und sozialer Raum' in Gotschlich (ed.), Links und links, 58-69, esp. 61.
construction projects, young people could genuinely experience feelings of responsibility and confidence in their own abilities. Being left to carry out activities on their own initiative without overt adult control was much more important in creating the sorts of positive feelings the regime wanted to generate.\textsuperscript{75} Unfortunately, the activities of the youth organization were so bound by routine, that there was very little opportunity of incorporating such experiences into everyday life.\textsuperscript{76}

A major disparity persisted between the SED's conception of politics as the single most important influence on young people's lives and young people's own conception of politics as boring and irrelevant. 'As soon as teachers start talking about political questions, then many in the class start yawning.'\textsuperscript{77} Asked by the regional SED secretary whether he had considered organizing a study course of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, the local FDJ organiser replied that he could hardly expect anyone to come to that because it was 'too boring'. Other 'youth friends' (the name applied to members of the FDJ) said that they would never be able to grasp Marxism-Leninism and that it was 'all too dry'.\textsuperscript{78} Only one in five FDJ members said that they had joined the youth organization out of political conviction. Nearly a third said that they had joined the FDJ only because everyone was carried over automatically from the Young Pioneers.\textsuperscript{79} Young people responded with greater interest to more subtle targeting. Between a half and a third of young people read \textit{Neues Leben}.\textsuperscript{80} Its circulation figures were helped by its articles on relationships ('\textit{Probleme: Du und ich}'), East German actors, sports stars, music, youth fashion and the occasional nude pinup. Gaining young people's interest and enthusiasm was nevertheless a difficult and never-ending struggle, which could easily be sabotaged by an ill-judged or overly-politicizing article.

\textsuperscript{75} Interviews with Hans-Peter D. & Wolfgang V. Discussions with Peter Bischoff on his role in the reconstruction of the Leipzig student club, the Moritzbastei.
\textsuperscript{76} 'Stenografische Niederschrift der gemeinsamen Sitzung der Jugendkommission beim Politbüro des ZK (29.3.1963)', BArch. SAPMO, IV2/2.111/8, 35, 45.
\textsuperscript{77} StAL IVA-2/8.02/353, 156-7.
\textsuperscript{78} Reports to the Central Council of the FDJ, StAL FDJ 199 (Kiste Nr. 65).
\textsuperscript{79} 'Umfrage ‘69', 63.
\textsuperscript{80} 'Umfrage ‘69', 72-4.
ANTIFASCIST MYTH AND REALITY

In certain respects, the impression given by internal sources and oral interviews is of teachers and other youth workers not so dissimilar from those in our own system, struggling between superhuman expectations and prosaic realities in an attempt both to enrich and enable young people and fulfil particular political demands. The sources also reveal another side to education and influence in the GDR, that of a dictatorship bent on imposing uniformity in pursuit of its idealistic vision. How are we to interpret the SED's attempts to influence and educate 'its' young people?

One of the most contentious and divisive issues in assessing the impact of East German education concerns the validity and effects of the attempt to educate young people as 'antifascists'. Antifascism was a fundamental component of the GDR's 'founding myth' and the most important goal in transforming young people into future citizens. The SED pointed to its early and thorough denazification of the education system of the GDR as evidence of its claims to be the better Germany. Opposition to fascism was correctly perceived as being the single most important factor capable of uniting the East German population in recognition of the state's right to existence and the population's duty to support and defend it. The belief that they belonged to an antifascist state still represents an important part of the East German psyche.

Following the regime's collapse, the GDR's 'founding myth' as an antifascist state came under serious and sustained attack both in academic works and in political and journalistic critiques. Revelations about the scale of spying for the Stasi coincided with reports of an alarming rise in attacks by right-wing extremists born and brought up in the GDR. These developments bolstered criticisms of the 'regimented' and 'totalitarian' nature of East German education. In some cases, the GDR education system was presented as being essentially similar to that of the Third Reich. Indicative of this trend was Hermann Ottensmeier's book, published in 1991, and entitled Fascist education system in

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81 Interviews with Dieter S. & Dieter J.
Fig. 4: Unsettling images of a regimented, militarized youth.
Fig. 5: Behind the facade there was space for fun and games, leaving less alien images.
Germany between 1933 and 1989: Continuity between the Third Reich and the GDR. Based on the premise of essential similarity, others drew the conclusion that, virtually without exception, all young people in the GDR had been misshapen and misformed by their passage through the official educational channels. Not only had Communism been seen to have failed, but there was now nothing to distinguish it from National Socialism.

In emphasizing the similarities with the Third Reich, attention was drawn above all to the methods of mass agitation, regimentation and propaganda employed in the GDR and the fact that they commenced as early as Kindergarten. Frequent references were made to the military character of the youth organization, the drill, the uniforms, the shooting practice and grenade-throwing competitions. But although education in the GDR was thoroughly steeped in politicization and took place in a regime which was neither democratic nor pacifistic, it is only by completely ignoring the antifascist content of Communist education that one could describe it as fascist. Indeed, the reason the SED went to such lengths to transform and politicize education was out of a determination to ensure that fascism never again reappeared on East German soil.

The images of young people engaged in communal gymnastics, exercising in front of tents or wearing uniforms and carrying weapons can have a powerful, but nevertheless deceptive effect. Although surface appearances (particularly the ‘regimented’ image favoured in SED propaganda) can seem highly reminiscent of Nazi manipulation and mass orchestration, East German rituals and activities were intended to reflect a mixture of Soviet, pre-1933 Bündische Jugend and German Communist youth traditions. A great deal of emphasis

84 This is the view presented by Hermann Weber, ‘Die Jugendpolitik der SED 1945 bis 1989. Forschungsfragen, Quellenlage und wissenschaftliche Erwartungen’ in Gotschlich (ed.), Links und links, 29-30. Although he presents a very different perspective in Das gestürzte Volk. Die unglückliche Einheit (Berlin: Argon, 1991), this was also a view taken by Hans-Joachim Maaz in Der Gefühlssstau (Berlin: Argon, 1992) – published in English as Behind the Wall: The inner life of Communist Germany (New York, London: W. Norton, 1995) – ‘In this book I want to make it clear that it was impossible to escape the personality deformation, although one could react to the repressive power in different ways...’ (5).
85 Most striking of all are the film extracts showing children practising paramilitary drill in ‘Kinder Kader. Kommandeure’ a compilation of GDR propaganda films directed by Wolfgang Kissel and C.Cay Wesnigk (1991/92); Arno Klönne, Umerziehung, Aufbau und Kulturkonflikt : zur

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was placed on the education young people received on cultivating humanistic beliefs (such as equality between men and women, solidarity with poorer people in the Third World, sympathy for the victims of Nazism, supporting and helping the weak and the sick). Although young people practised shooting and hand-grenade throwing in the GDR, such activities are no different from the 'military training' provided by the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) in Britain which has its own uniforms, drill and shooting practice. Although such activities expose young people to military discipline and hardware, there is no reason why, as a result, they should necessarily turn into fascists. Interviews with former participants suggested that seeing the amount of damage that firing a heavy machine could do had done more to foster feelings of innate pacifism. The GST provided young people with opportunities for engaging in activities like sailing, driving and flying as well as shooting. For many young people, being a member of the FDJ and undergoing its rituals was not much different from participating in the Scouts (an organization which is still heavily marked by the colonial epoch in which it was founded and which continues to require its members to pledge an Oath of Allegiance to the Queen). When it was first set up, an important difference between the FDJ and these types of youth organization (and a source of popularity) was that there was no gender segregation.

The evidence which has emerged since the Wende has certainly contributed to a demystification and tarnishing of the GDR's founding myth. But it should not be seen as negating it completely. Although the GDR made major efforts to remove Nazis from the education system, it had little alternative but to replace them with people who had been members of the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls (BDM).

A large part of the SED was made up of Nazis; who else then? Who were the workers in the factories? Former Nazis. Who were the low- and also the high-level functionaries? Former Nazis. Who else then could one build socialism in Germany with?

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Geschichte der Jugend im geteilten Deutschland von 1945 bis in die fünfziger Jahre (Hagen: Fernuniv., 1998), 76.  
86 In Linie Angetreten, 308-310.  
As a result, the slogan 'Never again fascism, never again war' – which was an important component of the regime's self-legitimization – also permitted those socialised in the Third Reich to swap their brown shirts for blue ones and be accepted into function-holding positions in schools and the FDJ.\(^8\) Although their conversion may well have been heart-felt and genuine, they could not avoid bringing with them into the new organizations certain of the values and style they had acquired in the old ones.\(^9\) Emphasis continued to be placed on discipline, self-sacrifice and obedience. The Cold War created new divisions between 'us' and 'them' conveyed through stereotypical images of internal and external enemies. 'Prescribed (verordnet) antifascism allowed a retrospective alignment with the Communists without the necessity of engaging in a genuine reckoning with the past. Indeed, one of the key weaknesses of Communist policy was that it left no room for a genuine individual process of dealing with the past.

The prisoner of war camps and Antifa schools, the youth committees and FDJ offered collective discussions rather than encouraging individuals to find their own way.\(^9^0\)

Although they were less than perfect, the regime could nevertheless count on large numbers of people who conceived of themselves as (and to all intents and purposes were) antifascists. Of all the regime's messages directed at young people, it was the evocation of the struggle against fascism which for a great many young people had the most immediate, emotional impact. The very real sacrifices the Communists had made in their struggle against the Nazis brought them a significant degree of commiseration and understanding. During


\(^9^0\) Buddrus, 'A generation twice betrayed...', 266.
the first two decades of the GDR, the Communist Party’s insistence on a comprehensive break with the past (however partial, one-sided and self-serving it may now appear in retrospect) nevertheless stood in stark contrast to the silence and immunity enjoyed by former Nazis in the West.\(^9\)

The collapse of the GDR and the unification of Germany has bolstered the West German founding myth (of a *Rechtsstaat* founded on the Basic Law) at the expense of East German claims to have transformed society and removed the structural causes of fascism. Following the *Wende*, what so many in the East had seen or been taught to believe was a historical necessity was now dismissed as an unnecessary diversion. But it is valid to ask how much West Germany owed, in its own, often difficult, struggle to overcome the legacy of the past, to its need to compete with its much more overtly antifascist neighbour to the East. Volker Ackermann has also pointed to the important role played in 1968 by young people, like Rudi Dutschke, brought up and educated in the GDR.\(^9\) The Marxist-Leninist account of history they received in school gave them the tools to understand and challenge the power and hegemony of ruling elites in the West. But while 1968 marked a watershed in West German self-conceptions and understandings of Nazism, in East Germany, the 1970s and 1980s saw the once dynamic and potent antifascist myth become increasingly rigid and stilted.\(^9\)

Antifascism ceased to constitute an actual struggle against the legacies of National Socialism, but instead came to be presented as a given which had already been achieved. While the student revolt in the West had provoked earnest discussions about the implications of the past not just in the media and the education system, but between parents and children, the effect of the changes in education in the East were to increase the gap between what young

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Fig. 6: Antifascism in action: ‘young revolutionaries from our school follow with interest the account of a former Concentration Camp prisoner’.
people learned formally in schools and what they picked up informally at home.

To be sure, the great majority of young people reacted with abhorrence to fascism. Eighty-four percent said that they would do everything in their power so that fascism could never be repeated.\footnote{Wilfried Schubarth, 'Zum Geschichtsbewusstsein von Jugendlicher der DDR'. Unpublished ZIJ report (Leipzig, March 1989); Wilfried Schubarth, 'Forschungen zum Geschichtsbewusstsein' in Friedrich et al. (eds.), Das Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung, 206-224.} When young people were directly confronted with the crimes of the Nazis (in visits to Concentration Camps or talks by veterans), the SED could count on an emotional response. As one youngster described:

The visit to the Buchenwald Concentration Camp was for me upsetting. I was moved and deeply shaken. For the first time I had such a deep insight into the life of the prisoners. From this time I have a great respect for all antifascist resistance fighters and feel a deep hatred against the imperialist forces which were and are the authors of such wretched misery.\footnote{Wilfried Schubarth, Zum Geschichtsbewusstsein', 110

By contrast, however, the repetitive and overly convoluted references to fascism in history and civics classes tended to weaken and dilute the message. By the end of the 1980s, such references had become so abstract and blurred that even those who responded well in other settings admitted that in history lessons, they experienced ‘relatively little’.\footnote{‘Der Rote Oktober', 150.} In contrast to the official message transmitted by formal education, the often more ambivalent accounts of National Socialism passed on by family socialization had a much more direct emotional impact. Unlike the peaks of emotion created by special one-off talks and visits, the impact of the family was sustained and self-reinforcing. As early as 1961, a teacher had written to the Party leadership warning that although young people had, in general, a better and clearer view of history than most adults educated under capitalism, ‘whether we like it or not, this false view of history seeps through the adults into our young people.’\footnote{Schubarth, Zum Geschichtsbewusstsein’, 110

For some, the conflicting messages they received and the lack of genuine debate about the past served to undermine and dilute the official message of
antifascism. In the same survey in 1989, as many as 15 percent agreed with the statement that ‘fascism also had its good sides’. Among urban apprentices the figure was as high as 21 percent.\textsuperscript{98} Asked to describe how they would react on finding out that their grandfather had been a member of the Nazi Party, their responses revealed a significant degree of confusion, equivocation and even overt identification.

‘First of all I think of the horrific acts of the fascists (Concentration Camps, murder, transportations) which makes me a bit sad because this period also had its good sides...’
‘...continually to hack away at [this issue], I find, makes no sense...’
‘These people perhaps saw their ideals realised in these associations...’
‘If he [my grandfather] joined out of conviction (not like with the FDJ) and also stood by it right up to the end, then I would be proud of him...’
‘The era of Hitler-fascism was a great moment in German history...’
‘Hitler thought progressively, but he miscalculated...’
‘Such people could be as convinced as members of our Party (SED) are today. He too had only done what he thought was right (according to his conceptions).’
‘I experience a certain pride in relation to the followers and defenders of fascism. Basically, they also fought for what they believed was a just and worthy ideal.’

Although, for a minority of young people, the antifascist message had clearly failed to get through, comparative surveys carried out immediately after the Wende showed remarkable similarities in attitudes to the history of the Third Reich in both Germanies, in spite of differences between the educational systems.\textsuperscript{99} While, for some, the antifascist message ceased to have any meaning, for others, their curiosity and desire to learn about what had really happened, led them to seek to uncover the forgotten and hidden past. Their sense of being a part of Germany’s complex and ambivalent history strengthened their resolve to stand up to the SED regime. One participant in the ‘Monday demonstrations’ of Autumn 1989, described how, the previous summer, she and other members of her ‘FDJ study class’ had ignored the officially prescribed literature to visit instead Jewish cemeteries in Leipzig.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{98} Schubarth, ‘Zum Geschichtsbewußtsein’, 67 & 97.
\textsuperscript{99} Schubarth, ‘Forschungen zum Geschichtsbewußtsein’, 219, 221-222.
\textsuperscript{100} Discussions with Frau Ulrike R.
A major weakness in the GDR’s emphasis on antifascism (and a problem which continues to plague teachers in Germany today) was that, perversely, the importance placed on opposition to fascism could have the undesired effect of making Nazis and Nazism seem daring and taboo. Particularly after skinheads attacked punks in the Zionskirche on 17 October 1987, it was no longer possible for the GDR authorities to hide the fact that a small, but nevertheless significant minority of young people had adopted racist and anti-Semitic attitudes completely at odds with the ethos of the regime.\(^{101}\) They were eagerly courted by West German neo-Nazi groups, keen to use their ‘ethnically-healthy, Spartan living, sportive and militarily schooled potential’ for Germany in the ‘final struggle’ against inferior races.\(^{102}\)

Even during the 1970s, the showing of Russian propaganda films could spark incidents with strong racist and anti-Semitic overtones.\(^{103}\) In March 1977, for instance, 255 eighth-class pupils from the Ho-Chi-Minh Oberschule were taken to see the film Naked among wolves at the Lindenfels cinema in Leipzig in preparation for their Jugendweihe excursion to Buchenwald. Bruno Apitz’s antifascist epic was supposed to teach them about the moral implications of modern war.\(^{104}\) Instead the darkness of the cinema gave them a chance to run amok.

The discipline of the pupils was catastrophic. When, for example, the SS attacked prisoners in Buchenwald, it was greeted with applause and loud calls of “chase them through the chimney, kick the Jewish swine dead”, etc.... Employees of the cinema tried to get hold of the biggest trouble-makers and were called witch, "Jewish sow" and other insults.\(^{105}\)

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\(^{102}\) Joachim Oertel claims to have heard this praise for the GDR in West Berlin skinhead circles. Joachim Oertel, Die DDR-Mafia. Gangster, Maoisten und Neonazis im SED-Staat (Böblingen: Anita Tykve Verlag, 1988), 84.

\(^{103}\) Provokatorische Handlungen während der Vorführung des sowjetischen Films "Blockade" (1975)’, BArch. SAPMO DY30/18017.

\(^{104}\) Alan Nothnagle, Building the East German Myth (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 57

\(^{105}\) 15.3.77-SB Südwest, Ho-Chi-Minh-OS’ in Leipzig Stadtarchiv, Stv&RdSt Leipzig (2), 1682 Band 4.

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By rendering Nazi symbols and ideology taboo the SED ensured that they came to act as a powerful source of fascination and tempting curiosity. The same rebellious urge that led young people to aim their air rifles at the portraits of regime leaders during FDJ target practice could also lead them to celebrate Hitler's birthday as a joke. Often when young people used fascist rhetoric and symbols they did so ironically in order to draw attention to the similarities between the two systems or instrumentally as a means of goading a reaction. The best way pupils of a Leipzig Oberschule could find to draw attention to their civics teacher's unfriendly and overly authoritarian teaching style was by answering the obligatory FDJ greeting of 'Friendship!' at the beginning of the lesson with the words 'Heil Hitler!' But, in other cases, it was the macho activism of National Socialism that provided the appeal.

Although such incidents represent important dents in the antifascist myth, the situation was a lot more complex and ambivalent than can adequately be explained by simple equations between the GDR and the Third Reich. A focus solely on structures and regime pronouncements ignores and minimises the extent to which individuals were able to form their own opinions and positions in relation to both the Third Reich and the GDR. By declaring that the two dictatorships were the same, Ottensmeier and others ignore the extent to which young people could consciously accept or reject aspects of what they were taught. The focus on techniques of manipulation denies young people's ability to question, challenge and subvert the messages they received.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has assessed the impact of state attempts to influence and shape young people in the GDR. It has examined both the extent and the limits of the claims made on young people by the SED and the means by which the Party sought to realise them in the spheres of education and leisure. Although the regime attempted to conceal and legitimize its domination through the creation of symbolic violence, its success was limited by the continued resort to overtly...
illegitimate, coercive measures. In spite of the regime’s attempts to make its claim universal and total, this proved impossible. Young people were subject to a number of competing influences, several of which were outside the Party’s control. As a result, the impact the state had on young people was complex and ambivalent. Disparities persisted on a number of levels. Although the regime may have succeeded in winning over as many as a quarter of young people, inner distance together with widespread feelings of resentment and repressed opposition remained underneath the outward compliance of the rest. In certain exceptional cases, these were significant enough to provoke a small minority into engaging in direct provocation, opposition and defiance.
2) The Impact of Western media

Although the state was able to assert control over the education system and develop its own network of organized leisure, it could exert little control over the airwaves and the flood of information and radio programmes coming from the West. Even after the Berlin Wall was built, West Berlin acted as an island of Western culture located deep within the GDR. The SED's attempts to exert influence over young people occurred during the decade in which the mass media were beginning to focus on the interests and needs of youth. Perceiving ‘teenagers’ as a lucrative and previously untapped consumer group, publishers bombarded them with magazines and comics, trash literature and books. Films, music shows and later television fostered the growth of interest in pop music and Anglo-American culture. This chapter shows how, in spite of Communist hostility, the changes taking place in media and culture in Western Europe spread to and had an influence on life in the GDR.

THE IMPACT OF CHANGES IN MASS MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT IN THE WEST

In the West, the 1950s saw the emergence of a new commercialized adolescent peer culture encouraged by ‘the transglobal spread of Coca-Cola, chewing gum and Hollywood’. In the USA, post-war affluence encouraged the development of a separate ‘youth culture’ as a growing range of media products were targeted directly at youth. Spreading out from America, ‘teenage’ markets developed to take advantage of increases in disposable income. The Wirtschaftswunder enjoyed by West Germany in the 1950s provided German ‘teenagers’ with the pocket money to buy non-essential items like clothes and records. Advertisers and marketing executives began targeting young people with disposable income but without adult responsibilities. They fell over one another to supply them with clothes, records, comics and other products.

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2 Arne Andersen, Der Traum vom guten Leben. Alltags- und Konsumgeschichte vom Wirtschaftswunder bis heute (Frankfurt/M.: Campus Verlag, 1997).
There were signs that the changes in consumption associated with the development of a mass market were creating a growing distance between the generations coinciding with a fall-off of political interest, particularly among younger workers, eager instead to sample and utilise the new 'mass culture'. West German social commentators, notably Karl Bednarik, remarked that the 'political' type of working-class youth formed by a tight network of organisations, associations and clubs of parties had effectively disappeared and had been replaced by the 'sceptical type' who viewed political organizations with mistrust and placed more value on individual experiences. Young workers no longer expressed membership of the working class through proletarian dress so much as through a 'primitive', vulgar ways of talking. While the First of May could only attract a few small groups of youngsters in the West, every evening groups of young people could be seen clustered on particular street corners, particularly in front of cinemas and fairgrounds.3

The increasing internationalization of mass media and youth culture provided an alternative set of values and encouraged changes in social mores. Symbolizing the altered balance between work and leisure, the 'showbiz' industry played a very important role in articulating, spreading and standardizing youthful feelings. In so doing, the media helped to transmit ideas and fashions to new audiences, whetting their appetites, inflating their aspirations and allowing them to redefine themselves. The enlarged importance of young people as consumers of mass media and entertainment provided them in turn with an acknowledgement of their changing status. Increased access to mass culture had an impact on their identities and sense of being by encouraging experimentation with forms of style which set them apart from adults.

Fashion and music became the areas where teenagers could express their difference from adults more openly. Their clothing and behaviour did not simply replicate the images portrayed in magazines and film. The increasingly international nature of the new youth culture broadened their horizons beyond the narrow confines of their everyday lives. It opened up another world and

provided them with new, alternative models for how and what to think. In the West, niche markets developed for articulating and explaining the growing generation gap, for providing advice and tips on what it was and how to be a teenager. Hollywood provided teen icons like James Dean and Marilyn Monroe who captivated, enthralled and inspired with their stylisation of beauty, glamour and youthful rebelliousness. The mass media encouraged young people to feel that they had a share in the creation of fame and glamour, thereby offering them alternative dreams and aspirations. Popular culture presented numerous examples of people apparently no different from themselves who had made it as film stars and musicians, by dint merely of their good looks or raw talent. Mass produced consumer items allowed young people new opportunities to experiment with their look and identity. Their increased autonomy as consumers allowed them the freedom to purchase and create the elements with which to make up their own culture. They could begin to dress like their favourite singers and movie stars. By imitating their look and mannerisms, young people could seek to appropriate something of their original appeal. Getting the ‘pose’ of casual nonchalance and effortless cool right brought them standing and approval from their peers, which was only heightened by the antipathy felt by their parents’ generation.

The commercialisation of adolescence through the creation of a specifically teenage market had a fundamental impact both on the way in which young people were viewed and on the way in which they viewed themselves. A youth culture developed which crossed not just geographical, but social boundaries. The old distinctions based on one’s relationship to work and production were increasingly subsumed by distinctions based on consumption and leisure. Although they were still expected to conform, and to live and behave in the same way as their parents, there was a growing feeling of rebellion and the need for a change of ideas and styles. As young people grew more confident they also began chafing at the restrictions. They began to express their own autonomous opinions more forcibly. This development naturally posed a threat to adults because young people no longer needed them to act as

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intermediaries between them and the outside world. The culture they embraced shocked their elders by challenging existing societal mores and promising liberation and escape. Clothes were the most important means for expressing difference. As a result, young people began developing their own (often provocative) forms of style and manner, erecting barriers of fashion and custom around adolescence.

American movies provided German youth with models for juvenile fashions, dances, and postures. Films like *The Wild One* (1953) and *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955) highlighted and at the same time created iconoclastic symbols for young people’s growing frustration with adult restrictions. Marlon Brando and James Dean symbolized potent, sexually-charged anti-heroes rebelling against adult society and its restrictive mores. In the most famous line in *The Wild One*, when Marlon Brando’s character, Johnny, is asked ‘What are you rebelling against?’, he replies ‘What have you got?’ Later in the 1950s, movies introduced Western audiences to Rock ‘n Roll. In several countries, *The Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *Rock Around The Clock* (1956) sparked ‘moral panics’ as the wild and raucous new music sent young people dancing into the aisles. To adults and the authorities, Rock’n Roll appeared hostile and aggressive – a dangerous breakdown of order and obedience. Riots occurred as the police attempted to maintain control and to prevent what they saw as disorderly conduct. At home, differences of opinion regarding music and clothing frequently became the source of confrontations between parents and adolescents.

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In many countries, the changes taking place in young people’s attitudes and behaviour led to debates about the harmful effects of Americanization. Most of the new styles and attitudes were American in origin. America appeared as the paradigm for the future threatening every advanced industrial democracy in the western world. Germany's defeat in World War Two seemed to herald the victory of American ideals and lifestyles throughout Europe. As well as their trademark chewing gum and chocolate, US servicemen also brought with them new mass-produced styles of clothing, ‘hot’ music and radio stations. America acted both as a source of fascination and as the model for West Germany’s attempts to rebuild economic and commercial success. To the extent that America appeared to represent the future of Europe, adopting American manners and dress was interpreted as being modern. Nevertheless, Germans in both East and West were concerned, and worried, about the role played by American music and films in shaping post-war German personalities. For Politbüro-member, Paul Verner, the ‘introduction of Americanisms into German youth’ represented an attempt to depoliticize them and ‘to alienate and estrange them from their own best interests’ with the result that they were left steeped in a ‘frivolous and deadly hopelessness’. If for certain groups of young people, America seemed the epitome of all things ‘cool’, for their parents and other adult authorities, American cultural imports were often perceived as an invasive and dangerous lowering of standards. What commentators feared was not just ‘Americanization’, but ‘Americanization from below’. Fear of America as an image of modernity overlapped with fears about the new popular culture imbuing youth with lower class values. ‘It was the novel and unsolicited ingress of new tastes coming from "below", and their evident powers to challenge and redraw some of the traditional maps of cultural habits, that generated many an acid but apprehensive rebuttal.’

In America itself, it was feared that the peer culture spread by comic books, radio and television was causing a breakdown in generational communication.

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10 Schildt, Moderne Zeiten, 398-423.
11 ‘Protokol der 9. Tagung des Parteivorstandes der SED (14/15 April 1948)’, BArch. SAPMO DY30/IV2/1/44.
12 Maase, Bravo Amerika, 19.
13 Chambers, Urban Rhythms, 4.
and control. These new forms of entertainment gave young people access to a world of symbols and images that was inaccessible and deeply alien to many adults. The new commercialized youth culture acted as a barrier, preventing parents from impressing their value systems on their children, and seemed to lead to an upsurge in youthful misbehaviour and juvenile delinquency.  

In Germany, the apparent breakdown of generational communication, perceived by many in the 1950s, could not solely be attributed to the impact of mass media and entertainment imported from America. The effects of the war—notably the absence of fathers killed or held as prisoners of war—was frequently attributed as a cause of juvenile delinquency. The weight of the recent past, with all its guilt, fear and shattered illusions rendered communication between the generations more difficult by undermining the values that older generations had to transmit. Nevertheless, by attacking the new music and other cultural imports as 'lower-class, cacophonous, and aggressive,' commentators could deflect attention away from the past by fostering a shared sense of post-war cultural pessimism among older Germans. Thus, while certain media (like radio, comics and the cinema) provided young people with direct access to American imports, newspapers sought to heighten and exacerbate parental fears about the effects of exposure to music and images which could stir up young people’s emotions and enflame their passions. Young people’s eager identification with the vulgar, low brow trash culture coming from America represented an affront to traditional notions of culture and respectability. The casualness that young Germans strove so hard to emulate represented a rejection of the ‘soldierly habitus’ of short hair and smart clothes. Scandalized and sensationalizing reports about the activities of youth gangs underlined the feeling that young people were running out of control and that interest in American media and popular culture led inevitably to delinquency.

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14 Gilbert, A Cycle of Outrage, 3.
16 Gilbert, A Cycle of Outrage, 15.
17 Poiger, Jazz, Rock & Rebels, 69.
Teenage rebels existed in a twilight zone between conventional conceptions of respectability and criminality. They 'looked and behaved like juvenile delinquents.' The domestic media's amplification of adult opposition to the new forms of culture served to increase the sense of alienation and subversive thrill experienced by those young people who were involved in ostentatiously consuming them. Particularly for young working-class men, overt support for the latest fashion from America became a potent statement of their challenge to and rejection of West German society's prevailing bourgeois norms. 'Halbstarke' males (as they were labelled by the press) responded to older generations' conceptions of order and decency with diffuse forms of rebellion. Appropriation of American imports and imitation of mass-mediated images provided them with alternative means of bolstering their experience of masculinity and adulthood. By fetishizing objects like motorbikes, cigarettes, combs, leather jackets and jeans, and inscribing them with power and symbolism, they manifested their maturity and augmented their 'sex appeal'. Adolescents not only appeared to be separating themselves from adult culture, but they also seemed to be taking over and dominating public space. Attracting attention to themselves and making people stare at them increased their confidence and self-assurance. Playing on adult fears, they clustered around street corners, ignoring adult authority and provoking confrontations and fights by staring back and insulting passers-by. The police and press in West Germany responded to these developments with a mixture of scandalized fear and aggressive intolerance.

The 1950s, then, saw changes in media and communications which altered young people's relationship to the mass media and created the possibility for international changes in youth culture and identity. In spite of opposition from the SED, the changes which were occurring in youth culture and identity in the West permeated into the GDR and shaped the way young people perceived the attempts to influence and control them. The development of new forms of youth

20 Gilbert, A Cycle of Outrage, 17.
culture and identity stood in direct opposition to the attempt to appropriate and functionalize youth in the service of the regime. It was something that the SED could not have predicted and which they had obviously not included in their calculations for winning over youth.

THE IMPACT IN THE EAST OF CHANGES IN MASS MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

According to Central Committee Member, Inge Lange, 'there is a direct relationship between the thoroughly unclean and anti-republican appearances in the sphere of culture and the difficulties that we find in the socialist education of youth.'

I say this not only as a member of the Central Committee, but also as a mother... In addition to [their parents, school and the youth organization] new factors have developed, which exist in abundance and which have an immense influence on youth. They are decisive in determining whether the school or the youth organization or even the parents, who in large numbers do want their children to become clean, orderly, decent people (saubere, ordentliche, anständige Menschen) who can fulfil their tasks effectively... I mean, such mass media as radio, television, literature, cinema, etc.\(^\text{23}\)

As in the West, so too in the East, the increased social and cultural power of the mass media and the marketplace over young people posed a threat to parents' ability to communicate with and control their children. But a much greater threat was posed to the SED and its attempts to influence youth politically. The images presented by Western media were completely at odds with the model of development presented to young people by the state. The romantic dreams of escape and the fairy-tale stories of rags-to-riches success had nothing to do with the self-sacrifice and hard work which was needed if socialism was to be built up virtually from scratch. The experimentation and diversification of lifestyles fostered by access to mass culture posed a serious threat to the regime's attempts to form young people into monolithic and monodirectional socialist personalities. The development of commercialized youth

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\(^\text{23}\) Inge Lange, 'Leidenschaftliche Kämpfer durch die Hilfe der Älteren', *Neues Deutschland* (19.12.65).
culture was a clear sign that capitalism was seeking to blind young people (in particular young workers) to their status at the bottom of society. To the SED, the new identities young people were developing were just new forms of false consciousness. The class enemy was succeeding in diverting youth's innate desire for revolution into disorganized and non-political forms of behaviour which posed no fundamental challenge to the political and economic system.

In West Germany and West Berlin, those in power try to keep young people away from societal life because they know that, if politicized, young people would find out about their volksfeindliche plans to destroy the population, would turn against them and overthrow them. They try to dull the minds of as many young people as possible in the Democratic Sector and our Republic in order to keep them away from societal construction.\(^\text{24}\)

In spite of its intolerance of Western consumer culture, it was nevertheless very difficult for the party to prevent the changes occurring in the West from seeping into and having reverberations in the East. Prior to the building of the Berlin Wall, the still open border with West Berlin acted as the main conduit for Westernized youth culture. Every day thousands of young East Germans crossed over the border to West Berlin in search of entertainment and amusement.\(^\text{25}\)

Because our Democratic Berlin has an open border to West Berlin, it is not surprising that, here and there, certain phenomena that actually only belong to an imperialist societal order, spread to particular, especially susceptible groups of young people here. So, unfortunately, there are still cases of young people who are driven to commit crimes by the Gangsterromantik coming from West Berlin.\(^\text{26}\)

To encourage youngsters from the GDR to visit cinemas in West Berlin, the West German government sponsored reduced ticket prices for people who could prove that they were from the East. ‘With a HO bag as proof that I was from the East, I could get into the cinema for 25 West Pfennigs.’\(^\text{27}\)

\(^{25}\) Poiger, Jazz, Rock & Rebels, 84-85.
\(^{27}\) Interview with Dieter S. HO stood for Handelsorganisation, the GDR’s state-owned retail outlet.
The degree of exposure to Western culture was clearly greatest for young people living in or around Berlin. But the opportunities for shopping and consumption attracted people of all ages from throughout the republic. They were able to bring back with them records, shoes and articles of clothing. Comics were frequently added to food parcels sent by relatives. In addition, American and West German radio stations reached well into the GDR, spreading awareness of the latest fashions, music and items of consumption available in the West. The increasing availability of television sets brought images of what East Germans were missing out on right into their living rooms.

Western media penetration had important implications for the SED's ability to influence young people. The conspicuous consumption of young people in the West starkly highlighted the GDR's inability to meet popular demand, thereby bolstering the Federal Republic's claims to being the better system. The images of commercialized youth culture were far slicker and more attractively packaged than the SED's attempts to popularize its own policies and provisions for youth. In addition, the popular culture imported from America provided enjoyment without making any demands on young people in return. In contrast to the dull repetitions and grey sameness of many of the SED's political and educational offerings, Western media promised endless variety and entertainment at minimal cost.

The SED's own policies had an ambivalent effect in relation to the spread of Westernized youth culture in the GDR. The party hoped to captivate youth with its own, officially inspired and influenced youth culture. But although certain aspects of home-grown youth culture like Simson 'Swallow' mopeds became very popular among young people (including some outside the GDR), in many other areas of consumer culture, East German industry was simply in no position to compete with the products and items offered in the West. Even so, this did not prevent youngsters from personalizing and customizing such objects by painting on logos or adding stickers.

In the Grimma area, the so-called 'Potato beetle' [gang] is motorized with motorcycles. Their crash helmets have black and yellow stripes. The group 'Unschuld vom Lande' [innocent country girls] is equally motorized and [its members] have the letters UVL on their crash helmets.29

The SED recognised the importance of 'modern leisure opportunities' for youth and sought to win young people's support by providing them with interesting activities and satisfaction of particular material wishes. On the other hand, however, the regime also endeavoured to combat any Western and, in particular, American influences on youth. Changes to the education system lengthened the time young people spent in schooling and training, increasing the gap between leaving childhood and entering adulthood during which young people could experiment with who they were and what they wanted out of life.30 By guaranteeing young people improvements in wages and limitations on the length of the working week, the SED deliberately created time for leisure activities. But the persistent failure of the youth organization to provide young people with activities that interested them left a vacuum. The party was shocked to find that instead of using these opportunities to become better young socialists, they instead filled the space by embracing the commercialized youth culture imported from the West. As a result, youth culture in the GDR was characterized by the overlap of permitted, tolerated, forbidden and excluded activities and fashions. The notion that there were certain universal characteristics of youth clashed with the suspicion generated by any activity which seemed to emulate developments which had first occurred in the West.

Young East Germans tuned in to and followed changes in youth culture and fashion for similar reasons to young people in the West. But they did so with the added knowledge that what they were doing was forbidden and taboo. Western media and youth culture provided young people with a source both of enjoyment and resistance. Identification with pop stars and film icons allowed young people to imagine themselves in different situations and at the same time to affirm things about who they were. Television and radio, comic books and magazines offered escape from the confines and drudgery of everyday life.

29'Readytum und Bandentätigkeit (15.12.1959)', StAL BDVP 24/113, 102-106. 30 See BArch. DY6/3939 on the effects of the introduction of the 10-year Polytechnische Oberschule.
Fig. 7: Schund und Schmutz Literatur confiscated by the authorities.
The images in Western magazines and on television provided young people with colour and spice in their lives; with knowledge of what they were missing out on and how the other half lived.

[Going to the cinema] was an adventure in itself and later on it was something the boys and girls greatly missed. It was as if they were cut off from the rest of the world and proper magazines like young people have today, there were hardly any then. Or magazines that informed and explained [about sex]. There was so much that didn't exist.\textsuperscript{31}

Nevertheless, through their media links to the West, young people could learn the latest about what was modern, glamorous, stylish, 'chic' and 'cool'. Reading such ‘texts’ against the backdrop of life in the GDR provided them with an additional subversive thrill. After the construction of the wall, on 13th August 1961, young people no longer had any opportunity to experience the reality of the West for themselves. For those who did not believe what they were told in school, the West acquired the nebulous quality of a world without borders, a place where dreams could be realized, another world to escape to.

Although they were denied the same opportunities for consumption as their counterparts in the West, young people in the East were nevertheless affected by and took part in the changes which were taking place in youth identities and aspirations. Difficulties in consuming magazines, records and movies were offset by the availability of radio and later television allowing a ‘pop media culture’ also to develop in the East. In spite of restrictions, television and (from 1959 onwards) transistor radios made Western pop culture accessible to an ever-wider section of the youth population. Youth research surveys found that during the 1960s, the proportion of young people who were decidedly against receiving Western media decreased to four percent. By contrast 67 percent of those surveyed listed either Radio Luxembourg or Radio Germany (or both) as their favourite stations.\textsuperscript{32} Although the construction of the wall imposed a physical barrier between East and West, contraband items continued to arrive in packets from the West or were smuggled across the border by foreigners. Later, when travel

\textsuperscript{31} Interview with Dieter S.
\textsuperscript{32} ZIJ: 'Umfrage '69', 25, 75.
Die Mitgliedsbescheinigung eines "Allgemeinen Clubs" und das Abzeichen des "Mickey - Maus - Clubs."

**Fig. 8:** 'Starclub' membership cards.
restrictions for pensioners were eased, grandparents became the major carriers for the latest records and tapes from West Germany.  

John Clarke used Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of 'bricolage' (which translates, roughly, as 'sticking together') to argue that through their use in a youth subculture objects and symbols become reordered and recontextualised to communicate fresh meanings. In a process Dick Hebdige describes as 'semiotic guerrilla warfare', there is a transformation and rearrangement of what already exists into a new context. In the GDR, the difficulties involved in obtaining access to and in consuming Western media products and consumer goods heightened the need for 'DIY solutions'. Youngsters in East Germany had to expend much more effort to achieve the right look. As a result, however, they were much more deeply tied up in the creation of symbolic importance and meaning. Each item of clothing told its own story, the story of the obstacles that had been overcome for it eventually to have been acquired. Informal channels, networks and contacts were essential for acquiring anything from a genuine pair of jeans to comics and fanclub addresses.

The difficulties involved in obtaining items of teenage consumption only served to increase their subjective value. By making such items contraband, the SED turned large parts of the population (including some comrades) into smugglers and accomplices. If, for their parents, the unavailability of certain items was a source of irritation, for young people, the added difficulties involved in participation in commercialized youth culture served to surround it with an atmosphere of excitement and adventure. The SED struggled against the fact that the more forbidden the fruit, the sweeter it tasted. The lengths to which young people had to go to access Western media or to conceal their consumption of it heightened the experience. For many young people, acquiring coveted items of youth fashion or symbols to mark out their difference involved genuine cases of 'bricolage' (or DIY). Clothes which were otherwise

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33 One discussion partner (Sascha W.) even managed to get his grandmother to smuggle a US-Army Surplus sleeping bag across the border.
36 On the lengths to which young people went to get the right 'look', see Poiger, Jazz, Rock & Rebels, 81 and Wierling, Die Jugend als innerer Feind', 410.
37 See Klaus Renft's memories of image-creation in Schütt (ed.), Klaus Renft, 47-48.
Fig. 9: The 'Boxer' knuckle-duster on the left was a version manufactured and sold in the West. The one on the right is clearly of inferior quality and was probably hand-crafted in the GDR.
impossible to obtain in the East were sewn together by mothers or girlfriends. In the 1980s, jeans were manufactured on a semi-professional basis by Vietnamese ‘guest-workers’. Young metalworkers used the opportunities available for them at work to manufacture badges, in some cases even knuckledusters.

Encounters with their relatives from West Germany may have convinced young East Germans that they were very much the poor relations, dependent on their Western aunties and uncles for cast-offs and scraps. On the other hand, with the right shirt or the right pair of jeans, the degree of attention they could draw to themselves (with its concomitant prestige and peer approval) was much greater. As Edgar Wibeau, the protagonist in Ulrich Plenzdorf’s cult GDR-youth novel, stated, ‘Jeans are a state of mind, not a pair of trousers.’ The reward for the extra effort and sacrifices they had to make was to become a source of envy and respect. The SED struggled against the fact that adopting a ‘modern’, Western look was intimately bound up with sex appeal. Exercising control over and experimenting with their own outward appearance was the means by which young people could demonstrate their increasing sexual maturity and exploit the sense of power that attractiveness with the opposite sex brought them. The SED could not alter the laws of sexual chemistry. ‘A young thing is besieged from all sides. In the morning she is a schoolgirl. Once out of school, everything between the ages of 15 and 80 dances a courtship display around her.’

In the East as in the West, the rise in importance of mass media and entertainment coincided with a drop in interest in political parties and other forms of organized leisure. In the GDR, the undisguised popularity of Western media products for large numbers of young East Germans not only revealed the extent to which the regime was failing to win over young people, but posed a

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42 Interviews with Klaus Renft & Franz P.
43 ‘Discussion of the problems of 13- to 16-year-olds (based on a discussion with 30 Berlin headteachers)’ BArch. DR2/6956, 115.
serious threat of contamination. The music and images transmitted from the West contained within them the ‘virus of subversion’. For the police and party, the mass culture to which young people were so attracted could be seen as an assault on the GDR. In order to combat this threat, the regime sought, on the one hand, to make clear the danger posed by Western manipulation and, on the other, to provide young people with safe alternatives (notably the Lipsi).

The SED tried to counteract what it saw as waves of propaganda and subversion coming from the West by highlighting the harmfulness of the Western media as a deliberate tool of American and capitalist exploitation. At the same time, the party played on the fears prevalent in West Germany by demonstrating that exposure to Western media led inevitably and inexorably towards acts of crime and violence. The SED sought to juxtapose the ‘clean and healthy’ culture provided in schools and the officially-controlled youth organization with the mind-numbing and degrading effects of exposure to Western trash culture (or ‘Unkultur’ as it was typically described).

Uta Poiger writes that ‘In 1950, increasing East German hostilities toward American influences found a focal point in the trial of Werner Gladow. Gladow’s gang, made up of adolescent and adult men, had committed armed robberies in stores and private homes all across East and West Berlin; in the course of their crime spree, they had even killed some of their victims. The public outrage and furor surrounding the Gladow trial provided the East German authorities with an early opportunity to ‘prove’ the links between Western media influence and criminal behaviour. Erich Loest’s literary account of the murder (based on what was reported in the East German press) depicted a character of infinite cruelty who found inspiration for his crime in American gangster novels. Interestingly, during the high-profile murder trial (and subsequent execution) of

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44 Rauhut, Beat in der Grauzone, 56.
45 See Chapter Eight.
46 Nothnagel, Building the East German Myth, 48-60.
47 Poiger, Jazz, Rock & Rebels, 48.
48 Poiger, Jazz, Rock & Rebels, 48-51.
49 Interview with Erich Loest. Erich Loest, Die Westmark fällt weiter (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1952). Extracts from the book were reproduced in Vorwärts, No.25 (22.6.1953), p.4. ‘Factly based’, the book demonstrated how ‘through a mudslide of trash literature, paid agents of the warmongers from both inside and outside Germany seek to lead young people in West Berlin and West Germany to commit provocations, attacks and murders on the territory of the German Democratic Republic...’
Diebe, Straßenräuber, Brandstifter – das sind die „Ritter der abendländischen Kultur“.

Fig. 10: 'Judge for yourself!' 'Thieves, muggers, arsonists - those are the "Knights of Western Culture". Young workers captured during the Uprising of June 17, 1953 are paraded in front of the population as common criminals.
This Samba Boy from West Berlin wanted to be able to commit plunder and arson disguised as a building worker. Clearly he was not given enough instruction by his client because the way he is dressed does not become him at all. The new bricklayer's clothing, bought in one of the shops around the Stalinallee, which on Monday, 15 June, were sold out of bricklayers' and carpenters' clothes in order to disguise the provocateurs and West Berliner fascists, was too long and the trousers had to be rolled up. The crepe-soled shoes and Samba socks don't fit too well with a building worker who's just come from work. The real Berliner building workers want nothing in common with these fascist bandits.

Fig. 11: Mugshot of one of the 'fascist spawn' arrested after the 1953 Uprising showing him wearing a 'cowboy shirt' and a tie with a naked woman.

Fig. 12: A picture purportedly showing a 'Western agent' trying to pass himself off as a worker during the disturbances in Berlin. He is given away by his stripy 'Samba' socks.
Derek Bentley, the British press also drew correlations between the defendant’s ‘vicious crime’ and his ‘flashy’ and ‘American-style’ clothes and demeanour.\(^5\)

The SED found further evidence for the threat posed by Western media in the 1953 uprising. Labelling it as *Tag X*, ‘the fascist putsch attempt’, the SED sought to show that the revolt was not the result of widespread hostility to its rule centred around workers’ grievances, but part of a cynical plan of disruption and disorder orchestrated by western intelligence agencies. To bolster such claims, the party-controlled press highlighted the prominent role played by young people in the uprising and targeted those with identifiable signs of interest in Western youth culture as hired agents of Western imperialism. Under the headline ‘the knights of Western culture’, both the national and local press sought to demonstrate that because of their contamination with Western youth culture, the young people involved had acted against the interests of the working class. In their search for a scapegoat, in the aftermath of the uprising, the party’s leaders focussed their attentions on carriers of Western-influenced youth culture. The population were urged to ‘judge for’ themselves. *Neues Deutschland* – the ‘organ of the SED’ – printed pictures of the ‘sorts of people’ involved in the disturbances. One purportedly showed a young worker wearing ‘samba socks’ and brothel creepers underneath his overalls.

The crepe sole shoes and the Samba socks don’t easily fit with a building worker coming straight from work. The real Berlin construction workers want nothing to do with these fascist bandits.\(^5\)

In a report by Erich Loest, "Bubis" with striped socks and ‘Ami’ haircuts, were described as flying through the streets on shiny chrome bicycles.\(^5\) Leipzig’s local newspaper, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, also printed pictures of young workers who had participated in the uprising. They were part of the ‘fascist mob which sneaked its way between our ranks and sprayed its poison, part of the same mob which had destroyed the pavilion of the National Front, where the

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\(^5\) Bill Osgerby, *Youth in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 12.
\(^5\) *Neues Deutschland*, 25.6.53, last page.
\(^5\) *LVZ* (23.6.1953), p.4: ‘Der Tag X von Erich Loest’. 

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Waterworks Choir used to sing old folk songs – our good old folk songs... Such were the people the workers allowed to lead them astray...

For Jakob Kaiser, head of the Eastern Christian Democrat Party in exile and Minister for All-German affairs (Gesamtdeutsche Frage), those young East Germans who had taken part in the rising had shown that they were ‘tuned in to freedom’, not ‘infected with Communism. In the years that followed, youth culture became increasingly politicized as both sides in the Cold War tried to use it as a means to demonize and demonstrate the inferiority of the other. The overreaction to youth culture shown by the East German authorities provided West German politicians and other commentators with a potent means of demonstrating the repressiveness and intolerance of the SED. They interpreted young East Germans’ interest in Western youth culture as a sign of opposition to ‘totalitarian indoctrination’. The GDR authorities responded by perceiving such young people as potential traitors and would-be criminal agents of a foreign power, acting as ‘receivers (Empfänger)’ for imperialist lies and propaganda.

At the height of the Cold War, mass media was clearly an important tool in ideological warfare. The West German government (together with other Western powers) was undoubtedly interested in using the popularity of Western media among East German youth as a means of demonstrating its superiority and of influencing its listeners in the East by presenting an alternative to the news and information transmitted by officially-controlled GDR media outlets. But the East German authorities perceived Western news broadcasts with their ‘lies and misinformation’ as only one component in a much larger and more all-encompassing attempt to influence their youth. Seeing Western intelligence agencies as a mirror image of their own, the East German authorities saw a network of deliberate and co-ordinated ideological subversion encompassing...
not just radio and television stations, but youth magazines, fan clubs and even pen friend exchanges.\(^{56}\)

The class enemy works with the most diverse methods. There are a series of covert espionage organizations, such as the film and music clubs and the so-called 'Partys'. Through the influence of the Station Luxembourg many young people are in contact with this broadcasting station and receive direct instructions about club work. With the help of the so-called hit parades and the show 'Top of the Pops (Schlager der Woche)', RIAS [Radio in the American Sector], NWDR [North West German Radio] and Freies Berlin [Free Berlin] make contact with the youth of our republic. As a result of temptation and enticement a part of our youth continues to commit flight from the republic... The sending of trash literature is systematically organized. In addition, direct indications are given for their sale and transmission inside the GDR.\(^{57}\)

It was sufficient to prove the existence of covert manipulation by demonstrating that such products and activities had their origins in the West and had managed to find appeal among East German youth. What the West was engaged in, the SED maintained, was 'psychological warfare' designed to undermine and sap young people's defences.

A regime, whose declared goal is preparation for a new war, cannot use young people who are educated in the spirit of humanism and international friendship. As a result, harmful influences are not kept away from young people, but are systematically organized using the most refined methods. The West German militarists need heartless killers, who are ready without hesitation to shoot at their own workers or to attack another people in the name of "freedom".\(^{58}\)

Again and again, the party and press repeated the message that Western media influence was part of a covert, psychological war. 'The enemy seeks to hinder the process of education and development of socialist consciousness, to provoke mistrust between youth and the state, to manufacture disbelief about

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\(^{56}\) 'Dienstanweisung Nr. 4 /66 "Zur politisch-operativen Bekämpfung der politisch-ideologischen Diversion und Untergrundtätigkeit..."'.

\(^{57}\) 'The tasks for the further limitation of youth criminality and rowdyism' (ca. 1960-1961) BArch. DY6/3937.

\(^{58}\) 'Entwurf für den Leitartikel des Oberbürgermeisters in die LVZ: Die Stadtverordneten beraten Probleme der Jugend' (ca. 1961), Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Stv&RdSt (1), Nr. 2311, 78.
our societal development as well as to spread decadent and amoral conceptions. Thereby the enemy seeks to create bases for itself among youth... in preparation for the covert war. RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) mixed 'the dehumanized bawling of a Presley with covert reception' and coupled 'slushy tearjerkers with spying tips'.

The goal of the enemy consists of carrying out ideological subversion, particularly among youth; to develop licentiousness and anarchy, in order to stir up parts of youth against their own Workers-and-Peasants' State and incite them to riot. They carry this out by means of their radio and television stations, particularly Radio Germany (Deutschlandfunk), through the infiltration of trashy literature and inflammatory material, but also very cleverly by means of the non-culture of music and dance, the Beatles-ideology and the ideology of bumming around (Gammeltern), inciting them to skive work (Arbeitsbummemei). In West Germany itself, they need this lifestyle to contaminate youth psychologically, and with all means of brutalization, to stir up the lowest interests to prepare them ideologically for their criminal war plans.

Psychological warfare was a hidden, but deadly menace, insidiously creeping in to pollute young people's consciousness and poison them from within. 'Drop by drop the youngster absorbed the poison of psychological warfare...' until he was ready to undertake subversive activity 'for the Judas-pay of ten West marks'.

Not surprisingly, many of the sources of influence cited by the SED were seen as entirely harmless by young people. In August 1959, the Stasi intercepted a letter to Margaret D., in Rostock, from the Elvis Presley Club in Munich. The club secretary, Judy, thanked her for her recent letter, expressed hopes that her cold was better and accepted her into the club.

I'm sorry that you can't listen to Elvis often. Especially as here in the club, we have all the records by Elvis (about 130 songs) and can dance Rock'n'Roll in our dance parties as often as we want. Besides that, we listen to AFN [American Forces Network] every day, which of course also exists in Munich.

59 Ibid.
60 LVZ (14.10.1960): 'Schulen des Verbrechens: Hetzsender und Westberlin'.

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and the great sensation at the moment [is] Elvis’s newest disc, "A big hunk o’ lovin" with "My Wish came true" (Auf Deutsch "Ich brauche Dich dazu") on the B-side. "I need your love tonight" is naturally really cool. As far as Elvis himself is concerned, he was born on 8 January '35 and is therefore now 24 years-old... Greetings to your fellow Elvis fans and, if you have questions, just ask me.63

The SED’s attempts to emphasize the corrupting effects of the Western media were easiest with regard to trash literature and comics which became a source of public fear and moral panic in both West Germany and the USA in the 1950s.64 The SED used the standard arguments about young people being vulnerable and easily influenced to argue that reading detective stories and gangster novels led them to commit crime. Similar assertions were used in relation to films depicting violence. Although such arguments made good copy for newspapers and may have influenced parents into making restrictions on what they allowed their children to watch, they could not prevent young people from being interested and curious nor the literature passing from hand-to-hand among groups of teenagers.65 Examples of the ‘trash and smut literature’ confiscated included Micky Maus, 'Der 30 Pfennig Roman', 'Stella Roman' and the 'Illustrierte Kriminal-Bücherei'.66

Although they came at the problem from very different ideological angles, the SED found itself in agreement with conservative and Catholic critics of American culture in West Germany.67 Bill Haley’s October 1958 tour of Germany coincided with elections in West Berlin. Walter Ulbricht used the riot following Haley’s concert in the Sportstadium in West Berlin as an opportunity to contrast the GDR’s own, worthy provision of opportunities for youth with the carelessness and political manipulation of the West Berlin authorities. Under the headline ‘Orgy of American Unkultur’, Neues Deutschland declared the SED as ‘the only real way out for West Berlin youth’ promising to ‘free them from the poison of Western nonculture’ and loudly declaring ‘Ami, go home!’68

63 'Anlagekarte zur Argumentation über westdeutsche "Film- und Schlager-Star-Clubs"', BArch. DO1/38215. 64 Kuhnert & Ackermann, 'Jenseits von Lust und Liebe?'; 47; Gilbert, A Cycle of Outrage. 65 Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Stv&RdSt (1), Nr. 2312. 66 BArch. DO1/38215. 67 Poiger, Jazz, Rock & Rebels, 46. 68 Neues Deutschland (29.10.1958): ‘Orgie der amerikanische Unkultur’.
Three years later, in a speech justifying the building of the Berlin Wall, Walter Ulbricht tried to play down the extreme nature of the decision to seal the border, cutting East Germans off from their friends and relations in the West, saying ‘a lot less happened than during an average Rock'n Roll concert in the sports stadium in West Berlin.’ He went on to say that the GDR would not make the same mistake as the Social Democrats had in 1933, when they surrendered the capital to the Nazis, even though they controlled a police force of over 100,000 men. It seems strange that Ulbricht should, almost in the same breath, link such apparently disconnected events as the Bill Haley concert of 1958 and the Nazi seizure of power of 1933 to justify the decision to imprison the entire East German population. But to Ulbricht there was no contradiction. The Social Democrats had failed to act when the brown shirts and swastikas of the Nazis had stared them in the face. The Cold War, by contrast, was a war which was fought by subterfuge and sleight of hand. Though more subtle and refined, the methods used by the class enemy were no less dangerous. Socialism had to be defended from fascism, whatever form it may take.

The SED chose to present commercialized youth culture both as a new and entirely alien influence on youth, and as a recrudescence of fascist methods of exploitation. In reality, young people had been becoming increasingly interested in external developments in media and entertainment since the 1920s when Hollywood films and jazz first became available. If anything, it was the SED’s attempts to prevent the spread of Western media influence which represented a continuation of Nazi manipulation. As far as many young people (and adults) were concerned, there was not much to distinguish the two regimes in their attempts to stop the population listening to ‘enemy broadcasts’.

Problematic for the regime’s attempts to portray Western youth culture as being dangerous and alien was the range of youth cultural opportunities available to young people and the insidiousness with which certain styles took


\[\text{On the importance of commercial mass entertainment for young men and women during Weimar, see J. Wickham, ‘Working-class movement and working-class life. Frankfurt am Main during the Weimar Republic’, Social History 8 (1983), 315-43.}\]
hold of youth even though they were Western in origin. Enforcing a rigid distinction between East and West was particularly difficult when it came to fashions in clothing and hairstyles. Although at first it was easy for the authorities to identify those aspects of the new youth culture which were American (or English) in origin, the increasing internationalization of youth culture made particular youth trends appear more and more universal. As particular fashions became more accepted and engrained in both West German and neighbouring Eastern European countries, it became harder for the East German authorities to make clear distinctions about what constituted a decent, German, socialist pair of trousers and what kind of haircuts were ‘decadent’ and ‘capitalist’ in origin. Adult notions about what was or was not permissible were subject to subtle and repeated challenges until what had once been perceived as a deep provocation by one cohort of schoolchildren had become banal and taken-for-granted by their younger brothers and sisters.\footnote{Discussions with Frank S.}

Members of youth subcultures had to go to ever-greater extremes of dress in order to stand out from the crowd. Surviving photos of Leipzig ‘Tramper (hitch-hikers)’ in the 1970s show young people dressed halfway between hippies and tramps (with tell-tale long patches on their knees).\footnote{Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Stv&RdSt (1), Nr. 2312.}

As with other aspects of its attempt to influence young people, the regime was more successful at convincing pre-teenage children of the harmful and contaminating effects of Western media. ‘The extent to which these debates have begun to have a positive effect is shown by the behaviour of a schoolgirl in her 3rd year, who told her teacher the following: “when I lie in bed at night, I hear the melody of the Seahorse show (Western television). But I don’t want to hear it and hide myself under the covers”. ‘\footnote{Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Stv&RdSt (1), Nr. 2312.} Children could be deeply disappointed by the hypocrisy of their parents. ‘My mummy told me that I can only see the little Sandman. But once when I got out of bed and looked through the keyhole, I saw that they were watching West [TV]. Why are they allowed that, the big people?’\footnote{Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Stv&RdSt (1), Nr. 2312.} Although the SED managed to keep children awake at night thinking about the harmful effects of Western media, with the onset of puberty and the awakening sense of selfhood and maturity it gave them, young
people were much harder to take in with tales of fire and brimstone. The opinion of their peers was often far more important than that of the regime. They were much more prepared to risk eternal damnation by tuning in to the hit parade.

Although young people still at school were subject to greater surveillance of their clothing and hairstyles (combined with regular checks to ensure their fingernails were clean and their schoolbags were well ordered and contaminant-free), apprentices and young workers were much harder to control. Once school and work were over, young people were able to rush home and change. It was very difficult for the authorities to cover every street corner, park, scrap of waste ground or public bench. In general, the regime could only react to events when it was already clearly visible that they were no longer in control. But by taking a public stand, the regime succeeded in turning the disputed stylistic feature into a symbol of opposition and rebellion.

Dick Hebdige argues that 'In order to project style, it [is] necessary first to appropriate the commodity, then to redefine its use and value and finally to relocate its meaning within a totally different context.' In a case involving young people from Karl-Marx-Stadt, a gang was reported to have attached hypodermic needles to their jacket lapels as a mark of identification. 'The fashion was copied by a number of young people because they found it "chic" without being members of the gang and indeed strongly protesting against it. Apparently the People's Police said that the wearing of hypodermic needles was unhygienic. This argument met with complete incomprehension on the part of young people.'

Official hostility and attempts to control Western youth culture were a continual source of friction between young people and the regime. While in West Germany society and the press gradually became more discriminating and less intolerant of American influences, the authorities in the GDR continued to emphasize the relationship between popular culture and crime. The SED did

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76 Bericht (20.3.63), BArch. DY6 / 3940.
little to convince young people of the threat posed by ‘Western lies and propaganda’ by exaggerating and misrepresenting the threat that Western popular culture posed to youth. Young people resented the way in which the regime cynically played on adult fears. In February 1962, the Leipziger Volkszeitung reported on a murder by a ‘returnee’ from West Germany under the headline ‘For 45DM Western freedom in action’. The murder was seen as proof of the imperialist attempt to ‘cause disturbances among the East German population’, by provoking them to commit such acts using the ‘poison’ of ‘dirt and shame literature’. Some respondents called for the perpetrators to receive the ‘most severe penalty, to eradicate at the roots the influence of the class enemy’. Others saw the crime as proof that the building of the wall had been both ‘urgently necessary and justified’. But the view commonly held by young people (including, in this case, an FDJ-organizer) was that there was no link between pop songs and crime. They disputed the assumption that it was the ‘lifestyle’ presented by the Western media which had led to the murder.

Although certain claims about youth could find credence with the adult population, this was not always the case. At a parents’ evening, a father ‘behaved provocatively’ by arguing that the causes of rowdyism had less to do with Western Schmökere (light-weight adventure stories or romances) than with the heavy tomes printed in the GDR.

Contrary to the SED’s emphasis on Western radio as a means of manipulation, young people tended to see it only as a source of good music. A survey carried out by the official Opinion Research Institute found that the majority of young people preferred stations which brought them ‘hot music’. ‘Apparently it makes no difference if they are Western stations or stations in the GDR and other socialist countries’. Many of those surveyed, answered that they listened to DT64 and Radio Luxembourg, Freedom Sender 904 and Deutschlandfunk, Radio Prague and the BBC. The survey’s finding that young people listened to both Western and the GDR’s own radio stations tends to confirm their oft-stated argument that ‘music has nothing to do with politics’.

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77 LVZ (14.2.62), ‘Für 45DM westliche Freiheit in Aktion’.
78 Discussions about the article in StAL, FDJ Bezirksleitung Leipzig 82 (Kiste Nr. 79).
79 Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Stv&Rdst (1), Nr. 2312.
80 Institut für Meinungsforschung: Information für Mitglieder und Kandidaten des Politbüros’ (18.1.67), p.22 in BArch. SAPMO, DY30/IVA2/16/159.
While some argued, 'if our stations broadcast better music, we wouldn’t have to listen to Radio Luxembourg' others criticised East German radio for being overly politicized: 'in our radio broadcasts, politics is continually thrown in. In Western radio, that doesn’t occur.'\(^{61}\) The SED’s position was further complicated by the fact that although *Freiheitssender 904* and the *Soldatensender* were disguised as West German pirate stations, it was an open secret to young people that they were actually broadcast from the GDR with the aim of influencing West German youth and, in particular, soldiers. By playing the latest music from West Germany, the two stations unintentionally secured large audiences in the GDR and weakened the SED’s claims against Western radio. 'If we’re not allowed to listen to Radio Luxembourg, then Freedom Sender 904 should also be disbanded.'\(^{82}\)

Functionaries repeatedly reported being bombarded with the argument that there was nothing wrong with Western mass entertainment. ‘*Musik ist doch Musik*’ and ‘music is international’ were common refrains at meetings organized to discuss the matter with young people. They pointed to the modernity of Western youth culture and fashion and emphasized that they were only demanding the right to enjoy what young people in every other country could enjoy. ‘Among a section of teachers, their knowledge of Marxism-Leninism is insufficient to give a thorough response to such questions. A few teachers even asked how they should behave in relation to the Beatles.’\(^{83}\)

However harmless they appeared to young people, the state’s fear about the effects of exposure to Western media led it to make deep intrusions into the private sphere, politicizing young people’s personal taste and interests. But in spite of the ‘totalizing’ nature of its claim, the state nevertheless found it hard to reach into the intimacy of young people’s bedrooms. Taking on the role of disgruntled parent, the party tried to dictate what pictures young people should or should not stick up on their walls. But to prevent young people responding by turning the volume of their music up and ignoring the world outside their bedroom door, the regime was heavily dependent on their real parents to police

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\(^{61}\) Analyse über die Lage und der Arbeit mit der Jugend in der Stadt Leipzig' (15.2.1965), StAL, IVA-5/01/269, 66; StAL FDJ Bezirksleitung Leipzig 82 (Kiste Nr. 79); BArch. DR2/6298, 60.

\(^{82}\) BArch. DR2/6298, 60.

\(^{83}\) StAL, IVA-5/01/269, 23.
and enforce its decisions. Either because their employment was of a sensitive nature or out of fear of what the consequences for their children might be if it was discovered, some parents did insist on a rigid ban on receiving Western media in the house. In the event of a misdemeanour, one of the first questions young people would be asked was whether their parents allowed them to watch Western television. According to popular myth, teachers would ask children to describe what their sandman looked like – there being two different versions, the Eastern and the Western sandman. If they gave the wrong answer, their parents would be summoned and berated for the inconsequential manner in which they were fulfilling the duty they owed to the state – of bringing their children up as conscious and committed citizens. The majority of parents, however, showed a greater or lesser degree of complicity with their children in allowing them to watch Western television or read Western books and magazines.

A youth research survey of the ‘function and effects of mass media’ carried out in 1971 found that ‘34 percent inform themselves about political events predominantly by means of GDR-stations, 9 percent through enemy stations, but 50 percent by means of both GDR and enemy stations.’ Although the view was widespread that it was important to see both sides of a particular issue – by informing oneself from both Eastern and Western media sources – young people were well aware that the knowledge and information they had acquired from the West could not be repeated in school and had to be hidden from their teachers. If they were ever forced to admit that they had listened to Western media, they were careful to say that they only listened to music and switched sides whenever a news report came on. Their access to Western media nevertheless gave young people an important means of immunizing themselves from the effects of official propaganda. It provided them with other ways of assessing, judging and making sense of the reality that they were experiencing. It meant that on certain issues they were much better informed than their teachers. This knowledge gave them power, if not to resist the demands made on them by the state, then at least to resist internalizing its messages. Even

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84 Discussions with Inge M-H. & Nils F.
85 "Funktion und Zusammenwirken der Massenmedien bei der ideologischen Erziehung der Jugend" (Leipzig: ZfJ, 1971), BArch. SAPMO, DY 30/21420.
86 Interview with Manfred S.
when they turned a deaf ear to the anti-Communist messages broadcast from the West, young people could not help but get the impression that things were brighter, freer and more fun in the West. What was worse, there was evidence that exposure to Western media made young people immune to certain forms of ideological influence.

Particularly problematic is the following tendency: young people who frequently receive Western stations, rate our programmes and films (e.g. political news in our media, GDR television commentators, TV-films like the ‘Der Sonne Glut’ and ‘Arthur Becker’, but also DEFA contemporary films) in part already according to the content and form of bourgeois mass communication. Their expectations as well as their criteria of assessment are already influenced by phenomena which are alien to our socialist ideology.

Ten years earlier, a group of head teachers had come to the same conclusion: ‘the general overstimulation plays an [important] role. That begins with television. The pupils are trained only for sensation, which we can’t always offer them in lessons.’

In many ways, the regime’s politicization of Western media and youth culture had a counter-productive effect. The, at times rabid, hostility shown towards their otherwise harmless pursuit of entertainment and amusement made young people more ready to identify with the radio stations condemned by the SED. Their presenters seemed to have a much closer and more realistic understanding of young people’s interests and needs. The crateloads of letters and record requests to Deutschlandfunk intercepted and seized by the Stasi testify to a pervasive desire on young people’s part not to be left out in the cold and instead to be part of the movements in music and fashion which put youthful lifestyles and experiences centrestage.

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87 ‘Funktion und Zusammenwirken der Massenmedien...’
88 ‘Funktion und Zusammenwirken der Massenmedien...’
89 ‘Discussion of the problems of 13- to 16-year-olds (based on a discussion with 30 Berlin headteachers)’ (14.4.61), BA, DR2/6956, 115
90 Intercepted letters are on show in the exhibition, ‘STASI-Macht und Banalität’ in the Museum der ‘Runden Ecke’ in Leipzig. Reports relating to such letters can also be found in the ‘special incident’ files for the Ministry of Education held at the Stadtarchiv, Leipzig.
CONCLUSION

For all its carefully laid plans for influencing young people, the SED had failed to reckon with the effects of Western media in undermining and negating its messages. The decades after the war saw important and unforeseeable changes occur in the way in which young people were catered for in the mass media and how they conceived of and outwardly manifested themselves. In the process, young people gained confidence in expressing their new-found identities through their choice of clothing and music. The increasing internationalization of mass media and youth culture provided an alternative set of values and encouraged changes in social mores. Youth culture provided young people with a means of experimenting and distancing themselves from the conceptions of their teachers and parents. The SED sought to combat the challenge to its cultural hegemony posed by Western youth culture by exacerbating adult fears about the dangerous effects of Americanization. Although the population was subjected to repeated bouts of intimidation and persuasion in an effort to prevent them from receiving Western media, it was difficult for the state to determine what went on behind closed doors. A gulf continued to exist between young people’s view of Western youth culture and that presented by the regime. The SED’s refusal to tolerate even music broadcasts acted as an important breach between it and sections of the youth population.

As we saw in Chapter One, while a minority of young people overtly rejected the role which had been allotted to them by the party and responded to the regime’s attempts to invade their privacy by publicly affirming their support for Western youth culture, the majority hid inner distance behind outward conformity. They were sandwiched between competing and mutually exclusive claims. The SED strove to convince them of the rightness of its path to socialism, fostering the development of an independent GDR-identity. Their easy access to Western media did not just provide them with awareness about developments in youth culture and identity in the West, but was important in keeping alive the notion that, whatever happened in the GDR, they were also part of a wider German community. By appropriating and incorporating certain aspects of commercialized culture and by experimenting with their haircuts and
clothing, they explored and expressed what it was to be a young East German,
in the process having fun and enjoying themselves.
3) The Impact of Milieu

One of the most important tasks that the SED set for itself, in its attempt to transform East German society, was the removal of social inequality. A transformed education system was the vehicle for achieving this. In its way, however, stood the immunity provided to young people by their socio-cultural milieus. As a result, young people's attitudes to education and leisure continued to be heavily shaped by the class they were born into. This chapter explores and reveals the areas – notably the Oberschule and the street – where differences of culture and 'cultural capital' between milieus continued to be expressed.

CULTURE AND SOCIALIZATION

The SED aimed to use the education system to combat the structural causes of social inequality by removing discrimination against working-class children and allowing them the same opportunities to obtain education and qualifications as had once exclusively been enjoyed by middle-class children. At the same time, however, it was important for the regime to produce as many young cadres as possible to take over positions in industry, the economy, public service and administration. Although the Party leadership refused to accept that there were any contradictions between the two imperatives, for those who were actually involved in education, there was a clear contradiction between trying to make education inclusive and creaming off the most able pupils to serve as the future elite.

The decade and a half after the Communists took power saw a significant amount of flux as large numbers of hastily-recruited and rudimentarily-trained young adults were brought into schools to cope with the dearth of teachers caused by extensive denazification. But whereas the rest of the secondary education sector saw significant changes in personnel and teaching methods, the Grammar or higher school (Oberschule) system escaped the reforms relatively unscathed. Although teachers there also saw the imposition of politicized education, they were saved from more radical changes by their
important role in the moulding of future cadres. Underneath the outward trappings of 'socialist educational institutions', there was much about the new *Oberschule* which remained the same as the old *Gymnasien*. The existence of 'old Gymnasial traits' was said to give rise to an 'alarming level of political irresponsibility and liberalistic behaviour'.\(^1\) Nevertheless, the level of specialist subject knowledge required of teachers at the *Oberschule* – some of which continued to provide classes in Latin and Greek – meant that they were less easy to replace with recruits from the shopfloor.\(^2\) As a result, not only was the level of former Nazi Party membership higher in the *Oberschule*, but they also helped to preserve and reproduce the values and habitus of the middle-class intelligentsia.\(^3\) Although officials strove to make the education system more open and accessible to pupils from the working class, the latter often struggled to cope in an alien and intimidating environment. While education officials continued to counter and condemn 'bourgeois' arguments about 'ability', they could not deny that working-class families, in particular, expressed the opinion that their children could not reach the goal of the *Oberschule*.\(^4\)

The grounds for such doubts lie in the bad experiences that these parents made during their own time at school. [They lie] in the worry that they cannot help their children in the same way as those who, in their own youth, were not excluded from a better education.\(^5\)

Although the SED had declared that it was in the interests both of workers and of the regime for young people from working-class backgrounds to succeed in education and to gain qualifications which would enable them to take on positions of responsibility, it struggled to convince working-class parents 'that their children are in a position to achieve the same results as those of other classes'.\(^6\) For many working-class parents, there was a basic incompatibility between being workers and being educated: 'we’re workers and our children

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\(^1\) 'Bericht über den Einsatz an den erw. Oberschulen (19.10.1961)', BArch. DR2/6298, 82-83.
\(^4\) 'Durchsetzung der sozialistischen Oberschule (6.5.1959)', BArch SAPMO DY 6/3939; 'Material über wichtige Probleme der Volksbildung (8.3.63)', BArch SAPMO DY30/IVA2/2.024/6.
\(^5\) 'Durchsetzung der sozialistischen Oberschule'.
\(^6\) Ibid.
should also be workers – why do they have to go to school for ten years?  
Educational officials were forced to concede that:

> Even though we [have] put a stop to the discrimination of workers' and peasants' children by opening up the same educational possibilities for them as for other children, we still have not managed to eliminate completely the consequences of educational privilege.®

Although the overt aim of the new education system was to get as many working-class children as possible through the education system and into professional and management positions, the curriculum and teaching methods used in the *Oberschule* continued to be more accessible to children from middle-class backgrounds. Prolonged participation in education not only required the sacrifice of freedom and independence, but cultural and emotional investments that many working-class families were uneasy and reluctant about making. Although there were signs that large numbers of working-class children were missing out on educational opportunities and were failing to keep up with their middle-class peers, the GDR authorities nevertheless prided themselves on resisting the move towards streaming of less able pupils which occurred in other, supposedly 'comprehensive', education systems. For them, any 'dividing up' of pupils according to ability before they had reached the official school-leaving age meant sacrificing the goal of creating 'truly equal' educational chances.® The sixth form (or *Abitur* classes), however, remained accessible to only a small minority of every age cohort. Although heralded as a further improvement in the 'integrated socialist education system', the creation of the 'polytechnical *Oberschule*' in 1959-60 served to reinforce the two-tier nature of secondary education in the GDR by placing restrictions on the numbers of sixth-formers allowed to go on to the *Abitur* and University while condemning the rest to vocational education.® As a master plumber from *Kreis Zwickau* told his local education committee, the regime should come clean and admit 'that the whole [polytechnical *Oberschule* business] is only a stopgap measure; we

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7 Ibid.
8 Untitled discussion material (ca. 1959), DY 6 / 3939, 14.
9 'Bildung als gesamtgesellschaftliche Entwicklungspotenz' (22.4.1969), BArch. SAPMO, DY30/IVA2/2.024/6, 287-309.
10 Interview with Claus K.
simply do not have enough places for our children at universities and colleges.' This view was greeted with agreement by the parents present.11

In spite of the fact that the GDR was unlikely to embrace or reward their talents and achievements, bourgeois notions of respectability encouraged middle-class children to continue working hard at school. Unlike many of their working-class counterparts, they needed little encouragement to engage in suitably educational activities in their free time. There was a significant degree of overlap between middle-class standards of academic achievement, self-discipline and polite obedience to authority with the qualities the regime desired of 'socialist personalities'. As a result, the children of professionals who had adopted a position of tactical acceptance often performed better than their working-class classmates in tests designed to assess the development of socialist consciousness.12 To combat ongoing educational disparities, the SED was forced to resort to overt discrimination against middle-class children even though they were often highly gifted academically. Throughout the 1950s, the position of middle-class pupils of Oberschulen remained highly anomalous. They were culturally and thereby educationally privileged at the same time as being socially and politically repugned. This increased both the 'oppositional spirit' present in the Oberschulen and the air of suspicion with which they were viewed by the Party leadership.

Particularly worrying to the regime leadership was the extent to which such schools could continue to retain their middle-class ethos and values.

For years in many erweiterten Oberschulen, traditions have existed, bound up with the particular school. The proper cultivation of these traditions or the development of new ones has not yet been successfully achieved everywhere. We often find remnants of the old "Gymnasial ideology" in school reviews and in badly organized school-leaving balls.13

12 'Gutachten zu der Habilitationsschrift von Herrn Walter Friedrich "Zum Problem der Verhaltensdetermination im Jugendalter" (27.2.1965)', BArch. SAPMO DY30/IVA-2/16/159; Discussions with Frau U.R.
SED suspicions were increased by reports suggesting that instead of having a healthy, proletarian influence on such previously elitist institutions of education, upon arriving at the school, working-class pupils and even teachers had allowed themselves to become infected by the pernicious bourgeois ideology.

The workers' and peasants' children come too easily under the influence of the intellectually more agile and in part also previously better educated children from white-collar and civil servant circles and the bourgeois layers of society.  

A report from 1958, about the Oberschule Grimma, revealed the extent to which subversion could occur if such schools were not rigorously controlled. Unbeknown to the authorities, the headmaster had been engaged in cultivating the school’s tradition as a former ‘Landesschule’, maintaining the school colours (green-white-lilac), which also happened to be those of the Principality and Church of Saxony together with the motto ‘Piety, manly virtue and erudition’. The headmaster encouraged links with other elite schools, such as Schulpforta and St. Afra Meissen, and even authorized the production of a magazine, the Augustiner-Blätter, which acted as an alumni organization for former pupils of the three schools. The achievements of the school, he wrote, were such that they were recognised in both parts of Germany. In an article on the ‘contribution of Schulpforta to the intellectual life of Germany’, one contributor held up as examples the former pupils Klopstock, Nietzsche and Bethmann Hollweg. In another article, it was stated that thanks to its ‘rural isolation’, Schulpforta had been able to preserve its character as a ‘Landesschule’:

One announcement in the Augustiner-Blatt is of particular importance. It stated: "The holder of the Old Boys' Record (Stammbuch) of St Afra, Dr. L. moved to Kassel at the end of June. He continues to hold the Stammbuch and expects communication of all changes. He is ready to provide

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14 ‘Bericht über die Überprüfung von 153 Oberschülern in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone’ (10.5.49), BArch. SAPMO IV2/905/42, 201-212.
Fig. 13: The choir of the *Thomasschule*, 1947.
information about Old Afraner*. It is to be expected that this is a cover
address which may be of significance.\textsuperscript{16}

In the years leading up to 1961, the SED closed what it saw as a number of
loopholes, in the process ridding the education system of much of its diversity.
Small, but important pockets of middle-class immunity nevertheless continued
to persist in a few traditional \emph{Oberschule}. Founded in 1212, the \textit{Thomasschule}'s
international reputation for fostering and encouraging musical genius meant
that it was able to withstand the pressures affecting other parts of the education
system. In 1953, for instance, inspectors reported that its choir classes
continued to act as 'reservoirs for pupils with strong religious ties and, in
particular, those from bourgeois circles'.\textsuperscript{17} The atmosphere in the school was
said to be such that FDJer felt scared to wear the blue shirt to school and
pupils from progressive homes removed pictures of Lenin when their friends
from the school came to visit.\textsuperscript{18} In 1971, the headmaster estimated that 50\% of
pupils in the choir were still members of the \textit{Junge Gemeinde}.\textsuperscript{19} Despite
numerous attempts, particularly by the SED regional secretary, Paul Fröhlich, to
transform the music school into one worthy of the altered social conditions in
the Workers' and Peasants' State, important elements of the school's special
social and cultural profile remained intact well into the 1980s.\textsuperscript{20} For Christoph
Kleßmann, the immunity of the \textit{Thomasschule} represents a clear example of
the 'Beharrungskraft' (meaning force of inertia or of persistence) of the middle-
class milieu.\textsuperscript{21}

Following the closure of the border with West Berlin, the regime was able to
use its power of control over admissions to the Sixth Form and to the
universities to deprive people of access if they showed themselves to be
socially, politically or religiously nonconformist, thereby effectively condemning
them to low status employment for life. For people caught in this trap, the

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} 'Schulinspektion: Thomas Oberschule Leipzig (29.6.53)', DR2/5187, 213-18.
\textsuperscript{18} StAL RdB, Volksbildung 500.
\textsuperscript{19} 'Einschätzung und Schlussfolgerungen zur politisch-pädagogischen Arbeit an den EOS der
\textsuperscript{20} Christoph Kleßmann, 'Die Beharrungskraft traditioneller Milieus in der DDR' in Manfred
Hettling et al. (eds.), \emph{Was ist Gesellschaftsgeschichte?} (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1991), 146-154,
esp.151-152.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
arbitrary nature of the decision-making process together with its openness to manipulation and abuse and their inability to leave the country to take part in further education elsewhere meant that they could well feel that their rights as human beings were severely infringed. For many young people from working-class backgrounds, however, school remained an unwanted imposition which they did their best to leave at the earliest possible opportunity.

WORKING-CLASS ATTITUDES TO FORMAL EDUCATION

Underlying the SED's conceptions of leisure and culture lay the notion that the privileges and opportunities that had hitherto been the preserve of the middle classes should now be made available to young people from working-class backgrounds. The main problem with this goal was its assumption that youngsters from the working class would automatically find them attractive. Although significant numbers of people did take advantage of the opportunities made available to them and were thereby able to enjoy educational advancement from which previous generations had been excluded, many others remained unmoved and uninterested by the changes in education. In spite of its attempts to broaden the education system and to make it more accessible, the SED was surprised to find that many working-class youths rejected the rubric of self-development, improvement and qualification and instead voluntarily embraced unqualified, unskilled labour. Contrary to the Party's expectations, young people from the working class did not have a 'natural' interest in educating themselves. What seemed natural and normal to children of the middle classes could seem profoundly alien and unattractive to young people from a different social and cultural milieu. The cultural attributes prized in the milieu they grew up in were often at odds with those of the education system. As a result, instead of seeing education as a means of emancipation, they could see it as a threat. Underlying their rejection of formal education lay an implicit sense that it was impossible to embrace schooling

22 Willis, Learning to Labour.
Fig. 14: Percentages of male and female FDJ members in Bezirk Leipzig, 1953-1964.

without rejecting the culture and milieu of their upbringing, 'the distinctive styles of speech, thought and behaviour characteristic of working-class culture.' An unwritten and often unspoken rule of working-class life was the need to maintain the solidarity and respect of their peers. It was difficult for young people from this background to conceive of being successful at education without leaving behind or turning their backs on their family and friends.

For working-class girls, education was often seen as unnecessary, a distraction from the important business of finding a husband and having children. For young men from working-class neighbourhoods, academic qualifications and anything which smacked of formal education or organizational control appeared much less important than the process of becoming and proving oneself to be a man. The parent culture they had grown up in emphasized macho activist values which put them in contradiction with the perceived passive and feminine ethos of formal education. Just as teaching posts came to be progressively filled by women, so too, in spite of its 'militarization' did the youth organization become increasingly female in both numbers and character.

In spite of perhaps because women played a much more important role in the workforce, taking on roles which had traditionally been classed as 'men's jobs', it was very important for young male workers in East Germany to assert their masculinity. Emphasizing their 'laddishness' was a way of demonstrating that they were strong enough to cope with the rigours of physical labour and factory life. A cock-sure sense of self was required to cope amidst the intense noise, heat and strain of factory work, with practical jokes and intense peer pressure applied to those who were seen as not pulling their weight. For many young

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25 Lüdtke, 'What happened to the "Fiery Red Glow"?', 226.
people from working-class backgrounds, such an environment required other
tricks and aptitudes than those which could be obtained by reading books.
Becoming a man involved the development of alternative values of toughness
and masculinity, having a laugh, skiving and expressing new found maturity
through clothes and adult tastes.²⁹

Already at school, youngsters who would become workers started exhibiting the
course humour, sexism, horseplay and badinage that would help them to stand
up to the authority and pressures from other workers.³⁰

On 17.3.64, pupils from class 10c of the 26th Oberschule consumed onions
and garlic during the day in production in order to make the atmosphere of
the lesson completely impossible. Discussions in the youth organization and
with the teachers concerning their behaviour revealed that they were of the
opinion that because they all now had their contracts to become apprentices,
they could lark about (Fez machen) in the last months of school.³¹

In its struggle to come to terms with 'laddishness', the SED dismissed such
behaviour as 'false romanticism'.³² Nevertheless, functionaries were forced to
admit that 'a series of pupils who act the goat in class are often those who
stand out as future boxers, wrestlers and other types of sportsmen. Spoilt by
trainers, "idolized" by their parents, they have become arrogant and think they
can get through life with boxing...³³

For many workers, old and young, drinking was an important expression of
manliness, as well as an enjoyable way of socializing and letting off steam.
Pubs remained important centres of working-class socialization and leisure.
'Drinking, fights, moral excesses and bad work discipline are the
consequences.'³⁴ However, the occasional drink-fuelled excess was considered

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²⁹ Willis, Learning to Labour, 15, 18.
³⁰ Willis, Learning to Labour, 55.
³¹ 'Bemerkungen zu den Fragen der Disziplin und Ordnung (Leipzig, 21.3.1964)', StAL IV
A-2/9.02/353, 56-64.
³² 'Lage an den allgemeinbildenden polytechnischen Oberschulen (Leipzig, 8.10.1963)', StAL, IV
³³ 'Bemerkungen zu den Fragen'.
³⁴ 'Fragen der Jugenderziehung im Zusammenhang mit der Bekämpfung des Rowdytums und
der Jugendkriminalität (Berlin, 14.5.60)', BArch. SAPMO DY30/IV2/16/230.
by many working-class youths (and some of their parents) as a normal part of
growing up.

Parents do not pay enough attention to this problem. Time and time again,
one can observe adults ordering drinks for children and youths. If they are
reminded by the bar staff of the observance of youth protection prescriptions,
this often leads to unpleasant disagreements. But young people themselves
show no understanding for these measures. Many young people deride and
laugh at serving staff if they offer them non-alcoholic drinks.\(^{35}\)

They continued to belong to communities in which an unruly sense of working-
class culture and identity survived and which, in certain areas, could be seen to
prevail.

The custom, for example, of 'celebrating starting a new job (\textit{der Brauch des}
\textit{Einstand gebens})' is still widespread. Young people who work in breweries
receive their free beer (\textit{Deputat}) in the same way as adults. The same is the
case for young people in the coal mines. Time and again young sportsmen
also find occasions for imbibing alcohol, often even in the presence of their
coaches.\(^{36}\)

As far as the SED was concerned, there was 'a lack of clarity among working-
class youth about the sensible use of free time' together with 'a lagging behind
in the area of ideology'. Instead of growing up free from the 'morality and way of
life under capitalism', working-class youth inherited from older generations a
disrespectful attitude to socialist property in which minor pilfering was seen as
acceptable.

So, for example, tools, wood and other things are taken home and nothing is
seen as being wrong with it. Other appearances such as skiving off work
\textit{(Krankfeiern)}, drinking during work, celebrating starting and stopping jobs
\textit{(Ein- und Ausstandsfeiern)}, frequent changing of workplace and the
organized exchange of trash literature are equally expressions of an under-
developed consciousness.\(^{37}\)

\(^{35}\) 'Ratsinformation über die Kontrolltätigkeit zur Einhaltung der Verordnung zum Schutze der
Jugend (Leipzig, 18.8.66)', StAL, IV A2/16/464, 263.
\(^{36}\) 'Ratsinformation über die Kontrolltätigkeit...'
\(^{37}\) 'Fragen der Jugenderziehung...'
PERSISTENCE OF WORKING-CLASS STREET CULTURE

Although some people from the working class sought to advance themselves by taking part in the new cultural opportunities, many shunned them in favour of more uncouth activities which provided them more immediate stimulation and amusement. If for those few working-class pupils who had made it to an Oberschule, subsidised theatre and opera tickets offered a chance to see 'how the other half lived' and gain access to high culture, for those young people from working-class backgrounds who had opted out of education, free-time was frequently centred around the street, the park and the gang. In Leipzig, several 'packs' or Meuten formed which dominated different areas of the town. The street and its adjuncts, the playground, fairground, cinemas and parks had traditionally been a zone of freedom for young working-class men between the twin oppressions of work and home. A street culture developed as young people clustered together in cliques on street corners and squares. Freed from the constraints of close surveillance, they were able to prove themselves in a way that they were unable to do at work. Denied alternative forms of recreation and leisure, the street and the park provided spaces where young people could interact and socialize with one another. Youngsters (mainly boys) from the working class regarded these spaces as 'their' territory, which had to be defended against intrusion by outsiders. Territoriality and masculinity were the two most important components of working-class street culture. Many of the criticisms levelled at the gangs stemmed from their need to uphold their territorial claim by 'holding the street'. But their territoriality and sense of mischief brought the gangs into conflict not only with one another, but frequently also with the authorities. The gangs accepted violence as a means of resolving conflicts. Contrary to popular perceptions, however, violence was not indiscriminate, but highly choreographed and bound by ritual. In working-class cultures, recognition is always of a difference - either one that is shared or one

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38 See Chapter Eight.
that isn’t... For working-class kids the paradigm of recognition takes the form of ritual insult’ with a repertoire ranging from staring or repartee to ‘taking the piss’ and practical jokes.\textsuperscript{42} Gangs observed a ‘code of honour’ which meant that they could not accept slights without resorting to violence. As a result, fights between rival gangs were a sporadic, but recurrent feature of street life.

[Conflicts were governed] by elaborate conventions and constraints, which required the selection of a rival group of roughly equal age, strength and numbers and involved preliminary rituals of eye contact, verbal abuse, weapon brandishing and pushing and shoving before the actual encounter. Many conflicts did not progress beyond this ritualistic expression of aggressive masculinity.\textsuperscript{43}

Aggressive posturing and physicality also represented a ‘ritualized form of self-representation and mutual entertainment...’ Often, violence appeared as a ‘means of enforcing the right of the clique to some form of entertainment – where fighting itself or the aggressively maintained freedom to intrude on other people’s amusements could [itself] be construed as entertainment.\textsuperscript{44} The gangs’ pleasure in spoiling and disrupting other people’s amusements had historical antecedents in the traditional practice of Charivari and rough music.\textsuperscript{45}

In the GDR, gang members thought nothing of ‘kicking up a stink’ (Rabatz machen) during film showings by means of loud interruptions and catcalls or abusing people as they went into the cinema.\textsuperscript{46}

The gangs provoked respectable society through a combination of their presence, dress and demeanour. ‘Larking and kidding formed a basic part of the male manual labourer’s culture, especially among the young. Its most characteristic features were aggressive repartee, practical jokes, illicit smoking and drinking and raucous singing and horseplay’. Mucking about on the streets was motivated by a desire to make things happen, to create some immediate

\textsuperscript{42} Philip Cohen & David Robins, Knuckle Sandwich. Growing up in the working-class city (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 78.
\textsuperscript{43} Humphries, Hooligans or rebels?, 190.
\textsuperscript{45} Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘The reason of misrule: Youth groups and charivaris in sixteenth century France’, Past and Present, no 50, pp.41-75.
\textsuperscript{46} See for instance BStU, Ast. Lpz., AU 762/67, Band I, 125-127.
excitement. Prizing toughness and physicality, they sought to defend ‘their’ space, their territory and their girls from potential intrusions by other marauding gangs and, if they got in the way, from the authorities. The Communist Party was not a complete stranger to the phenomenon of juvenile street gangs. In her book *Beating the Fascists*, Eve Rosenhaft studied attempts by the German Communist Party to take over and utilise the cliques as a means of community defence against the Nazis in the early 1930s. Rosenhaft shows that the Communists’ attitudes to what they saw as Lumpen elements were highly ambivalent. While recognising the gangs’ ‘spontaneous antifascism’ as a potent means of defending working-class neighbourhoods, at the same time, the Communists showed unease about their indiscipline and unruliness together with their lack of interest in politics. The Communists were unsure whether to consider the street as a reservoir for potentially revolutionary working-class recruits or to see it as a cesspool of un-proletarian, pre-political, lumpen elements.

Although by the mid-1950s, they had no idea that they were following in others’ footsteps, youngsters from working-class neighbourhoods continued to engage in street culture throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The earliest ‘cliques’ and Meuten shared certain Bündische stylistic features with the gangs which had gone before them – with gang members wearing neckerchiefs and checked shirts as a means of distinguishing group members from outsiders. As in the 1920s and 1930s, knives and knuckle-dusters represented important fashion accessories for urban street gangs. With the rise in importance of commercialized youth culture in West Germany, the gangs and Meuten in the East gradually also lost their trappings of Bündische style – swapping checked shirts and shorts for jeans, t-shirts and leather jackets. But although their

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47 Humphries, *Hooligans or rebels?*, 140, 146.
48 Wensierski, ‘Die Anderen nannten uns Halbstarke’.
49 Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists?*, 136. The contempt felt by some in the Communist Party for disorganized elements of the working class was expressed all too clearly during an exchange between FDJ functionaries in which it was stated of one that ‘His position is not that of a Comrade but of a washerwoman’. STAL, SED IV5/01/483.
50 See Chapter Eight.
51 The use of the the term ‘brightly checked (Buntkarierte)’ as a label for gang members in Leipzig in the 1950s suggests continued associations with the ‘buntkarierte Skihemden’ worn by Meuten members in the late 1930s. See Gruchmann, ‘Jugendopposition und Justiz im Dritten Reich’, 105; For a report on gangs wearing neckerchiefs, see Cliquenbildung, 1952; Landesarchiv Berlin, STA Rep. 303/26, 137.
52 Arno Klönne, *Umerziehung, Aufbau & Kulturkonflikt: Zur Geschichte der Jugend im geteilten
outward appearance changed substantially, the gangs still exhibited similar styles of behaviour to those who had gone before them. In the 1930s, the Meuten had sung songs of wandering and adventure and shown 'lively interest in every news broadcast about the civil war between the Spanish workers and the fascists'. For want of better things to do, some gangs continued to sing songs together into the 1960s. Only this time when they wanted to break a taboo, they sang forbidden soldier songs from the Third Reich (like 'Grüß mir die Heimat, Karin mein Glück' and 'Wir fahren gegen England'), altering the words to add lines about Walter Ulbricht and Khrushchev, even transposing them onto the tune of songs they had learned in school like 'Spaniens Himmel'.

HOSTILITY TO WORKING-CLASS POPULAR CULTURE

Within working-class communities, attitudes to the gangs (and to other forms of rough, non-respectable popular culture) had always been contradictory and ambivalent. Although their macho attitudes and unruly behaviour emulated and stemmed from attitudes prevalent within their parent community, there were also many within that same community who perceived such behaviour as lumpen and non-respectable. The fault-lines between respectable and non-respectable culture ran not above or below but right through the middle of the working class. Therefore, while some were prepared to defend or excuse certain forms of behaviour as being a long-running feature of working-class life, others simply attacked what they saw as a lowering of standards and morals which would not have happened when they were young. 'The same historical process which pushed the parent culture inwards on itself pushed working-class youth to its periphery as the residual legatees of street culture'. At times when the community was subject to official hostility or external threats, the barriers...
between it and the outside world served to increase the sense of solidarity and
toleration of the gangs. As these barriers disappeared (or became submerged)
as was the case from the late 1950s onwards in the GDR, the divisions,
particularly between respectable and non-respectable sections of the working
class, were likely to increase. The decline in power and privilege of the
bourgeoisie meant that workers ceased to have a common enemy and allowed
inequalities of opportunity and interest to open up within the working class itself.

The development of the GDR as a workers' and peasants' state had a
complex and contradictory impact on the status of the working class. The
dictatorship of the proletariat removed the social stigma attached to being born
into the proletariat as well as opening up opportunities for training and
development previously restricted to higher social classes. There was no longer
any shame attached to being a worker, no reason to feel inferior for wearing
overalls or working men's boots. But, at the same time, the SED presented a
conception of working-class life which was solidly sober and respectable, shorn
of reckless and unruly features, pasteurized and homogenized to fit in with the
requirements of socialism. Continuing differences in education and status were
concealed behind a general appearance of mateyness (deliberately fostered by
party functionaries who addressed everyone around them with the informal Du).
An atmosphere in which people did their best to avoid standing out by rubbing
along as unobtrusively as possible made those who hung around on
streetcorners in the gangs and who, by contemporary standards, dressed
outrageously (with brightly coloured shirts and stripy socks, later with jeans and
imitation leather jackets) seem all the more daring and ostentatious.

Although they continued to behave in a boisterous and disorderly manner,
their haircuts and clothing changed in response to western fashions. The SED
was much more interested in exposing the alien influence of the West than in
exploring potential sources of continuity with older patterns of working-class
behaviour. As a result, although arguably part of a long-standing tradition of
working-class street behaviour and culture, such uncontrolled popular practices
became increasingly viewed with suspicion. Disregarding the fact that they were
also part-and-parcel of working-class culture, any behaviours which threatened
the Party's attempts to create order and authority were criticised and
condemned, frequently using bourgeois notions of 'decency' and 'respectability'. At the height of a growth in subculture stimulated by Rock'n Roll, Walter Ulbricht gave a speech in which he recognised that 'for the middle-class, for a part of the intelligentsia and for many farmers', 'the path to socialism' was a very difficult and complicated matter. The only way they could be won for the project, he argued, was when they realized that socialism represented 'a decent (anständiges) life rich in culture'. The main arguments used for harrying and persecuting the gangs (known officially as 'liquidating' them) were that they were misspending time which could have been used for educating themselves and acquiring culture; and that, instead, they were involved in sexually harassing women and young girls (verbally or by means of wolf whistles). For those young people involved, the sanctimonious official reactions were difficult to understand. Gangs had their own sense of morality even when it failed to coincide with that of the rest of society. Although they did not conform to middle-class standards of propriety, the banter and remarks nevertheless formed informal codes of conduct and manners characteristic of and acceptable in parts of the working-class community.

While the SED claimed to preserve and foster working-class traditions and popular culture, what they held up as traditional, working-class culture (such as folk dancing and political singing) was often very different from what young people from the working class actually enjoyed doing. The Bitterfelder Weg, launched in 1959 with the catchy slogan 'Grab your pen mate', was supposed to dismantle the wall between the masses and high culture. 'Intellectual workers' (Kopfarbeiter) were supposed to go into the factories and write about the lives of workers while 'manual workers' (Handarbeiter) were artistically to adapt their everyday life and thereby 'storm the heights of culture'. Although the Bitterfelder Weg did create more realistic depictions of working-class life in the work of Christa Wolf and Erik Neutsch, the Party nevertheless maintained a reductive conception of working-class culture, disavowing those elements which could not be politically managed and controlled in support of the state. While

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57 LVZ, 24.6.58.
58 Humphries, Hooligans or rebels?, 134, 137; Willis, Learning to Labour, 46.
60 Christa Wolf, Der geteilte Himmel (1963), Erik Neutsch, Spur der Steine (1964). Both books tempered their realistic depiction of economic and other problems with optimistic accounts of
the patchwork of local working-class groups, associations and societies were incorporated into the network of activities controlled by mass organizations like the FDGB and the National Front, attitudes to street culture and other forms of uncontrolled popular culture remained unremittingly hostile.

It is difficult to say how much Walter Ulbricht really understood of high culture and the fine arts. Surviving propaganda images suggest that he was happiest outdoors playing volleyball with ‘die Jugend’. But he persisted in seeing culture as an antidote which all young people needed to imbibe if they were to inoculate themselves against imperialism. There was a contradiction, however, between SED conceptions of culture as a weapon or a tool for advancement of the working class, and culture as it was experienced as a way of life inextricably bound up with people’s sense of self. While the SED emphasized the foreign and alien character of western youth culture, smuggled into the GDR as part of a deliberate effort to undermine socialism, what the police actually attacked was the continued existence of working-class street culture under the label of ‘rowdyism’. In this way, the SED succeeded in turning itself against young people from the very class it claimed to represent. By attempting to take ‘their’ spaces away from them, the SED alienated young workers and called forth their stubborn resistance. The refusal to recognise working-class use of the street as a space for recreation and socialization led the SED to embark on an attempt to remove them from public view. What the SED failed to accept was the extent of continuities between its own perception and methods of dealing with working-class street culture and the authoritarian responses of police forces and the bourgeoisie since the turn of the century. In its attempts to impose a total claim on young people, the SED implicitly took over the bourgeois ‘mission’ to reform working-class youth and to deprive them of access to spaces which had traditionally served as places for interaction and recreation. As a result, although much of the power of the bourgeoisie had been removed and middle-class groups had been made to serve as scapegoats people finding their place in socialism. In Spur der Stein, Bala, the archetypal ‘anarchic adventurer’ becomes a working-class personality conscious of his societal responsibility.

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61 Nothnagle, Building the East German Myth, 48-60.
and reminders of the injustice of the past, the SED took on many of the functions and prejudices against non-respectable forms of culture and behaviour which had traditionally been the preserve of the bourgeoisie. In Gramscian terms, the hegemonic processes of cultural domination continued to work against working-class youth even though radical steps had been taken to equalize social relations and redistribute societal resources. In effect, the SED became responsible for policing and enforcing conformity with bourgeois norms.

Although the Party claimed young workers as the great hope and achievement of the regime, in actual fact, they continued to be hounded by state authorities. Their continuation of street-based culture brought them into conflict with a police force which had committed itself not just to upholding and defending bourgeois norms of respectability but to enforcing rigid definitions of suitable adolescent behaviour instituted by the Nazis. Documents in the Landesarchiv in Berlin show that the East German police took over the police order of 1943 in exactly the same form and wording as it had been issued by the Nazis (complete with swastikas and references to exceptions for members of the Nazi Party). The order imposed curfews on young people hanging around on 'public streets or squares, in parks and stations, in cinemas, varieties and other entertainment venues' thereby declaring virtually all uncontrolled leisure-time activities for young people as 'loitering' (Herumtreiberei). Although less severe, similar presumptions and attitudes towards youth were carried over into the GDR's own legislation. While the similarities between the Communists' own responses to youth and those of the Nazis remained veiled and hidden, the SED saw itself as a modernizing force. In their new role as ruling party, the Communists ceased to see youth gangs for what they were – an element of working-class culture – and instead to see them purely as a

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63 For Britain, see Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels*; Some of the best work on bourgeois attempts to control working-class behaviour has, in recent years, been carried out in Australia. See Lynette Finch, 'On the streets: Working class youth culture in the nineteenth century' in Rob White (ed.), *Youth subcultures. Theory, history and the Australian experience* (Hobart: National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, 1993), Ch. 12, 75-79; Jon Stratton, *The young ones. Working-class culture, consumption and the category of youth* (Perth: Black Swan Press, 1992).
65 *Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin: 'Polizeiverordnung zum Schutze der Jugend vom 10.6.1943 (Berlin, 1.2.47)', Landesarchiv Berlin, STA Rep. 303/9 Nr. 102, p.67.
67 See the 'Verordnung zum Schutze der Jugend vom 15.9.1955', STA, IV5/01/483.
nuisance and an obstacle to order and progress. Surviving forms of working-
class street culture were interpreted as relics from the past, phenomena which
had no place in the altered social conditions of the GDR. Ever since the 18th
century, would-be social reformers had been trying to get eigen-sinnig working-
class street cultures off the streets.\textsuperscript{68}

Alfons Kenkmann argues that because its antifascist Feindbild (or concept of
the enemy) was such an almost perfect reflection of the anti-Communist
Feindbild used by the Nazis, the methodology used by the SED to deal with
youth cliques came to mirror that used by the Gestapo.\textsuperscript{69} In both cases, the
methodology used was to round up as many members of the group as possible
and then decide what to accuse them of. For their part, gang members made
the authorities' work in persecuting them easier by repeatedly engaging in
excesses of misrule.

\textbf{FORMS OF CARNIVAL AND MISRULE\textsuperscript{70}}

Control of the street, the parks and the Kleinmesse was much more difficult to
achieve than control over schools, factories and the youth organization.
Youthful misrule was a recurrent feature in front of the cinemas and at
particular street corners where passers-by (usually of the same age) would be
jostled and jeered. There was also an upsurge of misrule at particular times of
the year. In addition to the official socialist calendar, the highpoint of which was
the first of May, there was another, more traditional calendar of popular
festivals permitting, in contrast, annual celebrations of carnival and ritualized
excess. Throughout the GDR, Shrovetide (Fasching) and New Year provided
young people with opportunities for dressing up and engaging in boisterous
merriment. In addition, Leipzig had its own special festival of misrule in
September. Just as Fasching traditionally implied the temporary suspension of
order, so had the 'Tauchscher' traditionally been marked by running battles
between students and apprentices. The festival dated back to the Middle Ages

\begin{footnotes}
\item[68] Lüdtke, \textit{Eigen-Sinn}, 9.
\item[70] George Rudé, \textit{The Crowd in History} (London: Lawrence & Wishhart, 1981); Eric Hobsbawm,
\textit{Primitive Rebels. Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the nineteenth and twentieth
centuries} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959); Peter Burke, \textit{Popular Culture in
eyarly modern Europe} (London: Temple Smith, 1978), Ch.7: 'The world of carnival'.
\end{footnotes}
Fig. 15: Entering Indian Territory. Children dressed up for the Tauchscher in the 1900s.
and marked Leipzig's ascendancy over its neighbour and rival, Taucha. Whereas at one time such events had been considered an important part of the life of the community, as society gradually became more 'civilized', bourgeois and self-controlling, the local authorities took a much dimmer view of such periodic releases of 'high spirits'. Nevertheless, in the 1920s and 1930s, the Tauchscher continued to be an occasion for 'letting go' and for fights between rival gangs. In 1929, it was reported that 'in a few parts of town large fights have taken place, in which participants set about one another with fencing slats, cudgels and other implements.' During the Third Reich, the Nazis appropriated the festival and used it in support of their notions of German 'national community'. After the war, the SED allowed it to return to some of its former glory with a procession of the town inhabitants dressed up as red indians as had been their custom ever since the town had been visited by Barnum’s Circus in the 1890s.

Writing in the Soviet Union under Stalin, Mikhail Bakhtin contrasted the unconstrained vitality of the carnivalesque with the sterile modernizing programme and rhetoric of Soviet Communism. 'For Bakhtin, carnival contained a utopian urge: it displaced, even inverted, the normal social hierarchies. Carnival was also a time which encouraged bodily needs and pleasures different from those called upon by the ordinary rhythm of labour and leisure.' Unfortunately for the SED, both the Tauchscher and Fasching provided young workers with an irresistible excuse for misrule. As was the nature of such events, they temporarily suspended the normal reign of order and authority, providing opportunities for ridicule and mischief which the GDR's political authorities could ill afford to tolerate.

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73 Schottke, 'Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung des Tauchscher', 110.
75 During (ed.), The Cultural Studies Reader, 382.
76 Schottke, 'Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung des Tauchscher', 115.
In February 1962, ‘friends’ from the FDJ-organization of the People’s Own
High-Current Equipment Works carried out a Fasching party. The People’s
Police were called when a person or persons unknown turned out the lights, let
off a tear gas canister and threw lighted rolls of film into the overcrowded room.
During the pandemonium and confusion, someone put a burning roll of film into
the apron pocket of one of the sales assistants, thereby singeing both her
garment and underwear. The police seized several ‘revolvers of West German
production’ and a dagger. A youth wearing a shirt with Presley pictures, pictures
of naked girls and corresponding labels such as ‘Elvis’ and ‘Rock’n Roll was
made to take it off. Questioned afterwards, the FDJ organizers failed to produce
a political conception for the carnival. Instead, it was reported, they had opened
the door to anarchy and licentiousness by printing invitations with the
formulation ‘Everything upside down (Alles steht Kopf)’.77

Overblown as it may have been, the hyperbolic ‘guerrilla warfare’ rhetoric the
regime used in relation to juvenile gangs captured an important essence of
juvenile misrule. The problem with acts of ‘organized rowdyism’ was precisely
that they needed no organization or ringleaders. All they required was the right
atmosphere for outwardly ordinary and unobtrusive young workers to briefly
take the stage in defiance of the regime in most cases only to disappear and
merge back into the crowd again. Such incidents rarely had any predefined
aims or plan. Misrule was exciting and contagious and could easily lead young
people to do things that they might later have regretted.78

It was not my intention to behave in the way described on the 3.9.1961. As a
result of the stroll through the fair (den Messebummel) on this day and the
alcohol I had drunk I got caught up in an irresponsibly light-hearted mood on
meeting this group. I carried out the actions as described without seriously
considering their meaning and consequences. Instead I let myself be carried
along by this impossible to describe atmosphere and the events which
occurred because I felt somehow ‘strong’ in this Meute.79

77 ‘Information über die Faschingsveranstaltung im HO-Warenhaus in Leipzig (13.2.1962)’, DY
24/ 3726.
78 ‘Randalierende Jugendliche in der Innenstadt (Leipzig, 4.9.1961)’ StAL, BDVP 24.1/420, 5-6;
BStU, Ast. Lpz, AIM 7201/92.
79 BStU, Ast. Lpz, AIM 7201/92, p.41.
Everyone involved was simply playing along by ear, acting instinctively in a group dynamic that caused them to lose their inhibitions and behave in an uncharacteristically bold way. Questioned (or rather interrogated) afterwards, participants tended to blame their actions on alcohol or on a reluctance to back down in front of the others. In some cases, the participants had been complete strangers before they became engaged in misrule together. In the case described above, Lothar R., had not known the others before they started shouting 'Long live the Frontstadt West Berlin' – to which he replied 'Stimmung (Atmosphere)'. He nevertheless attacked the policemen who tried to arrest his companions, even though he himself had been a transport policeman for the last five years and was on leave after serving as part of the 'security forces' involved in sealing the border in Berlin.

By the time I realized that the [other] youngsters were defaming the measures that through my service following the 13.8. I had helped to carry through and protect, it was too late... During my deployment after the 13.8.61..., I [nevertheless] proved under difficult conditions that I stood by the GDR. I stayed steadfast in this mission in spite of the stones thrown by provocateurs from West Berlin and did not listen to their invitations to go over to the other side.\(^80\)

The ritual character of carnival and misrule easily lent itself to expressions of symbolic opposition to the regime in the form of chants and catcalls. Attempts by the police to arrest the 'ringleaders' even though heavily outnumbered often provoked the crowd into challenging their fragile authority. Although reference was often made in such situations to the language of Westerns – with calls for the 'Sheriff' to give up their friend – the crowds served to remind the 'People's Police' of the fate which awaited them if ever the tables were turned.

"Sheriff gibt den Klaus heraus, sonst machen wir dir den Garaus." – Sheriff let our Klaus out, or we'll do you in.\(^81\)

"Sheriff gib die Kumpel frei, sonst haue ich Dir die Knochen ein." – Sheriff let our mate go free or I'll come and break your legs.\(^82\)

\(^{80}\) BStU, Ast. Lpz., AIM 7201/92, p.41-2.

\(^{81}\) 'Vorkommnis auf dem Weihnachtsmarkt' (Leipzig, 30.11.1964), StAL, IV A-5/01/247, 35-40.

Party functionaries repeatedly criticised the failure of older workers to intervene or to exercise a more positive influence over such youngsters. Just as young workers implicitly knew which of their older colleagues to pay heed to and which could safely be ignored, so too did the more astute older workers know better than to attract the young lads’ derision and lack of respect by lecturing them about what they got up to in their free time. In March 1951 older workers not only failed to intervene but actively applauded and joined in with the perpetrators.

The many visitors to the fair, who wanted to go home, stayed in front of the police guardpost and were consciously misled about the incident by the 'checked shirts (Buntkarierten)'

As a result of this false information, working-class elements (Arbeiterelemente) also took up a completely false position against the people's police. A section of our comrades and naturally a greater proportion of the colleagues in the factories did not fully recognise the political implications of this organized provocation. They are of the opinion that it was only a childish prank (Dumme-Junge-Streiche) and that there have always been fights at the 'Tauchscher' and that they're only horseplay (Rüpeleien).

The reactions of older workers to events which occurred during the 1951 Tauchscher showed the extent to which they were still aware of and ready to defend older traditions of misrule. At this stage, young workers could still rely on a sense of reciprocal support and solidarity based on common working-class understandings and experience.

Although the Tauchscher and Fasching carnival were both subjected to heavy restrictions (and eventually, in the early 1960s, banned), the fairground (Kleinmesse) in Leipzig continued to provide a stage on which for riots to take place in which young people joined together to engage in misrule thereby symbolically undermining the authority of the state. In many cases, misrule had more political implications than participants themselves realized (at the time or subsequently). They exploited the opportunities available to them in order to turn the normal order temporarily upside down. Provoking the police through spontaneous outbreaks of misrule was largely motivated by the desire for

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83 'Bericht über die provokatorischen Vorfälle zum Volksfest "Tauchscher" am 10.9.51 auf der Kleinmesse in Leipzig', StAL IV/5/01/273, 51-9.
immediate gratification in the form of entertainment and fun. Playing cat and mouse with the authorities provided light relief from the constraints of everyday reality. The regime’s implicit adoption of bourgeois norms of respectability made it particularly vulnerable to working-class forms of street culture and protest. Provoking and winding up functionaries added another level of amusement to defiance of authority and respectable society.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the impact of historical and cultural continuities on young people's experiences of and reactions to official attempts at socialization. It has assessed the difficulties faced by the SED in transforming the education system and the persistence of residues of an elitist middle-class ethos. Examining working-class attitudes to formal schooling, the chapter suggests that it was easier to make institutional changes than to alter tastes and sensibilities. Instead of seeing school and formal qualifications as a means of enlightenment and emancipation, many young people from the proletariat feared that education would alienate and estrange them from their surroundings and milieu. There was an important contradiction between the SED’s stated aim of opening the education system up to all and its rigid insistence on maintaining traditional educational values which were harder for working-class pupils to cope with, and which when they did identify with them, had the effect of removing them from the outlook and experiences of their class of origin.

Distinct from and in contradiction to the official emphasis on culture as an antidote and the means of transforming society, young people from working-class neighbourhoods remained attached to their own forms of culture and entertainment which stood in opposition to attempts to create a hegemonic culture. By attacking those aspects of working-class culture that it was unable to control, the SED and the People’s Police in effect became responsible for enforcing bourgeois norms. Not only did young workers struggle to retain their occupation of spaces that had traditionally been theirs, but they also developed their own forms of carnival and misrule to undermine official attempts to monopolize and misappropriate them.
CONTRADICTIONS & NEGOTIATIONS

For a great many young people, the combined effect of the various influences to which they were subject was to produce 'inner conflict' (or Zwiespalt). It was in an attempt to overcome such forms of 'cognitive dissonance' or 'wandering between the worlds' expressed through various forms of passive opposition, distance and escapism, that the regime resorted to a variety of strategies, some cooptive others overtly coercive in an attempt to win back young people for socialism. Although the building of the wall was the most dramatic demonstration of the Party's determination to put an end to ideological border-crossing, the decade between 1955 and 1965 saw a number of attempts at renegotiation as the regime tried to coopt and coerce young people back into conformity. Nevertheless, in spite of repeated signs that the youth organization was failing to achieve its function of winning youth for the regime, there was a lack of political will to effect genuine reforms. The regime oscillated between repression and reform without finding a coherent strategy for winning back waverers.

Faced with a number of conflicting influences and divided from one another by class and milieu, the experience for young people of growing up in the GDR during this period remained predominantly one of ambivalence. Pulled between the desire to fit in and the urge to rebel, many youngsters straddled the border between conformity and nonconformity. Some sought to pursue their interests within the system, disguising their inner distance and disbelief behind masks of conformity and allegiance. Others overtly rejected the regime's message and sought to take flight either directly in the form of Republikflucht or indirectly through self-segregation and inner emigration.
4) Inner Conflict

Wichtig zu lernen vor allem ist Einverständnis.
Viele sagen Ja und doch ist da kein Einverständnis.
Viele werden nicht gefragt, und viele
Sind einverstanden mit Falschem. Darum:
Wichtig zu lernen vor allem ist Einverständnis.

Bertolt Brecht, Der Jasager und der Neinsager
performed by Class 12b of the Karl-Marx-Oberschule

In July 1961, Class 12b of the Karl-Marx-Oberschule spent a fortnight on the island of Rügen in the Baltic Sea assisting local farmers in harvesting turnips. Following their return to Leipzig, it was discovered that members of the class had been engaged in activities which were 'defamatory' and 'harmful' to the state. Although in retrospect their activities appear harmless, during the heightened state of paranoia immediately following the building of the wall, they were interpreted as 'counter-revolutionary actions' resulting from 'an intensification of enemy activity in the Oberschule'.^ Their trial was the first of several involving Oberschüler and saw them accused of treachery and of seeking to undermine the state.

After the 13 August, manifestly reactionary forces have made an appearance among students and pupils at universities and higher schools, particularly the extended Oberschule. They often have good marks, talk progressively and often give the impression of being good FDJ members, even though they listen to NATO radio stations, take in the lies and slanders directed against the GDR and act according to their directives.2

This chapter explains what happened and demonstrates how, under particular circumstances, young people's feelings of ambivalence towards the regime and towards its attempts to integrate and convert them could develop into concealed forms of dissidence and protest. Although young people from another school were also arrested, the focus here is on the experiences of six young men from the Karl-Marx-Oberschule - Hans-Peter, Wolfgang, Franz,

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1 Incident reports (Aug to Sep 1961), DY30/IV2/905/27.
2 'Analyse über die Lage unter der Jugend und die Wirksamkeit der staatlichen Jugendpolitik (Feb. 1962)', Barch SAPMO DY6 / 3940.
Fig. 16: Following their release from prison, the former Karl-Marx-Oberschüler (minus Dieter) returned to the Baltic for a holiday wearing the stripes of escaped prisoners as their Fasching costumes. From the left, Franz, Reinhart, Wolfgang, Herbert and Hans-Peter,
Herbert, Reinhart and Dieter – who were declared to be the ringleaders of the ‘provocation’ and who were consequently forced to endure long prison sentences for their ‘crime’. The group had remained relatively close friends and had recently taken part in the trial of the judge who had presided over their case. This meant that it was relatively easy to make contact with them. During the course of six separate biographical interviews they described for me their memories of school and of one another in an attempt to recollect what it had been like to grow up in the GDR and to go to an Oberschule. A further interview was carried out with one of the group’s co-accused from another Oberschule (in Jüterbog). Due to a combination of factors it proved impossible to trace any of the girls involved in the incident. Firstly, it is rare for the names of girls to surface in charge sheets and official reports. Secondly, although, in this case, contacts still existed between a person I had interviewed and one of the young women who had been involved, the interviewee said that it had been such a traumatic experience for his former classmate that she was reluctant to talk about it. While the boys had been attacked using judicial means, the girls had instead been subjected to public humiliation. In her case, the shame attached to her memories of what happened was such that, even today, she was scared ‘about what her present employers might think if it were to become public’.

**AMBIVALENCE**

As has been suggested in the previous chapters, young people in the GDR grew up subject to a number of different competing influences. The state, Western media and their cultural milieu all had an impact on their lifestyle and identities. The combined effect was to create feelings of ambivalence. Opportunities were tempered with pressures to conform; escapism was tinged with danger; and immunity offered distance without outright condemnation. These feelings of ambivalence and contradiction were most strongly felt in the Oberschule. On the one hand, young people there were part of a relatively privileged group. Only a small proportion of their age group was accepted for a place at a higher school. Providing they accomplished all their duties correctly, ‘volunteered’ when it was demanded of them and passed their exams

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3 Judgement in the case against the Karl-Marx-Oberschüler (December 1961).
4 Interview with Claus K.
successfully, the way was open for them to go on to university and to become professionals in the new socialist society. On the other hand, just below the surface there lurked the continual pressure to conform for fear of sacrificing their hopes of future success and happiness.

How a particular individual experienced various aspects of the education they received depended on their background, but also on their personality, their aptitudes and abilities. Each one of the six boys in Class 12b had his own ‘favourite subject’ and personal hates. German literature, history (particularly of ancient Greece and Rome), Chemistry and PE were all listed as favourites. Civics (Staatsbürgerkunde), recent history and Russian all figured heavily as pet-hates – although for different reasons. For those with no natural gift for languages, Latin, French and English were all equally difficult to come to grips with. But Russian, with its strange-looking alphabet and complex grammar was even harder to master. As with other languages, it was only if young people spent some time in the country and were forced to use it that they became genuinely adept and confident in speaking it.5

Civics was off-putting for different reasons. Not only was it boring, but it was repetitive – covering ground which had been taught and re-taught over previous years. In addition, the terms used were often heavily theoretical and abstract. ‘Frequently concepts are used in lessons which present a completely foreign and abstract world for pupils. It starts with the concept of [socialist] democracy.’ As Dieter J. put it, ‘we weren’t the thickest, [but] there were a lot of things we simply couldn’t grasp – namely all the dogma that was presented to us.’7 Above all, however, civics was an obvious political imposition, with little purpose other than to make young people into pliant and believing subjects of the state.

[Civics was] much too stuffily correct (bieder)... the whole thing had to be accepted without contradiction... I withdrew into myself and simply didn’t say anything... To contradict what was said was nearly impossible. Even then it

5 Interview with Herbert O.
7 Interview with Dieter J.
had to be highly qualified... but simply to say what you really felt... [I just] didn’t say anything... We only said what we really thought when we were outside.\textsuperscript{8}

Civics, ‘that was the subject in which there was no discussion’. In other less overtly politicized subjects there was at least the possibility of having and expressing one’s own opinion even if it differed from that of the teacher or the textbook. ‘In every other subject we could discuss things with the teacher, even raise doubts about a particular thesis, but in Stabü one wasn’t allowed to do that...’\textsuperscript{9} As a reflection of the immutable laws of history, civics was considered inviolable and any deviation from the official syllabus, however minor, was dangerous for both pupils and teacher. ‘There were often subjects where the teacher couldn’t go any further or didn’t want to in order not to lose face (\textit{um sein Gesicht nicht zu verlieren}).’\textsuperscript{10}

All of the six boys gravitated towards scientific and technical subjects, aiming at careers as engineers or, in the case of Franz P., medicine. These interests reflected, in part, the technocratic ethos of education in the GDR, geared towards professions where young people could make a contribution to the well being of society. Their career choices also reflected a more general German emphasis on technical know-how and efficiency. But the interest in science and technology exhibited by these six reflected the interest of boys around the globe in the 1950s when science seemed like the great hope of humanity, capable of solving problems and creating a better and more prosperous world.

In their spare time, several of the boys were engaged in \textit{basteln}, building models and playing at being inventors. Starting out with mechano and model aeroplanes made of balsa wood and glue, many boys at this time moved on to playing around with early crystal radio and electronics sets. Herbert O. and Hans-Peter D. were no exceptions. Having a father who was a chemistry professor, Herbert was able to get hold of enough equipment to build his own private home-brew distillery and the chemicals to stock a dark room. In addition, Herbert not only built his own radio receivers, but even managed to make his

\textsuperscript{8} Interview with Wolfgang V.
\textsuperscript{9} Interview with Dieter J.
\textsuperscript{10} Interview with Dieter J.
own short-distance sender. As a result of his experiments, he remembered depriving all the houses in the surrounding area of their television reception.\textsuperscript{11} Hans-Peter also learned about waves and frequencies during his attempts to strengthen and improve the TV signal from West Germany.\textsuperscript{12} Franz P. was a sound engineer and DJ in his spare time, recording Rock'n Roll songs off the radio onto an early tape recorder and playing them back at parties.\textsuperscript{13}

Although these interests were first developed at home with parents or older siblings, the state offered opportunities for young people to take their hobbies further and to develop them into expertise which would prove useful in later life. Hans-Peter continued his hobby of taking apart and playing around with old radios in the school's GST signals corps. Dieter J., was also involved in radio at school but as a writer rather than as a technician. He wrote, edited and presented reports on the Karl-Marx-Oberschule's own radio broadcasts via the tannoy system at lunch- and break-times. He was also involved in the GST, where he took part in sailing and 'water sport' – a combined event consisting of running, swimming, rowing and technical disciplines. 'I put my whole heart into it (Ich war mit Leib und Seele dabei). We went out to Knauthain, to the brown-coal lake there, twice a week for training. We took second place in the GDR championships.'\textsuperscript{14} Wolfgang V. was also a keen sportsman, enjoying football and athletics, training twice a week and competing at weekends. On top of that, he was interested in amateur dramatics and took part in the productions of the school's 'Agitprop' group. Franz P. also enjoyed sport. In addition, he developed his ambition to become a doctor doing voluntary work with the local Red Cross.

When they first remembered these after-school activities, the interviewees all spoke of the fun and enjoyment they had had. As Dieter J. remarked, 'We really enjoyed it'. It was only when asked to elaborate or explain further what such activities had entailed that they had become conscious of other aspects or interpretations, which tempered their otherwise fond reminiscences. 'All in all, seen from today's perspective, it's possible to see that it was directed somehow

\textsuperscript{11} Interview with Herbert O.
\textsuperscript{12} Interview with Hans-Peter D.
\textsuperscript{13} Interview with Franz P.
\textsuperscript{14} Interview with Dieter J.
in a particular direction.' Asked if they were really given a microphone and allowed to broadcast to the whole school, Dieter explained that there was always a teacher around supervising and directing them in the same way as for the Wandzeitung. 'It was naturally all done under the leadership of teachers, who made editorial revisions and kept an eye to make sure there was nothing negative about it... At this age, it was relatively easy for the GDR to bring us in a particular direction.' Unprompted, Dieter also explained that although they had practised shooting with the GST, it was treated very much as sport shooting (eine reine sportliche Sache) and not as pre-military training as was the case in later decades of the GDR. Likewise, in relation to my possible reaction to the term, Wolfgang went on to elaborate on the term 'Agitprop'. When he had first mentioned it, he explained, he had thought nothing of it. He just remembered it being fun. 'Back then, it was common for each person to be involved in some kind of free-time activity. I didn’t really care what was said [in the Agitprop performances]. It was absolute fun for me.' Forty years later, he could see other connotations to the term ‘Agitation and Propaganda’: ‘to tell the truth, in the 9th and 10th classes, I didn’t give it an awful lot of thought. I took part without standing behind it but also without aversion because I enjoyed the acting. We were various different people who got on well together. To be honest, I was never particularly politically engaged. You just did it without thinking too seriously about it – that only came later. It was only really about the acting [for me].'

Growing up in the GDR, the boys experienced its ambivalence at first hand. 'We grew up in the GDR. We went through the whole development.' As Hans-Peter explained, they were subject to influences from 'several sides':

As a young person, as a fourteen-year-old you’re not yet so sure of yourself... you’re continually pulled back and forth. There were always so-called "proofs" that the path the state had taken had to be the right one. You were influenced from several sides but with increasing age and increasing possibilities of informing yourself... [it became easier to work out what was true and what was false].

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15 Interview with Dieter J.
16 Interview with Hans-Peter D.
As far as Herbert O. was concerned, 'I never considered the ideas of socialism to be bad... it was just the way they were implemented and the people who represented the whole thing who did it in such an amateurish and unpopular way. The basic idea was – to be sure at 15 or 16 very diffuse – nevertheless [one I could agree with].'

There were aspects of their schooling where young people had gone through the motions and, on the advice of parents or teachers, had consciously hidden their true feelings in order to maintain their chances of future success. Some of the things demanded of them were more crass and oppressive than others. Hans-Peter remembered that shortly after the wall in Berlin had been built, pupils from the school had been loaded onto trucks and driven round Leipzig holding placards and distributing leaflets in support of the regime. This period was also one in which young men in the Oberschule came under great pressure to sign up for service in the National People's Army (NVA) even though conscription had not yet been formally introduced and service was nominally still voluntary. Other pressures to show conformity – like the Fahnenappell where pupils were made to march up and down outside and stand in front of the flag – gradually lost their meaning and significance by force of habit. The state was not the only organization to put pressure on young people or to inspire their resentment however. Although he had been baptised a Catholic, Wolfgang V. nevertheless became disenchanted and stopped going to church. 'The priest put pressure on me [to stay and become an altar boy] but I didn’t want to do that.'

Although young people were subjected to significant pressure to conform, the GDR in the late 1950s was still far from being a smooth, well-oiled dictatorship and it was still possible for the system and its carriers to show themselves to be fallible. As Reinhart K. explained, he had been able to go on to the Oberschule even though he had not taken part in the Jugendweihe: 'that was the GDR. It wasn’t supposed to happen like that, but it did.' Hans-Peter took the Jugendweihe at the last minute after his class teacher advised him to

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17 Interview with Herbert O.
18 Interview with Wolfgang V.
19 Interview with Reinhart K.
do so in order to avoid wrecking his chances of getting into an *Oberschule*

'Son, at least go along to the ceremony. You don’t have to take part in the preparatory lessons, but at least go along to the ceremony. Then you get a book and a certificate. Then I can see to it that you’ll get a place at the *Oberschule*.' Letting the mask of the loyal teacher briefly slip (he later failed to return from a half-term holiday), he went on to say that one had to have two faces to get by in the GDR – the official one that one showed to the world and the private one, what one truly felt and thought which one kept for when one was at home. Looking back on the thirty years he had practised this advice, Hans-Peter was unsure about how to evaluate it. At the time, it had proved a fairly accurate assessment of how to get by and get on in the GDR. 'In the end, a whole generation conformed in one way or another to this system in order to get through it.' But with hindsight, he asked himself whether 'if more of us had done differently and not hidden what we thought, maybe the dictatorship would not have lasted so long'.

Although some of the pressures on them were highly visible, others were less clear and unambiguous. What the interviewees said about their experiences would suggest that although sometimes they had to go through the motions, there were many forms of activity and participation which were genuinely enjoyable and which young people engaged in because they wanted to. Some like Franz P. may have become engaged in function holding in the FDJ simply in order to improve their chances of getting into university. 'I had to be in it in order to study medicine – there was no other way'. Unbeknown to his friends, he was also a member of a Catholic youth group. Others, like Herbert O., became heavily involved in the organizational life of the class because they wanted to be involved and active at the centre of things. 'I enjoyed doing it, the organizational stuff.' In addition to the FDJ, Herbert was also a member of the GST, the Society of German-Soviet Friendship (DSF) and the official cultural association, the *Kulturbund*. Although a lot of school and youth organization activities were planned and directed from above, there was usually a significant amount of scope for the young function-holders to influence

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20 Interview with Hans-Peter D.
21 Interview with Franz P.
22 Interview with Herbert O.
and shape what it was the class as a group actually did. For the most part, their busy teachers were happy to let them take charge of organizing and carrying out activities and events – thereby removing yet another burden from their overloaded shoulders. ‘We were more or less given a free hand to get on with things... [Then afterwards] We were able to say "We organized that ourselves".23

Not only did their active involvement ensure that they could choose things which were of more immediate interest to themselves, but the experience of planning and organizing projects and undertakings together strengthened their friendship and sense of group solidarity and class camaraderie. When they elected the FDJ-secretary, the class sought someone who understood them and could speak on their behalf. As Franz P. described it, the others elected him because he always spoke 'somewhat critically' in the FDJ. 'They chose me to be the spokesman, because I used to say "No, that's not good" or "That can also be seen critically"... I didn't just say "It's all crap" and "Everything's bad", but I always gave a justification. The others listened and said to themselves "He doesn't greet [every new measure] by going hurrah".24 While at the time, those involved were aware of the limits and were keen to bend and extend them, in the afterglow of hindsight, thanks in essence to this invisible layer of leeway and immunity, experiences of 'compulsion (Zwang)' and 'hypocrisy (Heuchelei)' tend to be displaced by happy memories of innocent fun and amusement.

IMMUNITY

Although some members of the group were actively involved in planning and organizing class activities, they nevertheless experienced a sense if not of opposition then of inner distance to school expressed to one another in breaks between lessons and out of school. During lessons, pupils played along, but without sacrificing their own opinions. Once out of the teacher's hearing, they demonstrated their inner distance and immunity through jokes, nicknames and

23 Interview with Dieter J.
24 Interview with Franz P.
derogatory comments. Thus Walter Ulbricht was known within the group by the mock affectionate term of 'Uncle WU'.

Socially, the group was quite diverse, with three boys coming from the middle and lower-middle class and the remaining three from the working class. Half of the boys had fathers, the other half did not. In terms of their parents' educational backgrounds, there was a sharp distinction between Herbert O.'s father, the Chemistry professor, and Franz P.'s mother, who supported her three children and aged father alone by working as a centrifuge operator in the VEB Espenhain. At the end of the war, Professor O. had been taken off to work in the Soviet Union with the remnants of Werner von Braun's V2 rocket team. Although during the Third Reich he had been a nominal member of the Nazi party, when he returned to the GDR, he was surrounded by the 'positive aura' of someone who had worked in the Motherland and was on good terms with the Soviets. This enabled the family to obtain a flat and a place for their son at the Oberschule as well as other privileges like extra food and trips abroad.

Within the group, there were also significant differences in upbringing style. Although at the two extremes in terms of their social backgrounds, both Herbert and Franz enjoyed a very relaxed relationship to their parents and were allowed to get away with a lot that the others could not. Nevertheless, Herbert remembered being brought up in a 'completely schizophrenic' way. His father was the only one to refuse to sign the declaration saying that he would not let his family receive Western media arguing that there might be a concert on the radio he would like to listen to. But at home, they received neither West German television nor radio so that when his friends talked about what they had watched the night before, he was forced to pretend that he too had seen it. Dieter J., by contrast, was subjected to a much more straightforward and strict upbringing by his father. 'My father was very strict. He came from a very humble proletarian background. He had no chance to study. He was born in '22 and by

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25 Interview with Wolfgang V.
26 Interview with Franz P.; Trial transcript.
27 Chargesheet, 12.
28 Interview with Herbert O.
29 Ibid.
the age of 20 he was in a Soviet prison camp.' He could not recall his father ever expressing a political opinion – either positive or negative – about the GDR. 'Only school results counted... Just "tell the teacher what he wants to hear. What you yourself think is your problem". I honestly can't determine what my father's opinion of the state was at this time. He never revealed his opinion to us children.\(^{30}\) He expected his son to make up for his own lost opportunities by working as hard as he could at school. And, if listening to Western radio was forbidden by the school, then his father's view was 'Then you kindly don't listen to any'.\(^{31}\)

Although it was not something that they consciously thought about at this time, the group members were nevertheless aware of one another's social background and were able to position themselves in relation to one another. Herbert O. was well aware of his good fortune in growing up surrounded by books and with a professor for a father. To his shame, he remembered one occasion when this knowledge spilled over into arrogance. When the class teacher, Herr W., had been unable to answer his question effectively, he had wise-cracked, 'Don't bother! I'll get my father to explain it to me.' But each member of the group was conscious that having been accepted to the Oberschule was a mark of their exceptional academic abilities. Knowing that they were relatively privileged made them self-confident without being arrogant or looking down their noses at people who had not made it so far. The changes made to the education system do seem to have had the effect of levelling down perceptions of social differences in the GDR. The working-class pupils did their best to keep up with their middle-class classmates, while the latter tried not to stand out or set themselves apart from the others.\(^{32}\)

As James Gilbert writes (for America), 'If schools were the main conduit to immerse children in approved cultural values, they were also awash with peer culture, some of which was socially approved and much which was not. Because of their contradictory functions, schools became battlegrounds of clashing values and customs.'\(^{33}\) If the formal side of education was heavily

\(^{30}\) Interview with Dieter J.

\(^{31}\) Interview with Dieter J.

\(^{32}\) Interview with Herbert O.; See Willis, Learning to Labour, 58-9.

\(^{33}\) Gilbert, A Cycle of Outrage, 18.
influenced by a conception of culture which favoured young people from middle-class backgrounds, the informal side of school – the atmosphere at break-time and out of school – was fairly working-class. 'We all tried smoking – so that we could feel big and strong and grown-up.' A macho oppositional spirit reigned in which kudos was gained by success with girls or in sport. Without either of these, one could still achieve popularity and be accepted if one showed oneself to be sufficiently ‘oppositional’ in relation to teachers and school. Opposition to school was mainly expressed through knowledge of the forbidden world carried by Western media. Being able to expound authoritatively on Rock'n Roll music or popular detective series on Western TV represented an alternative form of ‘cultural capital’ enabling its bearer to find acknowledgement and approval with his or her peers. Although his family was anomalous in not listening to Western radio at home, Herbert O. nevertheless pretended to his classmates that he was a regular listener.

> You had to pretend that you knew what was what. I didn’t want to stand out... I placed a lot of value on having this image because in the circles I wanted to belong to, it was important... Perhaps [I pretended] in order to belong to that image. As a good socialist, I couldn’t get any image among my fellow pupils – only through sport or [by being] “oppositional.”

Franz P. was proud of the fact that he had already started working at 15 (as a tram conductor after school) and had earned enough money to buy his own tape recorder, a prized item that cost the equivalent of two month’s wages and ‘guaranteed success with girls’.

> Nevertheless, knowledge about Western youth culture did not entail access to working-class street culture. Although the boys may have wet their hair to form quiffs and danced to Rock'n Roll at parties, they had no intention of doing more than imitate the *Halbstarke* look. As Wolfgang V. said, they had no contact with the gangs. ‘I’d only heard of them, I didn’t know them’. In any case, what with his heavy sporting schedule and all the things he did with the others

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34 Interview with Dieter J.
35 Interview with Herbert O.
36 Interview with Franz P.
in the evenings, he had no time for hanging around on the streets. Reinhart K. put it more strongly: ‘we had nothing to do with such people.’

The boys were more likely to be found in the opera than hanging around on streetcorners looking for fights. To a large extent, they willingly embraced the regime’s emphasis on all-round education and on accessing and enjoying high culture. For Herbert O., this was simply an extension of the tastes and culture of his family where he was surrounded by music and literature. For others, like Wolfgang V., Dieter J. and Hans-Peter D., exposure to culture was new, but nevertheless something that they were keen to take part in and grew to enjoy. ‘After all the whole education was directed towards it... musical and cultural appreciation. It was offered and some took advantage of it. I’d say that a great many took advantage of the opportunity.’ Wolfgang V. also felt that the school’s cultural message had fallen on ‘fertile ground’. Not only did the school organize trips to the theatre and the opera, but prices were low enough to enable the group to go out to such events on their own initiative in the evenings and at weekends.

Although members of the group were aware of the existence of the social differences between them, they never acted as a barrier or obstacle to them getting on. Young people in the GDR no longer conceived of themselves or their lives as being rigidly determined by class differences. By opening education up to the working classes, the SED had unintentionally succeeded in weakening the importance of class for young people. It was no longer necessary to conceive of one class or the other as automatically being superior or inferior. Middle-class youth may have continued to have certain advantages in terms of cultural capital, but these were offset and balanced out by the advantages in the GDR of being working class. The Oberschule acted as something of a social melting-pot, concretely lowering and bridging the class divide by allowing working-class pupils to acquire cultural sensitivities and qualifications previously confined to the middle class. At the same time, boys

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37 Interview with Wolfgang V.
38 Interview with Reinhart K.
39 Interview with Dieter J.
40 Interview with Wolfgang V.
41 Interview with Dieter J.
from 'bourgeois' backgrounds were able to acquire the earthy humour and relaxed attitudes towards girls and life of their working-class peers.

As the pupils at the Karl-Marx-Oberschule engaged in social re-positioning, they compared themselves not just to their friends and classmates, but to their teachers. There were those teachers with sufficient presence and status to be recognized as 'pedagogues' and 'personalities' and those, like their class teacher Herr W., who were not out of teaching college long enough to have earned their pupils' respect and obedience. As far as the boys were concerned, 'He wasn't a personality.' It was by testing their teacher's limits that young people (especially young men) developed their own measure of themselves. In the case of Herr W., his relative youth and inexperience allowed the boys in the class to see themselves as being in competition with him. Although with the hindsight of middle age, the 'boys' were able to appreciate his easy-going generosity and willingness to put himself out for them, at the time, they had shown their teasing affection for him by nicknaming him 'Donald' (after Donald Duck). They had interpreted his readiness to get down in the fields amongst them during class harvesting expeditions as a sign that the distinctions between teacher and pupil were steadily becoming blurred and undermined. While willingly taking on responsibility for organizing themselves, they paid the teacher back for his trust by playing practical jokes on him and pushing out the limits of what they could get away with.

ESCAPISM

A major impetus for testing the limits in school was the search for self many young people experienced in late adolescence. An important part of finding out who they were and what they wanted out of life took place through escapism. The GDR authorities were particularly worried about young people seeking to find themselves through physical escape or 'flight from the republic (Republikflucht)'. The West German government and media liked to present the young people who came over from the GDR as political refugees fleeing from

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persecution. But as internal reports (from both East and West) suggest, in many cases young people went to the West more out of curiosity and a desire for adventure rather than because they genuinely feared arrest and persecution.\(^{44}\)

Although leaving the GDR was still possible for them prior to 13 August 1961, for the six Karl-Marx-Oberschüler, the thought of leaving their friends and families and everything they had and knew in the East for the strange and unfamiliar West was not something they took seriously by the middle of 1961. "To be sure there was jealousy of West Germany, of the DM, because of the shortages, the chocolate, etc."\(^{45}\) Their attention was naturally also drawn to the West by Western media and youth culture. But that did not mean that they wanted to go and live there. "The only thing which made me look to the West was the music."\(^{46}\) Accessing Western radio and television provided them with a less tangible, but no less important form of 'inner emigration' or temporary escape from the conditions and reality of life in the GDR. By tuning in to Western mass media, they temporarily 'switched off' from the SED's ideological messages.\(^{47}\) As we have already seen, some hobbies could bring young people into participation in state-sponsored activities. Other leisure pursuits like reading and listening to Western music could take them in the other direction, further away from the state and its ideology into their own world of fantasy and imagination. Day-dreaming was an important barrier to penetration by the regime.

Evening after evening, West German television presented young people with 'a richer world without borders'.\(^{48}\) In the early 1960s, the 'Flimmerkisten' (or shimmer-boxes as the first television sets were known) provided black-and-white proof of Western differences and superiorities in news broadcasts and advertisements. Radio, by contrast, was a much more ethereal medium, bringing snatches of music and disembodied voices from far-away countries

\(^{45}\) Interview with Herbert O.
\(^{46}\) Interview with Dieter J.
\(^{48}\) Interview with Stephan Heym, Marxism Today, Nov. 1989.
and continents. Nevertheless, music brought to them by the Sunday afternoon
hit parade on Radio Luxembourg and AFN, the American Forces Network,
provided a much more potent means of escaping reality. 'It was forbidden to
listen to such broadcasts and music. Naturally that made it a lot more exciting
to do so.' With the increasing availability of transistor radios, young people
could take music into the privacy of their bedrooms – no longer being forced to
share it with the rest of the family.

As Franz P. put it, 'at 17, 18 you weren't fully developed... you still had
dreams... One way in which East German adolescents bent the contours of
reality was by dreaming about where they would be in the future, what trips or
adventures they would undertake. Encouraged by his performance in school
plays and 'Agitprop' (on one occasion playing to Walter Ulbricht himself),
Wolfgang V. dreamed of becoming an actor. Another two of the Karl-Marx-
Oberschüler dreamed of going to sea. One did his best to achieve the dream by
studying marine engineering. The other moved to the Baltic coast. All of the
boys had dreams which seemed impossible to realize after the building of the
wall – of visiting places like London, Paris and New York which they had only
read about in books.

The archives are littered with similar day dreams and fantasies which
brought young people to the attention of the authorities. In November 1961, for
example, it was discovered that Irmgard K. from class 13 of the vocational
school in Aschersleben and a member of the FDJ, had written to the Vienna
Magazine asking for them to publish her address.

Through the publication of her address in this magazine, she came into
contact with several penfriends, including among others foreign legionaries,
who betrayed our workers’ and peasants’ state and went to join the foreign
legion. She gave these addresses to other girls in her class and declared:
"it's hardly a disgrace if one writes letters to a legionary." She was even of
the opinion that legionaries are only people like us and [are only] doing their
work. For Irmgard K., this correspondence was merely, as she herself
expressed it, a "hobby". According to her, she only did it to receive postcards

49 Interview with Wolfgang V.
50 Interview with Franz P.
and stamps as well as to be able to correspond about [different] languages, countries and peoples. The writing of letters spread itself very quickly to a large part of the class, which even comrades knew about but did nothing to counter. Even a member of the local FDJ leadership, Monika O., was in correspondence with a legionary.\(^5\)

Another important way of temporarily opting out of East German reality was by hero-worshipping musicians and film stars or by acting out scenes from TV. By dressing up like their idols, boys and girls hoped that some of their sex appeal would rub off on them. Another way in which young people sought to connect and associate themselves with a distant icon was by plastering the walls of their bedrooms with his or her image. The activities of dressing up, listening to music, day dreaming and corresponding with penfriends and fan clubs all seemed perfectly normal and natural activities to young people. But to the regime, they appeared like a dangerous source of subversion and potential conflict, encouraging young people to identify with alien influences at the expense of genuine identification with the GDR. 'How deeply the Western ideology was rooted in the defendant is shown by the fact that he decorated his room with tasteless cover pictures of stars from the Western world and other kitsch.'\(^5\) As far as the SED leaders were concerned, young people seemed to be engaged in a dangerous form of 'ideological border-crossing'. Outwardly, they appeared to be loyal citizens of the GDR. Inwardly, however, they harboured strong elements of doubt and disbelief. What's more, as soon as night fell, they deliberately tuned in to foreign broadcasts and imbibed the 'poison' of Western nonculture.

For intelligent and curious young *Oberschüler* like Hans-Peter, it was interesting to find out about what was going on in the world outside. He particularly enjoyed tuning in to the BBC German-language service which brought news, sketches and the occasional Ulbricht joke.\(^5\) 'They were really amusing. Already as pupils back then we talked about them.' Being in touch with other outlooks and opinions on domestic and international events provided

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\(^{51}\) 'Information über Feindtätigkeit und besondere Vorkommnisse aus den Informationsberichten der Bezirksleitungen vom 30.11.61', BArch. SAPMO DY24/3726.

\(^{52}\) Judgement (December 1961), 6.

an alternative to what they were taught in school. 'It was noticeable that in
school something would be talked about in one way, but the reality was instead
something else. It was naturally interesting for a young person from the age of
10 or so to fish information out of the ether.'

The building of the wall was designed not just to keep the population in, but to
keep Western influences out. 'We have sorted out material border crossing.
With that, it's definitively the end. But many citizens still have their aerials
pointing to the West. They're still ideological border-crossers (ideologische
Grenzgänger).' The building of the wall was designed not only to keep people
inside the GDR, but to prevent the spread of influences from West Germany
corrupting East German youth. In an uncharacteristically poetic metaphor, Erich
Honecker described East German youth as 'wandering between two worlds'
prior to August 1961. The construction of a wall out of concrete and barbed
wire was a clear sign that such idle wandering was to cease. Throughout the
GDR, teachers, parents and pupils were forced to sign declarations that they
would no longer receive Western media. A number of cases occurred during
this period of heightened tension which served to highlight both the extent of
'inner conflict' (or Zwiespalt) existing among East German youth and the degree
of paranoia on the part of the authorities. One of the most interesting, dramatic
and perplexing incidents involved the six boys from the Karl-Marx-Oberschule.
During July 1961, they along with the rest of their class had been on a working
holiday on the island of Rügen in the Baltic.

In addition to their weekly 'day in production', all East German schoolchildren
were expected to spend several weeks each year involved in harvesting
agricultural produce. In the hope of getting away from Leipzig to the seaside for
the summer, Herbert O. had written to several agricultural collectives (or LPGs)
on the Baltic coast asking if the class could come and work for them there.
Having received a favourable response from one of the collectives, the class
had set out for the island of Rügen with bicycles, tents and clothes for a

54 Interview with Hans-Peter D.
55 'Zentralrat der FDJ: Materialien über die Rolle der NATO-Kriegssender und des schwarzen
Kanals (Berlin, den 1.9.1961)', BArch. SAPMO, DY24/3935.
56 'Aktennotiz über die Sitzung des Politbüros zur Auswertung des VII. Parlaments am
Fig. 17: Wiek on the Baltic Sea, Summer 1961.
fortnight and had set up camp in a disused field near to both the LPG and the sea. 'It was a great experience to be away from home.' Although with hindsight, Wolfgang V. did not think they had been of much help to the farmers, they were nevertheless welcomed with good grace and fed by the communal canteen. After working in the fields in the morning, they were free to go swimming, cycling or to play a game of football in the afternoon.

The arrangement worked well and in 1961, it was the class's second trip to Rügen. This time when they returned, they felt like old hands. They knew the lie of the land. In addition, several of the boys had or were on the point of turning 18 that summer. Of particular interest to them was the fact that that year they shared the campsite with a party of Oberschüler from Jüterbog. The Leipzig schoolboys were pleasantly surprised to find that the girls from Jüterbog were a lot more attractive than the girls in their own class. Over the week that the two classes were together, they 'befriended one another'. Using a tape recorder brought along by one of the boys, they turned the collective's canteen into a dance hall. When the time came for the Leipzigers to return home, the group of six informed their teacher that they had decided to stay on for another week. As they had letters from their parents giving their consent to this arrangement, there was not much Herr W. could do. Although he had tried to get them to move on to another campsite once the rest of the class had left, when they refused to budge he reluctantly left them on the original campsite in Wiek.

During the two weeks they had been together, there had been a marked decline in the class's respect for Herr W. The general loosening of restrictions which occurs on school trips was further exacerbated by Herr W. wearing a tracksuit instead of his normal teacher's garb. The boys' sense of competitiveness undiminished, they played a series of practical jokes on him, turning his tent round as he slept and hoisting his bicycle into a tree. Herr W. did his best to take such pranks in his stride. As a relatively young and inexperienced teacher, he lacked the gravitas of the older teacher or the armoury of comments and techniques of control built up over years. He tried to teach his class to be young socialists by example – working alongside them in

57 Interview with Wolfgang V.
Fig. 18: Class 12b enjoying camp life in Wiek. One of the tricks they played on their teacher involved hoisting his bicycle into a tree.
the fields (something other teachers would not stoop to doing). When one of his pupils lost his razor, Herr W. lent him his own. ‘That’s just not something you do is it?’ With forty years of hindsight, his pupils looked back on him with a mixture of admiration and guilt. ‘He really tried to build us into a collective.’ It was Herr W.’s lack of formality and reserve which his pupils looked back on as one of his most important qualities. Unfortunately, with his class on Rügen in 1961 it was his greatest weakness, a weakness successfully exploited by Helmut S.

Helmut S., like Herbert O., was the son of a professor and had been sent with his father to the Soviet Union from 1950 to 1955. Unlike Herbert O., Helmut S. had used his time in a Soviet school to pick up dirty jokes and knife-fighting technique. He returned to the GDR and to a place in the Karl-Marx-Oberschule a year older than his classmates but light years ahead in terms of worldliness and sexual maturity. In spite of the cultural capital he had inherited from his father, Helmut preferred to coast through school in the style of a highschool rebel. His classmates remember him as being very strong physically and a great success with the ladies – talking easily and confidently with students in their late twenties. Having been photographed by the headmaster wearing jeans to school (and presented in the Wandzeitung as an example of what not to follow), Helmut had become something of a cult figure for his classmates. Although well aware from their schooling that it was wrong to say such things, the boys copied Helmut’s habit by greeting one another with ‘Treudeutsche (true German)’ and ‘Arische Gruß (Aryan greeting)’.

What upset the delicate balance of the teacher-pupil relationship, destroying his authority and leaving the door open for subsequent events was Herr W.’s fatal mistake of accepting Helmut S.’s challenge to a wrestling contest and then going on to lose. Although both the victor and the vanquished travelled back to Leipzig together on the same train, they left behind them six boys who were already on the way to becoming men, confident about their future, relaxed after

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58 Interview with Reinhart K.
59 ‘Zur Lage an der erweiterten Oberschulen (October 1961)’, BArch. DR2/6298, 79.
60 Interview with Hans-Peter D.
61 Interview with Dieter J.
Fig. 19: 'At that age', it was very important to dress and act the part.
a fortnight’s holiday and with another week to look forward to enjoying in the company of the girls from Jüterbog.

‘COUNTER-REVOLUTION’

‘The schoolgirls and boys [from Jüterbog] drank copious quantities of alcohol, stayed on the dance floor until late in the night with no supervision, and led an immoral life in the camp. In the course of this they made friends with the pupils from Leipzig.’ Together, ‘they carried out a so-called symbolic burial of leading functionaries from the socialist camp. A flagpole was erected above the grave and a death’s head flag was attached to it.’

What had started out as a bit of fun (Gaudí) was seen by the investigating authorities as nothing less than ‘organized counter-revolutionary subversion (organisierte konterrevolutionäre Umtriebe)’. The main charge made against the boys was that they had carried out ‘a so-called symbolic burial of leading state and party functionaries from the socialist camp’. They were accused of having made death threats against leaders of the German and international workers organisation as well as against some teachers of the school. A bottle was recovered containing pictures of Walter Ulbricht, Paul Fröhlich and Mao Tse Tung. ‘A full bottle of beer was also “ceremoniously” buried in the grave... so that the symbolically buried would not get thirsty.’ Each of the defendants had dropped a handful of earth into the ‘grave’. Next to the ‘grave’ were food remains with a label saying ‘pigs’ feed (Schweinemischfutter)’. In addition, the boys were accused of singing anti-Soviet songs, and using the Nazi ‘true German’ and the ‘Aryan’ greetings. Following these ceremonies, the boys were supposed to have danced about singing ‘Ulbricht’s dead, pointy beard’s dead... Stalin’s dead... Titov’s dead.’

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62 ‘Bericht über die Vorkommnisse an der erweiterten Oberschule Jüterbog (4.10.61)’, BArch. SAPMO, DY30/IV2/905/27.
63 StAL, BDVP 24/1/324.
64 Interview with Herbert O.
65 ‘Bericht über die Vorkommnisse an der Karl-Marx-Oberschule, ca. 12.10.61’, BArch. DR2/6956.
67 Chargesheet, 9.
68 ‘Umfangreicher Strafverfahren’.
Fig. 20: Images of Counter-Revolution.
The Fahnenappelle on Wiek together with the 'Death's Head Flag' and scraps used to 'honour the fallen'.
Under interrogation, the boys revealed that they had carried out a mock flag ceremony (Fahnenappell) every day at daybreak and sundown. The accused Franz P. had presided over these ceremonies, making the others line up in an orderly line and calling out to them 'eyes to the flag' before hoisting a black flag with a death's head (eine schwarze Fahne mit Totenkopf). On several occasions he had imitated Walter Ulbricht's voice. The interrogations also revealed that the accused Herbert O. had suggested to the others that they should construct a 'monument to the fallen' (Opferstätte). This they had done and honoured with 'old cheese and mouldy bread'.

At the trial, particular reference was made to the death's head flag (Totenkopffahne) tied to a flagpole above the grave. The authorities argued that this was a death's head, the symbol of the SS.

Acts of violence like these were in the past and particularly in the fascist era committed by nationally inclined young people under black flags with the death's head, which then escalated to murder. The result was that workers' leaders and thousands of fighters for the working class were beaten and killed in a bestial manner.

Before the grave, the boys were supposed to have made hate-filled speeches (Hetzrede) and sung songs with 'militaristic contents'. From their interrogations, the Stasi were able to piece together the text of one of the anti-Soviet songs. The chorus of the song came from a satirical act – 'It's all the Russians' fault' – by the Leipzig University student cabaret, the Rat der Spötter (the Council of Mockers). In their song, the students mocked the prevailing tendency to blame everything that went wrong on the Russians with lines like 'My tea's gone cold, my bicycle's flat, It's all the Russians' fault'. While keeping the chorus, the boys in Wiek dropped the song's satirical baggage, filling it instead with a lament for

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69 There were of course other ways of reading the skull on a black background. As can be seen from the photographs of the Fahnenappelle, the flag resembled much more a homemade 'jolly roger' (with toothpaste used as paint) than anything used by the SS. Interestingly, the 'skull and crossbones' (or Totenkopf) has a long and venerable association with youth nonconformity in Germany. It was used as a symbol of youthful rebellion by both the Edelweiß pirates and later by West German Halbstarke gangs. See Poiger, 'Rebels with a cause?', note 23, p.119 and Peukert, Inside Nazi Germany, 154.
70 Judgement, 5.
71 'Umfangreicher Strafverfahren'.
72 Judgement, 14.
the now symbolically dead (and buried) leaders: 'Ulbricht is dead, Khrushchev
is dead, Crodotzki is dead, It's all the Russians' fault. Why are the Russians to
blame? I don't know why, but they are.' The Rat der Spötter were arrested
and imprisoned shortly after the Karl-Marx-Oberschüler. In a Stasi report, it
was stated that 'The Leipzig student cabaret 'Rat der Spötter' created a
programme ('Where the dog lies buried') which in its entirety presented an
attack on the politics of the party and government and Walter Ulbricht and
indirectly extended as far as encouragement of counter revolution.'

Snapshots seized during house raids showed that the boys from the Karl-
Marx-Oberschule had 'even sought to keep a documentary record of their
hostile actions'. The raids also turned up letters with anti-Soviet contents: 'if in
Biology, lice are spoken of and you don't have any, then you can always fetch a
couple from the "friends" in the old camp.' One girl from Jüterbog had
received a card showing a portrait of Walter Ulbricht. On the other side was
written, 'I hope that you know how to appreciate the honour which is bestowed
on you with this card.' Other cards contained remarks such as: 'have a look at
the text under the stamp' under which was written 'Greetings from Uncle WU'.

An indication of the class's experiences and state of mind during the trip was
also recorded in the Wandzeitung. It contained a poem with the words: 'in Wiek
began a new life – we escaped from culture... The return home was often
torture.' The boys from Leipzig had visited their new friends in Jüterbog where
'a lot of drinking and dancing to tape recordings of Bill Haley and Presley' had
occurred. Although the Leipzigers had been the instigators, they had found the
Jüterbogers accessible for their 'deliberate smears against our workers-and-

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73 'Bericht über die Vorkommnisse...'
74 Rink, 'Das Leipziger Alternativmilieu' in Vester, Hofmann & Zierke (eds.), Soziale Milieus in
Ostdeutschland, 201.
75 'Einige Hinweise zur Lage an den Universitäten und Oberschulen (1.12.61)', BStU, ZA, ZAIG 508.
76 'Bericht über die Vorkommnisse...' 
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
peasants-state and, in particular, Comrade Walter Ulbricht. Most damning were statements from teachers and fellow pupils revealing that the boys had concealed the fact that they were opposed to the state. Behind their feigned loyalty, they had nevertheless listened to Western radio and recounted anti-regime jokes during breaks. These actions 'proved' that even prior to setting out on the trip to Rügen the boys had been hostile to the state and therefore that their actions had been pre-mediated.

The provocations in Wiek and on the 19.8.61 in Leipzig were the result of the subversive activity they had already carried out at the Karl-Marx-Oberschule in Leipzig. It is therefore fully erroneous for the defence to claim that the Leipzig group "acted spontaneously in Wiek, because following the departure of their class teacher back to Leipzig, they felt free and as a result of this situation [came to commit] these violent fascist acts".

At a meeting held to discuss the boys' conduct only one teacher tried to defend their actions: 'the pupils' plans were not real. How, for example, were they supposed to get near enough to Khrushchev to murder him? They just went a bit crazy. The teachers did their best. It's just bad luck that such a thing happened at the Karl-Marx-Oberschule. It could have happened in any another school." Together with the unfortunate Herr W., the teacher who made these remarks was dismissed from the school. When questioned about how their classmates had behaved before, during and after Wiek, three pupils from class 12b (Helmut S., Just M. and Monika P.) revealed themselves to be enemies of the state by refusing to condemn or snitch on their friends. At a special flag ceremony (this time under official auspices), it was announced that they, together with the six already under arrest, were to be excluded from the school and 'banned from all Oberschule in the republic'.

To our shame, we must recognise that the class enemy has found sustenance at our school. Pupils, who the workers' and peasants' state gave the opportunity to study at an EOS, so as to be able to go on to university, have become traitors.

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80 Ibid.
81 Judgement, 16.
82 'Zur Lage an der erweiterten Oberschulen (ca. October 1961)', BArch. DR2/6956, 77.
A group from class 12b has, for a long time, oriented itself towards the West. They have let themselves be influenced by the class enemy. The organized character of this provocation shows itself in the fact that following their return they carried out meetings with pupils from another EOS with the same content and goal. They thereby exposed themselves as lackeys of the enemies of our people, who have already twice thrown the German people into a national catastrophe.®

The authorities claimed that the fact that contact had been maintained between the Leipzig and Jüterbog pupils and that reciprocal visits had taken place revealed the 'organized character' of the provocation. At these subsequent meetings between pupils from the two schools, joint reception of RIAS had occurred, the 'SS-Flag' had been brought into the room and 'counter-revolutionary plans' had been discussed.®

The main reason why the authorities overreacted so much to what, in retrospect, seems little more than a harmless bit of fun was that in between the actions taking place and being discovered, Walter Ulbricht had taken the decision to build the wall shutting the GDR off from West Berlin. At a time when the regime was on red alert looking for internal enemies and opponents, the case of the Karl-Marx-Oberschüler seemed to suggest the dangerous extent of hidden corruption and subversion among youth. 'The accused committed their hate crime at a time when the GDR nearly fell into the hands of the warmongers in Berlin and in this situation it was essential to strengthen the GDR through exemplary and positive actions.... The [accused] must recognise that the GDR embodies the best traditions of the German nation and is the rightful German state.'®

Ironically, the headline of one of the newspaper articles from which the boys had ripped out the pictures of regime leaders was the Party's hyperbolic claim 'We shape the world (Wir gestalten die Welt)'. By punishing the boys' youthful misdemeanours as if they had committed major crimes, the regime sought to halt the rot and make plain its commitment to re-shaping and moulding the younger generation. For their 'bit of fun' the six boys were sentenced to a total of over ten years in prison.®

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84 'Karl-Marx-Oberschule: Beschlüß des Pädagogischen Rates (12.10.61)', BArch. DR2/6956.
85 'Beschluß des Pädagogischen Rates'.
86 Judgement, 17, 19.
87 Judgement, 1-3.
Fig. 21: The incriminating photograph.
Although it is clear from photographs of the camp that girls were also involved in the incident, none of them was charged. Instead, they were subjected to crude humiliation. After visiting a fête in a neighbouring village, the youngsters had brought back a sign reading 'Entry 1 DM' which they had placed at the entrance to their campsite. A photograph of the sign was used as 'proof' that the girls had used the campsite as a brothel and had exchanged sex for money.\(^{88}\)

CONCLUSION

By exploring the memories and experiences of the six Karl-Marx-Oberschüler accused of plotting counter-revolutionary intrigues while they were on holiday on Rügen, the chapter testifies to the existence of widespread ambivalence, immunity and escapism among young people. A detailed examination of their outlooks and behaviour shows not only how wildly the SED could overreact to minor acts of nonconformity, but also how events such as these could come about. What happened in Wiek resulted from a special and unique set of circumstances. But without understanding the ambivalence felt by many young people; the competing pressures of school and their peers; or the dimension of fantasy and dreams that young people escaped to, it is impossible to understand how when the pressure was suddenly released (as it was in Wiek) they could create such an elaborate set of mock rituals and ceremonies deriding those in power. It was this complexity of adolescent life that in its incomprehension the SED resorted to desperate measures in an attempt to crush.

\(^{88}\) Interview with Claus K.
5) Compromise and Cooption

"Go to youth, gentlemen!" Lenin gave this so simple and yet so precise advice to his comrades whenever the Party stood before particularly difficult and complicated tasks.... Without going to youth nothing is possible, let alone any youth work."¹ This was the justification Kurt Turba, editor of Forum magazine and leader of the Politbüro Commission on Youth, gave for transforming youth work in the GDR. In his study of youth policy in the SBZ, Michael Buddrus writes more prosaically that 'for a regime wishing to impose its blueprint on society, winning over the support of youth, or at least neutralising youth's potential for opposition is crucial."² The 1950s and 1960s saw three particularly important attempts to address the failings of the youth organization and to find new ways of re-incorporating nonconformist youth and bringing them off the streets. This chapter explores these and other, more autonomous bottom-up initiatives in order to assess their impact in winning back those young people 'standing on the sidelines'.

'MUST THE POLITBÜRO ORGANIZE KITE-FLYING?' – PROBLEMS WITH A DYSFUNCTIONAL YOUTH ORGANIZATION³

By the mid-1950s, it was clear to Party leaders that the FDJ was failing to achieve its allotted purpose of winning youth for socialism. It was true that the youth organization could count over a million members by the early 1950s, but reports on what young people actually did in local communities showed not just an alarming lack of initiative on the part of local organizers and functionaries, but widespread disinterest on the part of youth.⁴ Not only was the FDJ failing to attract and keep committed members but it visibly could not keep young people off the streets. In addition, it could demonstrate no impact on figures for Republikflucht and juvenile crime.⁵ The official emphasis on 'sensible' free-time activities was undermined not just by Western media infiltration, but by the

¹ 'Abschrift aus Forum Nr 16/65: Kleinigkeiten, die keine sind', Landesarchiv Berlin, C.Rep 902, Nr. 2117.
³ Walter Ulbricht speaking at the 25th Conference of the Central Committee of the SED, BArch. SAPMO, IV2/1/152.
⁵ BArch. SAPMO DY 24/3727.
dearth of local leisure and recreational opportunities for young people. Disinterested local functionaries not only failed to create new, purpose-built facilities for youth, but instead commandeered existing venues and used them for purposes for which they had not been intended. In rural areas, in particular, since the creation of collective farms (LPGs), community halls and other leisure spaces had been taken over and used to store agricultural produce and equipment. Of the forty-nine 'public houses with dancing facilities' in Kreis Wurzen, only eleven organized dances at least once a month.\(^6\) In those areas where the FDJ was able to organize activities and events, they were often poorly attended.

Unfortunately for the SED, changes were occurring in society and culture which made large-scale, centrally-planned, heavily-regimented youth organizations like the FDJ appear increasingly outdated and irrelevant. Part of the reason for declining interest in the activities offered by the FDJ was that the increasing accessibility of consumer items like transistor radios, TVs and mopeds made the leisure opportunities provided by the FDJ appear unnecessary and increasingly redundant. By 1969, ninety-three percent of young people had access to a TV at home. Fifty percent had transistor radios. Forty-nine percent had their own room. One in four apprentices and one in three young villagers possessed their own moped.\(^7\) As early as 1960, it was noticed that 'Many young people today possess bicycles, motorbikes, boats, tents, etc.'\(^8\) Having bought a motorbike, camping gear, a transistor radio and a camera, one young man felt that he had already accomplished his most important material ambitions.\(^9\) With the independence they gave him, he no longer had much need for a youth organization. Not only were they materially more independent, but their aspirations were set on other goals than those which the youth organization could provide.\(^10\) Once they had reached their late teens, many young people wanted to make their own decisions about what to watch and listen to, what to wear, how to behave and where to go. 'If I spend the whole day working in the factory, then that's not very meaningful (sinnvoll).'

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\(^6\) 'Bericht über die Lage der Jugend im Bezirk (Leipzig, 9.5.1961)', StAL, RdB Volksbildung, 3723.
\(^7\) 'Umfrage 69', 19, 23, 90.
\(^8\) 'Die Aufgaben der weiteren Einschränkung von Jugendkriminalität und Rowdytum (ca.1960)', BArch SAPMO, DY6/3937.
\(^9\) StAL, FDJ Bezirksleitung Leipzig, 82 (Kiste Nr. 79).
The main thing is that my "dough" (Piepen) is correct. In my free-time I do what I want and won’t let myself be dictated to.'

As young workers became relatively more prosperous and independent, the youth organization lost much of its appeal as a source and co-ordinator of leisure. 'Many functionaries don’t take account of the altered standard of living of our youth in the activities [they organize] in the neighbourhood... They try to win young people for the work with old forms and methods. There are a few functionaries who go on and on about the good old days of the FDJ and don’t understand that life has become a lot richer and brighter since then.'

As a new generation of young people began to grow up which was no longer so conscious and marked by experiences of Nazism, total war and defeat, so too did its aspirations and outlooks change. A lot has been written about the preceding generation, the one most severely affected by the war. Described as the 'count me out' (ohne mich) generation, they were seen as reluctant to be deceived again by attempts at mobilization and indoctrination. But the evidence suggests that the FDJ was actually more successful at obtaining the active and enthusiastic support of young people in the years immediately after the war than it was when it became a truly 'mass organization'. At a time when the population of both parts of Germany was struggling to come to terms with what had happened and how they had allowed themselves to become caught up as part of it, the FDJ offered a potent and optimistic message of societal renewal through personal engagement in the cause of democracy and socialism.

While it later became clear to many of these early converts that they had been duped by a cynical manoeuvre on the part of the KPD — to take over and then increasingly marginalize rival influences on youth — at the time, many of those involved were firmly committed to the ideal conveyed by the slogan 'Never again fascism, never again war'.

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12 ‘Die Aufgaben der weiteren Einschränkung...’
The problem for the SED leadership was that once they had channelled this generation of idealistic converts (for the most part former members of the Hitler Youth) into responsible positions in the parties and mass organizations tasked with 'democratic-socialist renewal', they bequeathed a youth organization that was increasingly hollow, bureaucratic and inert. The 'pioneers of the first hour' took with them the skills they had gained in getting people organized and motivated, making contacts, finding resources and getting things done. They left behind a youth organization composed of people who, for the most part, did not have anything better or more important to do.

A number of 'Free German Youth' groups were founded by German refugees in exile, the most notable of which was formed in London. Even after it had been re-founded in East Berlin, the initial outlook of the organization was markedly casual and civilian. As a more or less reluctant amalgamation of Communists, Social Democrats and Christians, the FDJ sought to hark back to the common ground of *Bündische Jugend* traditions that all of the organization's initial founders could share. But 'the "co-operation" with people who thought differently was only seen as a means to an end'. Following the 'intensification of the class struggle' from 1948 onwards, however, Social Democrats, Christians and members of the 'bourgeois' parties were increasingly sidelined and the organization rapidly reverted to the marching, uniforms and shooting practice which it had previously condemned as 'militaristic'. 'Not without reason, the Communists reckoned that uniformization would prove psychologically effective'.

While young people became increasingly interested by and caught up in the changes taking place in media, youth culture and fashion, the youth organization remained wedded to notions of 'the happy youthful life' which saw hiking and campfire songs as the most important and exciting form of youth

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19 Klein, *Jugend zwischen den Diktaturen*, 84.
recreational activity. While the FDJ ran dances and musical venues, it resisted any encroachments of 'Western decadence' or the modern fashion for 'dancing apart'. Just as signs had banned swing dancing during the Third Reich, so in the GDR there were signs on the dancefloor saying 'Dancing apart is forbidden'. The emphasis on leisure being 'sensible' and beneficial to both young people and society was a major barrier to providing activities that young people might actually find enjoyable and worth their while doing.

In addition to providing young people with leisure opportunities, the youth organization was also tasked with politically influencing them. The competing imperatives of ensuring that they were sufficiently exposed to political demands and, at the same time, providing them with interesting and enjoyable leisure activities were difficult to fulfil. The urge to fill up all of their time with political influence clashed with the desire of most young people to escape the influence of the Party at least in their free time. While FDJ functionaries were, in theory, answerable for leisure provision to those below them, if they failed to provide interesting activities, it simply meant that youngsters ceased to attend and found other ways of spending their time. The pressure from above for politicization, however, was relentless. Going through the motions of politically influencing young people had negligible impact on them, but was essential for safeguarding the functionary's future career. Initiatives to improve the situation on the ground were risky and carried far less weight than ensuring that political and administrative duties were at least nominally fulfilled. Although a higher proportion of young people in schools were active members of the youth organization, this was largely because FDJ activities had become a compulsory extension of the curriculum. Teachers tended to dominate the planning of activities, thereby reducing young people's autonomy and stake in the organization. Ideological imperatives and top-down bureaucracy combined to shut young people out of decision-making processes at ground level, leaving them to feel bored and left out in the cold. 'Administrative working methods'

22 'Entwurf für den Leitartikel des Oberbürgermeisters in die LVZ: Die Stadtverordneten beraten Probleme der Jugend', Leipzig Stadtarchiv, StVvRdS, Nr. 2311, 78.
23 Schütz (ed.), Klaus Rentf, 51.
24 See the speech by Alfred Norden at the 25th Conference of the Central Committee (24-27 October 1955), BArch. SAPMO IV2/1/152. Extracts from the speech are reproduced in Mählert & Stephan, Blaue Hemden, 110-111.
compounded youthful disinterest to produce apathy and inactivity. Seventy to eighty percent of the apprentices surveyed in 1969 reported that there had been no FDJ meetings at their place of training in the previous months.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{‘LEST WE CREATE A MURDEROUS PIT IN THEIR HEARTS’ – HAVING A HEART FOR YOUTH\textsuperscript{27}}

It was these young people ‘standing on the sidelines’, frustrated, bored and turned off by the official youth organization, that the \textit{Politbüro} sought to turn with its repeated youth communiqués and initiatives designed to revitalize youth leisure provision in the GDR. In a change to its scheduled broadcasts, the Party temporarily broke off from self-congratulation and prescriptions for young people to do ‘even better’ and turned its critical gaze on the organization which was failing to serve young people’s interests or meet their needs. In a process which became known as ‘having a heart for youth’, functionaries were encouraged to take responsibility and be critical about their own failings. In addition, they were to take urgent measures to stop the rot and renew their efforts in order to regain young people’s trust.

The first of these initiatives came in 1955 and was spearheaded by Alfred Norden. It was initiated in response to alarming levels of \textit{Republikflucht} among young people, a problem, he suggested, that should keep all functionaries awake at night. The problem was how to captivate young people so that they would stay in the republic. The phrase he used was ‘\textit{Wie fesseln wir die Jugendlichen?’} – an interesting choice of words because \textit{fesseln} can mean both gripping (as in providing gripping entertainment) and, more literally, tying down. Norden was uncompromisingly frank in his criticism of the FDJ, describing its structure as being ‘far too similar’ to that of the Party. ‘We read in an FDJ circular that young people must be won for hiking. That’s a joke. We don’t need to win young people for wandering. They’re quite capable of wandering without us.’ Arguing that bureaucracy was stifling initiative and isolating the youth organization from ‘a large part of youth’, he called for ‘a shake-up of our youth work’ (\textit{die Umkremplung unserer Jugendarbeit}).

\textsuperscript{26} Umfrage ‘69’, 65.
\textsuperscript{27} Alfred Norden at the 25th Conference.
Fig. 22: Republikflucht figures for 14- to 18-year-olds, 1952-1961, subdivided by gender.

Source: Patrick Major, 'Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power' (Manuscript), Ch. 3.
As a bureaucratic, top-down mass organization, the FDJ was simply ill-suited to responding to grass-roots needs. 'If young people want to experience something, then they have to organize it themselves.' There was, he complained, 'no trust between young people and the FDJ hierarchy'. The majority of young people were convinced that they could exercise no influence on the activity of the FDJ because everything was 'decided from above' and because anyone who thought differently was viewed and treated with distrust. In any case, there was little point having original ideas because they never received an answer from the youth leader. Norden referred to a youth secretary in Magdeburg as an example of what FDJ work should not be.

This secretary revealed that he has no idea what young people do in the evenings, [because] he is not there. And how can he be? He must read all the circulars which come from the Central Council of the FDJ and must take part in the numerous meetings.  

'Why then', Walter Ulbricht asked, 'do we pay for this huge apparatus?' when, as Norden had said, 'evening after evening the greater part of young people in towns [up and down] our republic are in search of some kind of variety or another that they don't find here by us.' With a still open border to West Berlin the consequences of the youth organization's failings were clear. 'Young people in Berlin have nothing else to do other than to go to the pub or to the cinema in West Berlin.' The latest craze sweeping Berlin teenagers was roller skating. The problem with the FDJ, Ulbricht quipped, was that it wasn’t mobile enough to keep up with them. If the Central Council of the FDJ was to win over youth, then it had to show that it had the interests of young people at heart. The way to do this, Norden argued, was by addressing: 'questions of fashion... personal hygiene... marriage... technology and science... music... literature... boardgames...'

Following these criticisms from on high, the regime did make special efforts to respond to the trend for differentiation by establishing youth clubs specifically

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28 Ibid.
29 Norden and Walter Ulbricht at the 25th Conference.
30 Norden at the 25th Conference.
designed to cater to young people's needs and making available items which were particularly desired. The FDJ even responded to complaints about the lack of new, tighter pants by announcing that it would hold fashion shows and open special stores for teenager clothing. Nevertheless, in spite of the damning criticisms of the youth organization and the noises about understanding from on high, none of the reforms seems to have had much lasting impact at ground level. The prominent role played by young working-class men in the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 brought soft-hearted (and realistic) discussions about youth to a premature end. They were replaced with blood-curdling statements about the extent to which young people had been corrupted by Western subversion in a NATO-orchestrated campaign of 'psychological warfare'.

The period following 1956 saw the rise of Rock'n Roll and an upsurge in official interest in the activities of 'rowdy' working-class street gangs. 'The fight against Rowdyism' saw the adoption of a number of initiatives, both cooptive and coercive, in an attempt to get young people off the streets. Experiments were carried out at local level in the hope of finding an effective solution which could then be taken up and rolled out to the rest of the GDR. In 1960, the Politbüro issued its official response to the 'problems for youth' in the form of a communiqué which spoke directly to youth. In A History of Youth, Michael Mitterauer describes youth clubs as the most important development in the collective life of young people since the Second World War. In contrast to the old-style regimented youth organizations, the decade after the war saw the development of a new type of 'club' which was characterized by 'unforced social interaction created principally by the sharing of space' rather than hierarchical organization based on a shared commitment to common ideals.

If we think, "what can we organize?" we'll get youngsters off streetcorners quicker than if we say, "Join the FDJ then you can come in the clubhouse...
I've experienced it myself, that a youth club leaders says, "You must do this and this". I didn't want that either so I said; "I do what I want!". 35

The principle of the club was that it was open to all. 'Friends can be brought along. A loose network of informal contacts forms around a nucleus... A person can fall in with this or that activity as the mood dictates.'36 In the discussions following the youth communiqué, youth clubs were seen as the key to solving the problems of youth disaffection and uncontrolled street culture by providing an intermediate step between the youth organization and informal groupings. By giving young people a greater say in how local youth clubs were run, it was hoped to entice young people back off the streets and into an environment that was safer and more controlled, but less overtly top-down and controlling. 'There's no point if someone says to a youngster, "You've been noisy, you're out."'37 Local initiatives showed that with the right people in charge, youth clubs could become popular venues for the sorts of young people who shied away from the youth organization with its blatantly officially-orchestrated and regimented activities. 38 One such 'rough diamond' was Klaus-Dieter Z., the former 'chief' of the Adler gang (named after the Adler district of South-West Leipzig), who had become involved in running a youth club for former gang members. Klaus-Dieter, or Zammo as he was known, had an instinctive feel for what young people would accept and how to make it interesting or attractive for them. 'You can't just say: meaningful free-time activities' particularly when they're in a group.

37 Schelsky, Die skeptische Generation, 471-475.
38 Speech by Jugendfreund Klaus-Dieter Z.
39 Speech by Jugendfreund Klaus-Dieter Z.
A major problem with these endeavours, however, was that as soon as they succeeded in attracting this kind of clientele, youth clubs immediately gained a reputation as ‘dens’ inhabited by delinquent ‘Halbstarke’ and repeat offenders. Those involved in trying to work with ‘problem youth’ knew what a difficult job it was to win their trust. If society at large was deeply hostile to their dress and demeanour, the young people who met up on the streets were highly suspicious of any attempts to try to order and control them. In an effort to gain their trust, the more ‘streetwise’ youth club leaders tried to gain the co-operation of people the youngsters looked up to and respected. Walter Ulbricht, himself, had suggested coopting a couple of Halbstarke – ‘young people who have authority in the neighbourhood’ – into organizing committees for local activities. It was often the case, however, that figures who had credibility on the street were precisely those who had already themselves been in trouble with the authorities. But while such ‘poachers turned gamekeepers’ had an implicit and intuitive understanding of how to talk to and get on with youngsters from similar backgrounds in a way in which both sides could maintain ‘respect’, to outside authorities like the People’s Police, the decision to place ‘former criminals’ in positions of authority seemed like irresponsibility bordering on madness. An immense gulf separated the self-understood mission and purpose of the police from the position of youth club leaders whose job it was to build bridges to young people who found themselves on the wrong side of the authorities because of their involvement in street culture.

While the police had fairly straightforward and clear-cut definitions and notions about what to do with troublesome youth (consisting either of locking them up or beating them up), those involved in ‘soft policing’ functions like the youth club leaders had a much thinner and more painful line to tread. Faced by hostile and aggressive police authorities, on the one hand, and suspicious and distrustful youngsters, on the other, it was very difficult to establish what

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41 Walter Ulbricht at the 25th Conference.  
44 Cohen & Robins, Knuckle Sandwich, 120-124.
constituted the right thing to do. Although their stated purpose was to get young people off the streets, they received very little in the way of concrete guidance about how to do this or what to do with them once they had. The education authorities complained that 'the young friends involved in youth clubs often receive insufficient support from experienced cultural functionaries... Those currently employed in the clubhouses are mostly very young and have little experience in cultural work and in how to lead people. Yet it is precisely of them that such great demands are made.'

As far as young people in the gangs were concerned, youth clubs were much more attractive in winter when they could offer a warm, dry place in which they could be by themselves. 'They are mainly in search of space where they can go and be undisturbed after work. They openly express their desire to have nothing to do with the FDJ, but instead to listen to their music and play Skat in their free time after work.' As soon as warmer weather arrived they were straight back out onto the street. The more 'streetwise' youth workers knew that nothing was more likely to send young people fleeing out of the door than 'sensible' activities or a lecture on the 'virtues of socialism'. Those at the cutting edge, working in the no man's land between the regime and the street, also knew that their authority over their young clientele was never more than fragile and that they were still highly prone to misrule. Knowing where to draw the boundaries was very demanding. If his or her regime was too strict or stuffy nobody would come. If they loosened up too much the kids would walk all over them and they would then be accused of complicity. It is not surprising that the authorities had so much difficulty in recruiting staff for the youth clubs who were both suitably able and 'politically qualified'.

'Having a heart for youth' entailed temporarily renouncing the prejudices against young people who clustered on street corners and admitting that as well as the pernicious influence of western media, they might have more prosaic

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45 In one incident in 1964, an ABV tried to get three young workers to leave a youth club. When they resisted, he fired a warning shot which hit and fatally killed one of them. 'Besondere Vorkommnisse, 1963-1964', BArch. SAPMO DY24/3730.
46 'Bericht über die Lage der Jugend im Bezirk (9.5.61)', StAL, RdB Volksbildung, 3723.
reasons for their behaviour like boredom and not having anywhere else to go. While at other times, Party leaders were perfectly happy to castigate young people on the basis of their clothes and haircuts, during periods of compromise and co-option, they encouraged adults and the authorities not to judge young people simply by their appearances. Instead of seeing youth as universally corrupt and decadent ('degenerate' was the word which older generations actually used),\(^49\) the Party strove to present young people as being essentially good and worth saving. On this occasion, however, the earnest heart-searching was brought to an end by the building of the wall. Following the 13th August 1961, the Politbüro had two new solutions for problem youth. The first was 'reeducation' in work camps. The second was conscription into the army. 'We have implemented a few measures against hostile elements, Walter Ulbricht told the Politbüro, 'Youngsters who don't want to work will learn how to in work camps.' Those in the gangs would be properly brought up in the army.\(^50\)

‘SOCIALISM WITH A CHEEKY FACE’ – ‘TRUST AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUTH’

Given Walter Ulbricht’s feelings towards youth in the immediate aftermath of the building of the wall, it is surprising that only two years later he was prepared to initiate a renewed campaign of self-criticism and ‘having a heart for youth’. Unless, of course, he meant what he said in August 1961: ‘we must discuss things openly with the gangs. We mustn’t awake the impression that we’re going to lock them up straight away. We have time for that. We must lure them out and find out where the enemy is. You [the FDJ] don’t know that yet.\(^51\) One reading of Ulbricht’s sudden conversion from misanthrope to philanthrope is that it was an attempt to take the wind out of the sails of those desiring reform. Another that it was a ploy to give them enough rope to hang themselves. More likely, however, is that it was a cynical exercise in ‘image management’ designed to coincide with the ‘Germany meeting’ (Deutschlandtreffen) in Berlin planned for July 1964.

\(^{49}\) Bericht über die Tätigkeit im Wahlkreis 8 Nord Dresden (29.4.1961), BArch. SAPMO DY 24/3844.
\(^{50}\) ‘Rede des Genossen Walter Ulbricht im Politbüro am 22.8.1961’, BArch. SAPMO DY24/3727.
\(^{51}\) ‘Rede des Genossen Walter Ulbricht...’

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The GDR wanted to have international recognition for itself... Each time, those in power used us [youth] to present the GDR [to the outside]... If they'd shown how it really was it wouldn't have been good for the image...
Particularly in '64 during the Deutschlandtreffen or the Weltfestspiele [in 1973] things could be done which would otherwise have been inconceivable.\(^\text{52}\)

These mass jamborees did have the effect of presenting a new, young and modern East German face to the world. Careful planning and skilful rhetoric masked the fact that little about young people's position in the GDR had actually concretely changed.\(^\text{53}\)

The best indication of what Walter Ulbricht was actually thinking when he ordered a new Jugendkommunique are the minutes of a meeting he held with representatives of the various organizations with responsibility for education and leisure in March 1963.\(^\text{54}\) 'Youth', he said, 'have the task of forming the future of the GDR and the whole German nation'. The Party could only allow young people to fulfil their destiny by 'overcoming the bureaucratism that here and there has become a habit with us. I'm talking about the bureaucratism which begins with the Working Group for Youth in the Central Council of the FDJ and [can be seen] everywhere.'\(^\text{55}\) The next generation had grown up under the conditions of the workers' and peasants' state and had no direct experience of the 'fight against capitalism'. As a result, 'a whole series of new educational problems' existed. The major problem was an imbalance in young people's attitudes to work and leisure. According to Horst Schumann, the First Secretary of the FDJ,

The first thing they all think about is leisure, dancing, fashion, amusing themselves, that is what life means for them. Naturally, they do their work, they study too, but for them it is more or less a necessary evil, that they can't

\(^{52}\) Interview with Klaus Renft.
\(^{53}\) 'Informationen über den Verlauf der Deutschlandtreffen in der Hauptstadt', Landesarchiv Berlin, C Rep 902, 2121; 'Sonne, Sex und Sozialismus' in Der Spiegel (27.5.1964).
\(^{55}\) Ibid.
get out of... [The way they perceive the world is] characterized by letting themselves go and just living for the day.®®

If young people were to accomplish the task set out for them, then the Party needed to change the way young people saw themselves and their lives.

The ensuing discussion produced a frank assessment of the situation. For Walter Ulbricht, the creation of a ‘unitary, coherent, I want to say comprehensive system’ had been a major achievement, but ‘one cannot say that it has been accompanied by a firm orientation in the development of young people’s consciousness’. In particular, Ulbricht’s attention had been caught by a children’s TV programme he had seen on East German television:

We hear on TV that a schoolgirl declares her lifetime goal to be owning a house with five rooms. There shouldn’t be more rooms than that because otherwise there would be too much housework! This house should be situated near a lake so that one wouldn’t have to build a "swimming pool". Those were the very words she used! I’m very clear about this. I only need to hear something like that once (general mirth). And that at the Kant-Oberschule in Berlin of all places. Kant would turn over in his grave if he could hear that.

What this showed for Ulbricht was that within the administration, ‘everyone makes their own youth policy, as he understands it, one from this standpoint, the other from another, one from a cultural position, the other from the position of scientific-technical progress. Is it not necessary to clear up this question?’®®

Although he was officially presented as the mastermind behind the GDR’s educational project, Ulbricht’s comments revealed discontent with certain aspects of the new system.®® Comparing the way young people were being educated in the GDR with the education he had received as a boy in the Kaiserreich, there was much that he could find that was wrong with it. ‘Back then, in Germany under the Kaiser, at least there was a class teacher.’ He saw

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®®  Ibid.
®®  Ibid.
the key to control over education as being the creation of a chain of command like the one which existed in the military. When he visited a school or a factory, he expected to be met by someone with responsibility, someone who was in charge and who would take the flak if anything was not right. This was the way it was done in the army. "When I come to a unit, I receive an accurate report of what the situation is. Woe betide the political officer if he doesn't tell me what kind of a mess his unit is in." This was also the structure of command Ulbricht had implemented in the economy.

In industry I have to have a chain of command, don't I? There I have a manager, a general manager and a work leader. Those are the ones I make responsible! But with you lot [in the education system] nobody's responsible. There too, order must be created.  

For 'ten years', he had been trying to drum it into the education ministry that they needed to implement a similar chain of command. 'In 1958, I [again] raised the issue of the class teacher! Who the hell is actually responsible?' The problem was the new, the 'people's democratic (die volksdemokratische) order' which had resulted, he felt, in 'sloppiness (Schlamperei)'. 'That's the way the whole education system has been mucked up.' But, 'to be polite, I'll say that a "liberalization" has occurred.' In many ways, though, he felt that the new, reformed East German education system was not a patch on the old one.

Before we had to cram to get marks. [But] now that's been abolished. That's the difference. Back then, we did gym. When it was still called "gymnastics", you knew exactly what you were doing. But what's it called now? ( Interruption: physical education!) No! That was also too mixed-up an education. Where is the novelty? It consists in the fact that one no longer needs to do gym, but that one can play ring-a-ring-o'-roses during this time. With gym, we marched up in ranks of four, counted off and went 'left-right-march!' to the equipment! After the warm up we did gymnastics. But here with us, we no longer do gym. [Instead] off they go into the heavenly spheres. There everyone can do their ring-a-ring-o'-roses exactly the way they want.  

Ulbricht was clearly worried that the GDR had gone too far in certain areas and was drifting away from its true purpose, as a workers' and peasants' state.

59 'Stenografische Niederschrift...'
60 Ibid.
Fig. 23: At the age of fourteen, Walter Ulbricht (standing, second row, marked with a cross) became a member of the 'Eiche' Gymnastic Association in Leipzig.
What he wanted were reforms which seemed to herald progressive and liberal-minded modernization, but which actually disguised a return to older values. The ‘trick (Kunst)’ was to dictate a law from above but to make it appear as if it was a response to general problems and real discussions. Not only had the whole system become too ‘namby pamby’ and liberal for Ulbricht, but it was far too top-heavy and bureaucratic. The education ministry had all sorts of think tanks working for it to come up with new names and reforms. The FDJ did a very good job at splitting hairs in drafting laws. But neither organization seemed to have much of an idea of ‘how youth now lives and how the problems will be solved.’

The main question, though, is the new presentation of the problems, the changing of working methods, the lively implementation. To do it as if we have no law and don’t make any law, to carry out everything without law – the law is only an assistance to put pressure there where things aren’t going normally...  

Monika Kaiser has interpreted Ulbricht’s decision to implement the youth communiqué as a sign that he was more open-minded and forward-looking than has previously been admitted. But there is no evidence to suggest that Ulbricht was opposed to dictatorial methods. What he opposed were dictatorial methods which were not working effectively. Although the communiqué was widely interpreted as a sign that there would be greater toleration for ‘young and modern’ ways of thinking, Ulbricht was not at all happy about the new fashions he could see taking hold in his republic. ‘We’ll have your teaching seminars inspected,’ he told the Minister for Education, Alfred Lemmzit, ‘then we’ll see how the teachers are trained there. We’ll check how many female teachers go to school with make up and short skirts, etc. to give the children this example. We’ll check all of that and we’ll see who’s to blame for the training teachers are given. That’s the question.’

Democratization was the furthest thing from Ulbricht’s mind as he tried to find a solution to the ‘youth problem’:

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61 Ibid.
63 ‘Stenografische Niederschrift...’
Fig. 24: To Walter Ulbricht's apparent disapproval, the 1960s saw young women playing an increasingly visible role in the education system.
State apparatus is state apparatus, it isn’t a voting association. Votes are held in the Volkskammer [the East German rubber stamp parliament] in order to advise and conclude laws, but when the state apparatus has something to carry out, it is to do so exactly. Otherwise, it’s impossible to work. And that goes for all areas. But the art is not to do it in a formalistic, administrative way, but to do it in a way that people will be convinced that their initiatives are being developed.

This, then was what Ulbricht really wanted. A law which had already been decided, but was implemented in such a way as to appear to have come from below. In the education system, he wanted to introduce measures which would tighten up and close apparent loopholes in the system, but these would be introduced in such a way as to make them appear liberal and open-minded. What would appear like progressive modernization was actually a disguised return to older values.

Ulbricht hoped that the communique would provide a unitary line banishing contradictions with their harmful effects on young people’s consciousness. He wanted to initiate a drive for modernization without encouraging the changes in outlook and behaviour so apparent in Western countries. Faced not only with increasing complexity and diversity but also with the appearance of phenomena which had not been planned and were unpredicted, Ulbricht hoped to impose order from above. As is evident from the way in which the communique was received, however, there were significant sections of East German society, which were eagerly hoping for and anticipating the very changes that Walter Ulbricht so opposed.

The person responsible for spinning the message until it appeared palatable (and plausible) to young people was Kurt Turba. At the meeting in March 1963, Turba had been praised by Ulbricht for his work as editor of Forum magazine. Ulbricht had suggested that ‘public treatment’ of questions like that of youth criminality should be carried on in the way it had been begun in Junge Welt and Forum so that there were ‘no exaggerations, but the tone should be right. In no way should some exaggerated criticism of youth come out. It should not be allowed that through publication of particular materials the enemy be given material and the whole discussion comes on the wrong tracks. We start from
the position of the decisions made at the Party Conference and handle the
questions matter-of-factly. For this reason, I lay a great deal of importance on
the FDJ itself posing these questions so that we don't give the impression that
we have to intervene or that we have the intention of intervening.'

For his part, Kurt Turba, responded to Ulbricht's criticism of the FDJ's
bureaucracy and incompetence by suggesting making young people
themselves the agents of change. His idea was to harness young people's
capacity for idealism and their 'natural' desire for change and to use them as a
dynamic force to shake up society. The phrase he coined to describe these
young revolutionaries was 'impudent socialists': 'es ist unsere Aufgabe,
sozialistisch frech zu sein...' Although it referred to them as the 'house masters
(Hausherren) of tomorrow rather than as 'impudent socialists', the communiqué
embodied many of these ideas about the role young people could play in
challenging outdated working practices and acting as a motor for change. By
speaking directly to young people, the communiqué cut out the layers of
middle-ranking bureaucrats and set out what young people's tasks were for the
transformation of society.

The youth communiqué combined the notion that young people were
malleable and idealistic with a recognition that they were often poorly treated
and misunderstood. Junge Welt announced that the communiqué sounded a
new melody for youth, a 'joyful optimism' which would overcome 'the soulless
administration' and 'remains of dogmatism' in the GDR. Young people's
supposed idealism seemed to offer the regime its most important resource. If
young people could be hooked into co-operation and enthusiastic support by
means of symbolic rather than material incentives – acceptance and recognition
rather than improvements in wages and the standard of living – then the regime
had a chance to break out of the vicious circle of failing incentives and poor
productivity. The communiqué not only declared young people to be mistreated
by older generations, but emphasized that they would soon replace them.

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64 'Kommuniqué des Politbüros des ZK d. SED, Jugend von Heute - Hausherren von Morgen' (Berlin, 1963); 'Der Jugend Vertrauen und Verantwortung'.
65 Junge Welt (27.9.63).
Der Jugend Vertrauen und Verantwortung

Ein moderner Mensch braucht eine zehnklassige Schulbildung

Das seelenlose Administrieren überwinden

Wir rufen die ganze Jugend zu frischfröhlichem Weltstreit

Nicht einfach neuen Wein in alte Schlüche gießen

Tanzmusik niveauvoll spielen


Fig. 25: The media offensive launching the 1963 Jugendkommissär.
Only youth are in the position to master the great problems of societal progress, those who know the laws of societal development, and how to take full advantage of them and in this way, allied with the whole people, to march forward step by step.66

Reports on how the communiqué was received suggest that East German youth already belonged to the ‘television generation’. Although very few young people had actually read the document, most had heard about and could express an opinion on it. Nevertheless the communiqué had a much more important impact outside of the group it was targeted at. Writers, journalists, artists, musicians and film makers were all highly adept at reading (and writing) between the lines. They all saw the matter-of-fact tone of the Jugendkommuniqué as a sign that the ice was finally thawing and breaking and that opportunities were being opened up for experimentation and free expression of creativity within socialism.67 But if one returns to what Ulbricht actually said in March 1963, then it is clear that he had no intention of unleashing creativity in the cultural sphere, but of making sure that it did not contradict the economic and social development planned by the Party. What he wanted was for young people to form a modern, capable workforce and for the education system to achieve this function. What he absolutely did not want were teachers ‘who have succumbed to the influence of Western lifestyles’ or TV programmes designed to develop young people’s fashion sense.

As if youth is there for fashion designers! Young people should be decently dressed! Our industry should produce decent clothing! The FDJ should say what problems there are! But that youth exist for fashion designers, we didn’t know that before. That’s the first time we’ve heard about all that.68

Ulbricht’s intention was to ensure that any ‘modern’ changes which occurred in society were rigidly controlled. The consequences of the youth communiqué, however, appear to have had exactly the opposite effect.

66 Ibid.
68 ‘Stenografische Niederschrift...’
Jung mit der Jugend


Fig. 26: Young at heart, Walter Ulbricht shows that he still has a thing or two to teach the younger generation.
By embarking on a campaign against bureaucratic inertia, Ulbricht unwittingly unleashed expectations for wide-ranging progressive and democratizing reforms. To liberals and reformers within the administration, the rhetoric about ending 'contradictions' and 'bureaucracy' appeared to signal that the regime was now aware of the need for change. What Ulbricht had intended was precisely the opposite, a return to traditional values:

In the universities where the professors are experienced, there it's in order. There it's ok. They have their old order. But, where it's now been modernized in a people's democratic fashion, nobody really knows what is actually going on. In the Ministry for Culture it's even worse and it has to be changed. That's why in the discussion with the writers, I criticised the Minister. We'll investigate and make sure that [there too] order is established.®®

Although the communiqué and the rhetoric which went with it challenged older generations of workers and their treatment of youth, the effect of the workplace discussions which followed the announcement of the communiqué was to harden divisions between the generations.®® Within the factories, the informal influence exerted by networks and relations based on Eigensinn ensured that young managers depended on the older workers' co-operation to get anything achieved and young workers did not rise above the position allotted to them by their older colleagues. Within each factory or collective farm, a status hierarchy existed with older male workers at the top and women and youngsters at the bottom. Position and status within the factory or farm were intimately bound up with control of raw materials, machinery and tractors. Older, higher status workers did the important jobs. People lower down the informal hierarchy swept up, made the tea and were generally forced to do the unpleasant jobs that nobody else wanted to do. Younger workers complained of being treated as suitable only for menial and inferior work. ‘The young female colleagues from the Behrend laundry said that nobody took them seriously and that they were continually criticised if, for once, they wore something nice or had a modern haircut.’®® Measures designed to make particular functions dependent on qualification and not experience were clearly a threat to the

®® Ibid.
®® Einschätzung und Berichte zur Durchsetzung des Jugendkommuniqués’ (1963-64), StAL, IVA-2/16/454.

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dominant position of older workers. ‘Arguments occur concerning the
deployment of more qualified younger workers in positions which are currently
occupied by older colleagues. They shrink back from arguments with older
colleagues and declare this matter a so-called “hot potato”.’ For their part,
older workers responded to attempts to undermine and usurp their status with
the tried and tested method of throwing a spanner in the works and sabotaging
the work of their younger rivals. In the LPG Küssern in Kreis Delitzsch, the FDJ
was given the ‘youth project’ of cultivating a field.

Because they were given no help whatsoever from the executive, the
youngsters only managed to cultivate a part of the area designated as a
youth project. The head of the LPG had the field photographed and started
running a book on the [eventual] “decrease in profits caused by the FDJ”.

Suggestions for improvements in working-methods were met with unconcealed
resentment. As one work leader put it, ‘When you’ve lived as many years as I
have worked, then you can allow yourself to criticise my work.’

AN EXPERIMENT IN UNLEASHING CREATIVITY –
THE KINO DER JUGEND

For all its shortcomings, the Jugendkommuniqué nevertheless created
unprecedented space for young people, aided by youth club leaders, to create
their own opportunities for activity and expression. Some of the most successful
attempts to create alternative activities for youth came from within the working-
class communities themselves. In 1963, Dieter S. became involved in setting up
the ‘Kino der Jugend’ (Cinema of Youth) in Sellerhausen in the east of
Leipzig. Following an unfortunate series of events, Dieter had ended up with
three years and six months in prison for spying. ‘It was a troubled time, a
troubled time and nowhere [could one] become firmly established.’

During his

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72 ‘Einschätzung der Mitgliederversammlungen im Monat November zur Auswertung des
Kommuniques des Politbüros “Der Jugend Vertrauen und Verantwortung” (Leipzig, den
23.11.1963)’, IV A-2/16/454, 41.
73 ‘Analyse zum Stand der Jugendpolitik der Partei nach der Veröffentlichung des
74 Ibid, 42.
75 ‘Untersuchungen zu den Vorkommnissen im "Kino der Jugend" am 12.9.1965’ StAL, IV
A2/16/464.
76 Interview with Dieter S.
apprenticeship he had been involved in a shooting incident in which a portrait of Wilhelm Pieck had been injured.

In our apprenticeship we had this culture room and we mucked around a bit... we shot pictures with an air rifle. It was still Wilhelm Pieck back then... We had no hatred for the man, but it just happened. We shot at the pictures and then it was interpreted politically and they gave me the choice between a prison sentence and volunteering for the army.^^

As the oldest involved, Dieter had been singled out as the 'ringleader'. Nevertheless, he soon found himself at home in his new work (as a cook) and was able to afford regular trips to West Berlin on his new salary. Unfortunately, on one of his visits to West Berlin, he was persuaded to stay there. He soon regretted his decision, but because he was 'absent without leave' from the military, there was no way he could return home. He was given a new West German passport and sent to work in a hotel in a rural district of southern Germany.

We arrived in a camp in the Pfalz of all places where there's little industry. Me and my mate were sent to a hotelier - more of a restaurant than a hotel - and we were employed as domestic servants. We were brought up very differently. We were more self-confident. In spite of everything, I knew who I was. Here [i.e. in the East] I'd never have been a domestic servant.

Unhappy at his drop in status and at the prejudices which workers - particularly those from East Germany - were still forced to endure in the West, he left to go and visit relatives in West Berlin. 'It was all so primitive there [in the West]. Politics aside, there were other conditions. It would have been more secure here, more certain.' Homesick for his former life in the East and curious to see how it had changed in his absence, at the beginning of 1959, he made the foolish decision to visit East Berlin. At the border, the guards noticed that his Western passport was a bit too new and he was arrested as a deserter on charges of spying. Because he agreed to plead guilty, he received a sentence of three and a half years.^^

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Ibid.

Ibid.

Interview with Dieter S.; 'Untersuchungen zu den Vorkommnissen...'
Once he had been released from prison, Dieter was sent back to work in a factory near where his parents lived in the working-class neighbourhood of Reudnitz in the east of Leipzig. In spite of his imprisonment, he nevertheless had dreams of escaping from his environment and becoming a journalist. In addition to sending in articles on cultural events to the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, he hoped to further his ambition by involvement in the *Kino der Jugend*. Given the dearth of leisure opportunities for young people, the new cinema, catering exclusively for young people, soon proved highly popular not just with young people from the surrounding area, but with youngsters from all over Leipzig.

The secret of their success was that 'we tried to bring as little or even no politics at all into it.' They also knew how to get the youngsters themselves involved. 'We understood how to make something out of nothing. We asked friends and people who came to the *Filmclub*, "Hey mate, do you know someone who can draw and paint?" Then we got them and asked them if they could do posters for us as advertising.' Young people were also heavily involved in refurbishing and repainting the cinema. Dieter arranged a deal with the manager of the Capitol cinema whereby a lad on a motorbike would collect film reels straight after they had been shown there and bike them over to the *Kino der Jugend*. Although slightly older, Dieter still had an implicit understanding for the youngsters who visited the cinema. He remembered telling the cultural functionary in charge of film distribution in Leipzig, 'Whatever you do, don't send us a heavy partisan film or something like that'. From experience, he could guess what the likely reaction would be. 'It was always at boiling point. At any moment it could tip over.'

Carried away by the cinema's success and the enthusiasm of the youngsters, who came along every week, Dieter let himself be talked into allowing amateur Beat bands to perform on stage. 'At first, the bands were there as a prelude to the film, but they proved so popular that in the end it was all music with a bit of film at the end.' Klaus Renft, at the time lead singer of The Butlers remembered it as being a great venue for gigs. 'The atmosphere was really wild'. For Dieter S., however, it became increasingly difficult to keep the

80 Interview with Dieter S.
81 Interview with Klaus Renft.
youngsters under control. 'It was absolute bedlam. There were 900 young people in there, starting at 12 and the oldest of them were 18. The average was 12 to 16. You can imagine the howling and the roaring.' The crowd of teenagers became so big that they had to start turning them away at the door and, on occasion, had policemen guarding the side exits. 'What was dangerous was that they were all sat so close together.' They were all packed in so tightly that many a time he feared for his seats which were 'old in any case'. Nevertheless, it was impossible to prevent the youngsters shifting around to the music. 'Young people want to have their fling, want to dance around.'

When they came to reassess the situation of youth in the summer and autumn of 1965, what Politbüro members found was not only that young people were turning more and more overtly to the music of the Beatles and Rolling Stones, but that they were being encouraged and helped to do so by youth functionaries and members of the Party. Youth club leaders, it was reported, were allowing amateur bands with 'American' names and English lyrics to do gigs in their clubs. FDJ functionaries not only condoned such activities, but had organized republic-wide guitar competitions for the most talented up-and-coming groups. Journalists for such prestigious papers as Neues Deutschland were writing articles praising the musicians' abilities. One article printed the heresy that 'it's impossible to divide dance music into socialist and capitalist. Just give free rein to young people and their music.' East German media executives had been providing them with recording contracts and airplay. The rot of western subversion had set so far into East German society that young FDJ apparatchiks could be heard discussing the West German TV broadcasts in the corridors of the FDJ headquarters in Berlin.

The 1964 Deutschlandtreffen had proved a great success with young people. The GDR had been able to present an open-minded and tolerant face to the world. Western journalists had been impressed by officially organized events where FDJler could be seen twisting in their blue shirts. But once the summer

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82 Ibid.
83 Rauhut, Beat in der Grauzone, 64-95.
84 'Butlers Boogie' Neues Deutschland (4: 4, 1965).
85 Mählert & Stephan, Blaue Hemden, 169, note 184.
86 'Sonne, Sex und Sozialismus', 33-37.
of ‘sun, sex and socialism’ was over, East German would-be reformers showed no signs of running out of steam. The GDR’s young filmmakers and writers had been creatively pushing back the boundaries of what was allowed and exploring uncharted territory by tackling previously taboo subjects. If Ulbricht had hoped to outflank the moderates by stealing their thunder, he had obviously seriously miscalculated. If, on the other hand, it was all just a cynical plot to get certain groups to reveal their true colours, then it had succeeded far beyond his original intentions. In August 1964, Paul Fröhlich, First Secretary of the SED in Bezirk Leipzig, received first hand experience of ‘impudent socialism’. He was visited by a member of the FDJ central council demanding to know what his administration was doing for youth. A letter was sent to Kurt Turba, whom Ulbricht had made head of a special Politbüro Youth Commission, asking him exactly what the comrade thought he was doing, trying to inspect the party apparatus: ‘as a consequence of his arrogant and supercilious (cheeky) behaviour, Comrade Fröhlich demanded that he leave his office [immediately].

The runaway success of Beat music among East German youth could not have been foreseen or predicted back in September or March 1963. The ‘modernity’ of the new music style and the suddenly fashionable clothing and haircuts created a crisis over modernity in the midst of the SED’s attempts at re-modernization. On the one hand, the Party presented young people as the vanguard and protean force for the revolutionary transformation of society. On the other, many within the SED (including Ulbricht himself) were deeply suspicious and hostile to any unplanned, uncontrolled developments. The experiment of ‘loosening the reins’ which bound young people raised questions and issues that the SED had no way of answering. Most notably: how far could socialism modernize without converging with the West? Ulbricht’s hopes of the communiqué magically resolving contradictions in the GDR’s socialist development proved hopelessly misguided. The hope of finding a path to contradiction-free development floundered against the ‘Janus face of modernity’. In December 1965, Horst Schumann criticised the scepticism ‘which

87 Mahlert & Stephan, Blaue Hemden, 159.
88 ‘Leiter der Jugendkommission (22.8.1964)’, BArch. SAPMO DY30/IVA2/16/68.
doubts and denies everything’ and the objectivism ‘which positions itself
between two fronts.’

Many of the youth clubs which were conceived as the nuclei of a new young
socialist society, have unfortunately become reserves for young people with
backward views and habits. From this reservoir a few rowdy gangs have
noisily and rudely pushed themselves into the foreground of interest.
Admittedly they are not capable of putting the extraordinarily great and
positive achievements of our youth in the shadows, but we would fail if we
forgot that youth is a sensitive and impressionable material.

What had started out as an attempt to foster a new generation of ‘impudent
socialists’ degenerated into a fearful confusing mess, in which the only thing of
which SED functionaries could be sure of was that large numbers of young
people cared little for their message but were instead sullenly indifferent and
ungrateful.

Friends, who are not yet convinced of the victory of socialism let themselves
be led astray by the dazzling facades of capitalism, the high work productivity
of West Germany and the USA and, on the other hand, by particular
difficulties that still exist here with us. Typical arguments are: "free
competition in capitalism is far superior to our planned economy."
"Here, the community swallows the individual and hinders his personal
development."
"There are too many people running around carrying briefcases here." 
"Before workers were exploited by capitalism, today it happens thanks to the
'Father State'."
"Here there's no freedom, it's all compulsion."  
"Nobody can claim yet that we represent the future. There are too many
shortcomings and deficits here."

Whether by accident or by design, the youth communiqué served to widen
the fault-line between older and younger generations, particularly within the
working class. Throughout the developed world, the mid-1960s was a time
when young and old sections of the working class were finding it hard to

89 Mählert & Stephan, Blaue Hemden, 168, note 184.
90 'Der Vater verließ den Saal. Beobachtungen und Notizen bei einem Jugendprozeß', Neues
92 'Analyse über die Lage und der Arbeit mit der Jugend in der Stadt Leipzig (14.1.1965)', StAL
IVA-5/01/269, 31.
understand and get on with one another. Older workers looked at the 'conspicuous consumption' of young workers and saw them as being inherently spoilt. They younger workers had experienced nothing of the wartime suffering and deprivations or the mass unemployment of the 1930s. Instead, they simply waltzed into jobs during a period of full employment, taking the sacrifices of their elders for granted but without showing appreciation and demanding yet more. Hostility to the younger generation centred on their supposedly lax, disinterested attitude to work. 'We don’t care where we work. The most important thing is that we earn a lot of money and have a good life.' Younger workers, their older colleagues complained, did not share the commitment to German standards of quality work and were only interested in work as a means of gaining money to buy consumer goods. 'The youth [of today] is only materially minded and has no interest in work [for work’s sake]. Relaxed attitudes among younger workers to work discipline were not, of course, entirely new. After the Nazis' rearmament policies had created full employment, younger workers had shown a similar lack of interest in rhetoric about the national destiny by skipping and skiving off work to further their own amusement. In the GDR, the regime sided with older generations by playing on young people's lack of direct experience of, and hence their supposed lack of resistance to, National Socialism. But although young people lacked 'direct experience' of fascism, it was their casual clothing and long hair – indicative of their lack of a soldierly habitus – that above all engendered feelings of hostility among older workers and regime officials.

CONCLUSION

Although Ulbricht's impatience with the lumbering momentum of the FDJ acted as the spur for changes in youth policy, it is clear from his many comments and interjections that the underlying message of the communiqué –

95 'Einschätzung der Mitgliederversammlungen...', 42.
96 Peukert, Inside Nazi Germany, 162.
that young people could now be free of petty-minded restrictions – was not one that he truly intended. True, he saw it as being necessary for a ‘thorough discussion of problems affecting youth’ and of the relations between the younger and older generations. But he saw no reason for a let-up in the ‘fight against the influences of bourgeois decadence’, only for that fight to be more consequential.

Saddled with a youth organization that far from mobilizing young people, actively repelled them, the Politbüro undertook a number of initiatives designed to ‘shake up’ youth policy. The prevailing atmosphere of intolerance to changes taking place among young people in the GDR was briefly suspended and replaced by an openness to dialogue and a rhetoric of understanding. Each time the Party promised to be more pragmatic in its dealings with youth, thereby raising hopes that tolerance and realism would prevail. Unfortunately, on each occasion the period of experimentation and optimism was brief. As Dieter S. said, ‘If you are going to let young people do things themselves then you have to reckon with the occasional mishap.’⁹⁸ Overtaken by events and by doubts about the validity of the enterprise, Party leaders abandoned the risky and uncertain attempt to win young people’s trust for the certainties provided by prescription, self-congratulation and hostility to any novelty or nonconformity. It was important to find more effective ways of ‘captivating’ young people. But the continued emphasis placed on ‘sensible’ leisure activities (and fear of Western-inspired alternatives) prevented the SED leadership from genuinely seeking to address youthful desires. The Party continued to insist on providing young people with what it thought they should want rather than what they themselves actually enjoyed doing.

⁹⁸ Interview with Dieter S.
6) Conflict and Coercion

The previous chapter explored regime endeavours to 'solve' nonconformity by attempting to find compromises and experimenting with techniques of cooption. But the Party leadership also had a whole arsenal of weapons of coercion and confrontation at its disposal, which were regularly used on those young people who were seen to be straying from the path set out for them by the Party. In schools and on the streets, instances of indiscipline and unruliness could easily be interpreted by the authorities as 'attacks on the state'. The regime's need to generate rituals and proofs of loyalty led to repression against individuals when they failed to live up to its expectations. In addition to this background level of repression of nonconformity, there were periodic campaigns of persecution directed at particular groups. In the early 1950s, the major focus was on young Christians, who belonged to the Junge Gemeinde, particularly in the Oberschule. With the emergence of recognisable youth subcultures in the late 1950s, the Party was provided with new and highly visible targets for public condemnation and official harassment. This chapter explores the influence of Stalinism on the Party and assesses whether the methods used by the SED in its bid to coerce young people into conformity really were 'just like the Nazis'. It also raises the issue of 'moral panics' which were neither Stalinist nor Nazi in origin and which constituted the prevalent mode of misrepresenting and attacking youth subcultures in both East and West.

STALINIST OVERTONES

Particularly in the early years of the regime's existence, while Stalin was still in power in the Soviet Union and the Soviet occupying forces continued to play a crucial role in shaping and influencing the development of socialism in the GDR, regime attempts to punish and control youth nonconformity could be described as 'Stalinist' in their language and methodology. Recurrent themes

1 Wierling, 'Die Jugend als innerer Feind', 407.
in the Stalinist-style rhetoric involved 'infiltration' and 'sabotage' by spies and traitors together with the work of the counter-revolutionary fifth column. Attacks on the GDR came from a wide-range of sources, all connected in a concerted covert onslaught. At this time, the GDR borrowed political rituals and ceremonies from the Soviet 'big brothers'. To a much greater extent than for subsequent Soviet leaders, attempts were made to generate a cult of personality for Stalin among East German youth. In the run up to Christmas 1949, Communists in the education ministry and the FDJ tried to have the traditional Christian emphasis on the 25 December as a celebration of the nativity of Christ replaced with a commemoration, instead, of Stalin’s birth which fell on the 21 December. Not surprisingly, this attempt to substitute a popular festival traditionally accompanied with eating, drinking and making merry with a dour celebration of the anniversary of a man responsible for the deaths and disappearance of millions of people (including several hundred thousand of their fellow countrymen) was more than many young people could stomach. Nevertheless, the authorities were determined to punish any young person who failed to show the requisite degree of solemnity and respect during these birthday celebrations. A group of sixth formers in Dresden used the occasion to make an ironic protest against the regime. They celebrated Stalin’s birth with not one but three portraits and hung up the slogan ‘Stalin, the genius of humanity.’

As a Christian and a member of the CDU, Manfred Klein had been heavily involved in the work of setting up the FDJ. But once the Christians had served their purpose as window-dressing for the supposedly non-sectarian nature of the official youth organization, he and other members of the so-called ‘bourgeois parties’ found themselves increasingly sidelined from its activities. Where once Christians had been allowed to contribute to the moral and antifascist training courses young people received, Christian messages were increasingly excluded. Instead of being taught to oppose militarism, FDJler

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3 Danyel, ‘Politische Rituale als Sowjetimporte’ in Jarausch & Siegrist (eds.), Amerikanisierung und Sowjetisierung in Deutschland, 70.
6 Mählert & Stephan, Blaue Hemden, 56-59.
were now being taught that violence was a useful tool in the development of socialism.

So, for example, during the establishment of state-run department stores (the Handelsorganisation or HO), it was considered easier to convince private owners that it was high time to shut up shop by applying the pressure of youth. The scale of means applied was wide and corresponded naturally to the desire of young people to take part in power and to play at "revolution".  

To draw attention to the contradiction between the ostensible aims of the youth organization that they had signed up to and its increasing instrumentalization in the service of the SED, non-communist members of the FDJ leadership formulated the resolution that 'any use of violence in political life or the propagation of the same should automatically result in expulsion from the FDJ.'  

Manfred Klein soon found himself in prison, condemned to '25 years hard labour for contacts to the American secret service and because of a visit to the "arch-reactionary" Adenauer [the West German Chancellor].'  

When he started his sentence in the notorious Soviet prison in Bautzen, he found himself reunited with people from 'all the lower and middle-ranking organizational levels of the FDJ' from Günter Sögtrop, a member of the FDJ central council, downwards. 

From 1948 onwards, the SED had been engaged in purging hostile elements (Social Democrats, Trotskyists, former anarchists and Western exiles) from its ranks. The 'intensification of the class struggle' also saw attacks on Liberals and Social Democrats within the teaching profession. Before, it had been necessary to prove contacts with the Eastern Bureaux (Ostbüros) of the West German Christian or Social Democratic parties. Now, anything short of full-hearted enthusiasm for Soviet-style Communism and Stalin posed a threat of disloyalty to the party. The 'Volkshauskreis' was a group of about 80 trades unionists and Social Democrats who met together with the ostensible aim of rebuilding the Leipziger Volkshaus, the traditional headquarters of the SPD, which had been badly damaged during the war. In the course of the

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7 Ibid, 67.  
8 Klein, Jugend, 80.  
9 Ibid, 91.  
10 Ibid, 94.
Stalinisation of the SED, they were attacked by the SED as a Social Democratic opposition group and were pursued by the East German judicial authorities.¹¹ Fresh from a trip to Moscow, in December 1949, Horst Sindermann outlined the groups which were now to be held responsible for slowing down the development and take up of socialism in the eastern Zone.¹² Leipzig, once proclaimed as the birthplace of Social Democracy, was now denigrated as the 'stronghold of Schumacher ideology', a city tainted with its long tradition of 'working-class revisionism':

'Don't let us forget, the fight against this objectivism [i.e. Social Democracy], which is represented in Leipzig with a strongly petit bourgeois character [in] a town where the old tradition of working-class revisionism is also present.'

Just two years after the forced merger of the SPD with the KPD and only a month after the founding of the GDR, Sindermann warned of the dangerous existence of 'petit-bourgeois, Schumacher-like tendencies' in the Leipzig teaching profession 'even among teachers who are members of our Party'. The teacher's union, in particular, represented 'a centre for political backwardness' in Leipzig:

We need to break with the old tradition of the teacher's educational association. The old Saxon Teacher's Union has died out. The teaching profession has totally different tasks to those of the then oh so lovely Saxon local historical teachers' association. The union has the task of the societal education of the teaching profession so that they don't deliver us any well-educated enemies of the people. The teaching profession must know that the Party cannot tolerate it that the union of teachers represents a centre for political backwardness in Leipzig, which is as yet no fact, but threatens to become one, if one does not now make a serious effort to liquidate it. (Applause)¹³

¹³ Sindermann speech.
There was no room in the ‘party of the new type’ for a functionary prepared to say to another functionary, ‘You know, you’re a good bloke, but you are and always will be a Communist and I am and always will be a Social Democrat.’ For Sindermann, there was only one option: ‘we must bravely and fearlessly track down the enemy agencies and their nests, smash them and reveal them in front of the whole population as centres of enemy English-American monopoly capital.’

Attacks on Liberals and Social Democrats within the teaching profession coincided with the arrest and imprisonment of pupils in the Oberschule. Together, teachers and ‘bourgeois, middle class’ pupils were colluding in hampering the development of socialism and the correct class consciousness among young people. In a general atmosphere of fear and confusion, purges and show trials were implemented by the Ministries of State Security and Justice, without key members of the administration, like Otto Grotewohl, being informed.

Sometime on the 2.10.1951, Comrade Grotewohl learned from an article in a West Berlin newspaper that on the 3.10.1951 a political punishment trial was to take place against 19 Oberschüler from Werdau before the district court in Zwickau. In the article it said that the pupils would have to reckon with long sentences and that only members of Communist organizations would be allowed in as spectators.

Grotewohl asked the Justice Ministry to delay or abandon the trial, but by the time a representative had been sent to Zwickau, sentences of between two and fifteen years had already been passed down. In fact, just after midnight on the night of the 3-4 October, the 19 Oberschüler were sentenced to a total of 130 years in prison. Their crime had been to distribute leaflets criticising the undemocratic nature of the ‘People’s Elections’ and the decision of the ‘unelected Pankow regime’ to condemn an Oberschüler to death for distributing anti-regime leaflets.

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14 Sindermann speech.
16 For a full account of the trial by one of those accused, see Achim Beyer, 'Der Prozeß gegen die "Werdauer Oberschüler" 1951. Jugendwiderstand in der SBZ/DDR' in Deutschland Archiv 31:1 (1998), 86-97.
Interestingly, the way in which the MfS had carried out this and other trials against *Oberschüler* in Saxony had produced 'strong opposition' not just among the general population but even within 'our government and the *Politbüro*. The 'opposition' on the part of regime leaders stemmed not so much from the fact that the trials and the sentences handed down were patently unjust and excessive, but because their lack of information about the trials made it impossible for Party functionaries to 'prepare and carry out the necessary political steering'.

As a result of the fact that the Western press and RIAS have broadcast several evil smear reports about the trial whereas our press remains silent, a strong discord has arisen among the population and in the factories, particularly in Werdau [described as 'a centre of sectarianism'] and Crimmitschau ['a stronghold of Social Democratism'].

The 'Stalinist' character of these early assaults against groups of young people defined and labelled as nonconformist by the authorities was particularly apparent in the offensive against the *Junge Gemeinde* carried out in the Spring of 1953. Combining high-profile denunciation in the media with a carefully-orchestrated series of showtrials and public purges in the *Oberschule*, the campaign was designed to strike terror into the hearts of young Christians and to show them that the regime meant business. As Erich Honecker put it in instructions to the troops: 'all measures are to be taken... [for] the cleansing of the *Oberschule*... There is no doubt that in a short time as a result of this education work, our hidden goal of liquidating the *Junge Gemeinde* (das von uns gesteckte Ziel der Liquidierung der Jungen Gemeinde) can be achieved.'

It resulted from Communist suspicions that middle-class and Christian *Oberschüler* were behind the poor performance of working-class youth in education and the lacklustre activities of the FDJ. In rural communities in particular, the FDJ was failing to compete effectively with the much more popular *Junge Gemeinde*. A report from Zschopau outlined the dangerous threat posed by this organization of young Christians:

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17 'Prozeß gegen 19 Werdauer'.
Instead of going to the [official] social evenings, members of the FDJ go to those of the Christian youth. There there are membership cards. The evenings take place in private flats and houses. They never let themselves get involved in political discussions. They are ready to work with the FDJ but reject any amalgamation. They talk about Goethe, Heine, sing religious songs, but as soon as a stranger comes along with them, they pretend to be holy (sobald aber ein Fremder mitkommt, bleibt man heilig).\(^{20}\)

Other local FDJ commanders reported the opposite. Christians used innocent-seeming leisure opportunities as a means of talking young atheists into abandoning their faith and becoming Christians.

In fact, many Christians were members of both organizations and those people who were keenly involved in \textit{Junge Gemeinde} activities were often also functionaries in the FDJ. Unfortunately, this only hardened the leadership's suspicions by suggesting that young Christians were deliberately infiltrating the youth organization in order to subvert and undermine it from within. Christian function-holders in the FDJ were accused of throwing a spanner in the works by deliberately making FDJ activities dull and uninteresting. The fact that convinced atheists were just as likely to hold tedious and unimaginative FDJ meetings was not enough to prevent the authorities embarking on a full-scale purge in which members of the youth organization were required to surrender their membership cards. A series of public meetings were held at \textit{Oberschule} in which young Christians who had 'infiltrated' the youth organization could be 'exposed' and denounced.\(^{21}\) In their attack on Christian subversion of the youth organization, Party leaders could fall back on the tried and tested language of 'spies', 'agents' and 'traitors'.

The campaign against the \textit{Junge Gemeinde} also represented the SED's first use of mass media in a campaign against a 'youth subculture'. An article printed in the \textit{Leipziger Volkszeitung}, on 19 April 1953, gives an example of the type of emotive and defamatory language the Party used against the \textit{Junge Gemeinde}.

\(^{20}\) 'Vertraulich! Abschrift der Berichte aus den Kreisen' (No date, ca. 1947), BArch SAPMO DY24/3817.

\(^{21}\) Eye-witness accounts of how the purges were experienced are given in von zur Mühlen, \textit{Der "Eisenberger Kreis"}, 27-8.
„Junge Gemeinde“ - Tarnorganisation im USA-Auftrag

Wie junge Menschen unter Mißbrauch religiöser Getüle zu Verbrechen aufgewiegelt werden

Das ist die vom Thomas-Oberschüler Peter hergestellte Strohpuppe mit rotem Schlips, die auf einem Treffen von Mitgliedern der „Jungen Gemeinde“ in Sehls „gehenkt“ wurde. Die Mörderpraxis, die heute noch am Modell exerziert wird, soll, wie bereits in Korea, auf Gehirn des amerikanischen Geheimdienstes, morgen Friedenskämpfer und aufrechte Patrioten treffen.

Fig. 27: The Campaign against the Junge Gemeinde presents it as an illegal terror organization acting for the USA.
The headline ran ""Junge Gemeinde" – Cover organization commissioned by the USA. The newspaper set out to explain ‘How young people are incited to commit crimes through the misuse of religious feelings’. Other examples of the Junge Gemeinde’s misdeeds were summarized under subheadings which sounded more like the titles of trash novels: ‘agent provocateurs in priests’ frocks’, ‘The SS Death’s head was the symbol’ and ‘Fascist songbooks for "spiritual edification".’

The Junge Gemeinde was said to be controlled by the CIA and was an extension of ‘the fascist terror organization, the BDJ’. Needless to say, the BDJ (a West German neo-Nazi youth organization using the name Bund Deutscher Jugend) had no connections whatever with the Junge Gemeinde. The important thing was to build up a composite web of attributions so that young people could be judged guilty by association. The ‘evidence’ for the accusations of pro-fascism came in the form of a photograph purportedly showing a death’s head symbol. The caption reads ‘SS death’s heads, the symbol of the fascist murder organization [which] members of the Junge Gemeinde painted on the doors when they were amongst themselves.’ Most of the information contained in the article was pure fantasy. Not only did the Junge Gemeinde seek to undermine the unity of young people, it claimed, but it also incited them to commit hostile acts against the state and tried to embark them on careers in crime. ‘Under the flag of supposedly religious activity’, it tried to lure young people into ‘banditry’ so that they would later become part of the network of agents and subversives under American secret service control. All this ‘confirmed’ that the Junge Gemeinde was no religious community, but an illegal terror organization.

In a full tabloid-style exposé, the newspaper recounted what had been discovered during a raid on a retreat (described as a ‘training camp’) run by the Junge Gemeinde in Sehlis. The inspection had supposedly revealed a dummy hanging from a tree with a red tie around its neck. ‘What has the symbolic hanging of a man with a red tie to do with the principles of Christianity and

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
religious activity? This outrageous provocation is closely related to the notorious methods of the American lynch organization, the Klu Klux Klan, and the brutal terror of Ami-soldiers in Korea. In short, the newspaper argued, the Junge Gemeinde was nothing more than a cover for American and CIA interests, a 'nesting place' for 'the sworn enemies of our young people and our republic disguised as Christians.'

Although much of the 'evidence' used against the Junge Gemeinde was fairly flimsy, this did not prevent the SED finding FDJler prepared to help them in 'unmasking' the Christian youth organization. As Manfred Klein suggests, the uniforms and ideological training had proved 'psychologically effective' in creating and heightening divisions between 'us' and 'them'. The opportunities for actionism and aggressive posturing offered by the attacks on the middle classes and purges of young Christians were capable of mobilizing those in the FDJ who felt hostility towards their more privileged and respectable neighbours. After the first article against the Junge Gemeinde was published in the January edition of Junge Welt, one young FDJ member (who had supposedly previously also once been a member of the Junge Gemeinde) wrote to in to say that 'These people can only damage our republic. They are hostile elements who hide behind a mask. They must be exposed and exterminated (vernichtet).'

Even after the campaign was called off (under pressure from the Soviets), there were reports of residual hostility to the Christians: 'in Bezirk Leipzig the view held is that, 'well, let the Junge Gemeinde come, afterwards, we'll institute a new policy and that'll drive them out again.' One young 'youth friend' was particularly upset by the sudden U-turn: "I voted for members of the 'Junge Gemeinde' to be expelled from the Oberschule and now I'm supposed to sit next to them on the same bench. I can't go along with that.'

NAZI OVERTONES

As Stanley Cohen suggested in his important work on 'folk devils' and 'moral panics', 'the process of spurious attribution is not, of course, random. The
audience has existing stereotypes of other folk devils to draw upon and, as with racial stereotyping, there is a readily available composite image which the new picture can be grafted on to.\(^28\) Unfortunately for the SED, the bank of existing popular stereotypes had already been exploited and plundered by the Nazis. As a result, in trying to whip up 'moral panics' about young people, the Communists had little choice but to re-use labels and images already shop-soiled and over-utilised by their ideological enemies. Consequently, certain aspects of the campaign of vilification and public humiliation against the Junge Gemeinde bore more resemblance to Nazi attacks on 'community aliens' than Soviet-style show trials. In addition to being accused of being fascist, racist and criminal, members of the Junge Gemeinde were also charged with being dirty, unhygienic and potentially sexually deviant. The aim was not just to marginalize and persecute young Christians, but to shame them by labelling them 'dirty and unhygienic', thereby tarnishing their respectability.

Those in charge of the SED witchhunt sought to alert parents to the shocking 'hygiene conditions' and promiscuous proximity they had discovered in the camp. 'Do the parents of 17-year-old Brigitte N. or Gisela R. approve of their daughters sleeping two to a bed so as to keep one another "warm"? (\textit{um sich zu "erwärmen"}), the article asked.\(^29\) Adding insult to innuendo, the paper went on to print their names and addresses in full. Unable to cite any evidence of 'misdemeanours' let alone real 'crimes' having been committed, the authorities sought to render the Junge Gemeinde's activities as something dirty and shameful. The young people at the camp were 'packed together like veal calves' with considerable risk not just to their health, but also to their morals.\(^30\)

Problematic for the Communist Party leadership was the fact that although seeming completely normal and second-nature to them, the Stalinist use of purges was deeply upsetting to a population which had just been through twelve years of National Socialist dictatorship. Although the campaign against the Junge Gemeinde was clearly Stalinist in conception, in its concrete


\(^{29}\) "Junge Gemeinde" – Tarnorganisation im USA-Auftrag.

\(^{30}\) The Stasi was not above accusing clergymen of sodomy in order to blackmail church leaders into accepting their overtures. See Landeshauptarchiv Brandenburg, SED Bestand, Bezirk Cottbus, Rep 930, 1264.
implementation, it reminded many people of the excesses of National Socialism. Thus parents of pupils purged from the Oberschule in Pößneck complained to Wilhelm Pieck of the ‘Gestapo methods’ employed by the local FDJ secretary – in keeping a little black book with the names of young people he suspected of being Christian. The language of ‘national community’ was also apparent in the aftermath of the June 17th uprising, when young people involved in subcultures were singled out for punishment and blame. Juxtaposing popular folk traditions familiar to older generations (‘our good old folk songs’) with the new and alien fashions among youth, the authorities sought to scapegoat gang members for the uprising and drive a wedge between them and the rest of the working-class community. The authorities printed mugshots of young people who had been involved and asked the population to judge for themselves.

Far from shying away from the label of being ‘just like the Nazis’, at times the German Communists went out of their way to pursue policies and methods which were very similar to those the Nazis had used in their own attacks on nonconformity and deviance. A clear resemblance for many people was the SED’s preparedness to use overt intimidation, violence and humiliation against members of the population involved in activities (such as tuning in to Western radio) which were arbitrarily condemned as being ‘hostile to the state’. Particularly in the 1950s, the regime was prepared to sanction and encourage the use of violence against young people who visibly deviated from party-imposed norms. Thus youth club leaders were admonished for shying away from ‘talking with their fists’ with the comment that ‘A punch in the face isn’t good, but we shouldn’t shrink from it.’ Brute force and intimidation were frequently encouraged as means of dealing with problem youth. The People’s Police could therefore feel justly proud of themselves for putting gang members in hospital.

The following incident contributed to the conclusive eradication of the Pressley-gang [sic]: towards the end of October 1958 as the gang again

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31 Ministerium für Volksbildung: ‘Lage in Gera (June 1953)’, BArch Berlin, DR2/4899, 63.
33 ‘Protokoll des Berichtes über die Arbeit im Klubhaus Erich Zeigner am 18.9.1953 (3.2.1954)’, StAL IV5/01/483.
spread itself out over the pavement, they were thrashed by a number of citizens in such a way that a few of them had to receive medical care. Through this "organized self-help" on the part of citizens, the so-called 42nd gang was removed at the same time.\textsuperscript{34}

In unconscious emulation of the Nazis, the SED sought to institutionalize this everyday threat of violence against young people who failed to conform by creating paramilitary 'order groups' (\textit{Ordnungsgruppen}) with a remit to pressure and intimidate the gangs into submission.\textsuperscript{35}

The goal of these order groups is to be deployed in problem areas in relation to youth with the aim of establishing contacts to these negative parts of young people and winning influence over them so that wherever possible they can be led to societal or FDJ work.\textsuperscript{36}

As 'helpers of the state and security organs of the GDR', the Order Groups had the task of ensuring the maintenance of 'internal order and security'. For many young people, however, the Order Groups were little more than 'organized FDJ gangs'.\textsuperscript{37} Although a nice idea in theory, it proved difficult in practice to find sufficient numbers of young people who were both ideologically-committed and foolhardy enough to be prepared to engage in unarmed combat with the gangs. As one young man put it, 'we're not going to let ourselves be beaten up by rowdies.' Others said that they would only agree to join if they were given the assurance that the would not 'have to fight the rowdies with their bare hands and that they would receive rubber truncheons or pistols'.\textsuperscript{38}

Although they could be brought in as a conspicuous and muscular presence at political meetings and on the door at discothèques, out on the street they were in enemy territory. There, their uniforms and kung-fu training were hopelessly unequal to the hit-and-run guerrilla-warfare tactics of the gangs, whose rules of engagement owed little to the Marquis of Queensberry.
Nevertheless, in 1961, the regime loudly announced that order groups were to be formed throughout the republic. Their re-introduction was part of a raft of repressive measures designed to tackle youth nonconformity, including the introduction of military service for all young men and the erection of special punishment camps for the 'reeducation' of 'work-shy youth'. Overall, it was proposed to create 4000 new order groups with a total membership of 30,000 'to tackle the persistence of capitalist Unmoral among young people. They were to receive pre-military training for their 'fight against provocateurs, rowdies and other hostile influences'.

The 'order for the creation of order groups' listed their tasks as follows:

- They increase the political vigilance and combat-readiness through the appropriation of pre-military skills and competencies and by taking part in contact sports.
- They smash provocateurs and carry out the fight against rowdies, criminal elements, speculators, hoarders and the influence of the class enemy (listening to Western senders, reading of 'Dirt and Shame' literature, etc.).
- They make sure that laws for the protection and support of youth are observed and ensure that henchmen of the class enemy are brought to account.
- They ensure that work-shy elements, do-nothings and parasites (Schmarotzer) engage in steady, honest work and revise their thinking.
- The girls in the order groups see their specific task as being to ensure that order and hygiene as well as a better sales culture exist in shops and pubs, as well as unmasking traffickers, hoarders and speculators. They talk to fiancées and mothers about the winning of young people [i.e. young males] for the armed forces.41

One of the first tasks given to the order groups was the implementation of a campaign entitled 'Blitz against NATO senders' designed to 'encourage' the population to turn their aerials around and stop receiving radio and television from the West. In a move described as 'Nazi' and 'medieval' by spectators, the

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40 'Amt für Jugendfragen Protokoll (13.9.1961)', BArch. SAPMO DY6/3937; StAL, BDVP 24/113, 97-98.
41 'Beschluß über die Ordnungsgruppen der FDJ vom 22. August 1961', BArch SAPMO DY24/3753-I.
regime tried to use young people as shock troops in its war against Western media infiltration.\textsuperscript{42}

The renewed offensive against Western nonculture combined denunciation with intimidation. Coming as it did only a week after the building of the Berlin wall, the drive to clean up the airwaves received mainly lacklustre responses from FDJier with comments like ‘Surely we don’t want to do the same as the Nazis and eavesdrop at people’s doors’ and ‘We’ve done enough this week for the FDJ’.\textsuperscript{43} Parents, too, were less than sympathetic to an attempt to use their children as enforcers of regime policy. One young man remembered his father telling him, ‘You touch that aerial and I’ll chuck you off the roof’.\textsuperscript{44} Nevertheless, some areas saw young pioneers being sent round to pin donkeys ears to the doors of people whose aerials pointed to the West.\textsuperscript{45}

Although, again under Soviet pressure, the campaign was soon called off, interviewees remembered growing up with the knowledge that they could get themselves their parents into serious trouble if they were found out and denounced for tuning in to Western stations.\textsuperscript{46} The Communists’ hostility to Western media was persistently seen in the light of the Nazis’ attempts to prevent the population listening to alternatives to official indoctrination and propaganda. When the \textit{Karl-Marx-Oberschüler} were being interrogated for their part in the ‘counter-revolutionary activities on Wiek’, one of those involved, Hans-Peter D., remembered being asked what radio stations he listened to. After trotting out the usual – Radio Luxembourg, RIAS and AFN – he was asked if there were any more. ‘Yes’, he replied, ‘the BBC and Radio Moscow.’\textsuperscript{47}

Within institutions for juvenile offenders, a harsh and brutal regime was encouraged.

\textsuperscript{44} Interview with Wolfgang F.
\textsuperscript{46} Interview with Dieter L.
\textsuperscript{47} Interview with Hans-Peter D.
On the 24.8.61, before they were put into the cells, two prisoners were needlessly kicked, knocked to the ground and given boxed ears. When asked why this had happened, the answer given was that the prisoners had said that their detention had been but a convalescence for them. Although on this occasion they were reproached by the authorities, mistreatment of young offenders (political or otherwise) by prison guards was routine. The SED was keen to ensure that when prisoners were beaten up without offering resistance, it was as a result of their orders and was not just dependent on the mood or whims of individual officers. In addition to the officially meted-out punishments, there was the everyday harassment and ever-present drill. Young offenders institutes, like the notorious Jugendwerkhof Torgau, were run in accordance with Prussian traditions of military discipline. Much of the daily routine consisted of compulsory sport (Zwangssport), designed to push inmates to the limits of physical exhaustion, together with punishing cleaning details. Those arrested by the Stasi remember being routinely deprived of food, being forced to stand with their noses to the wall for hours on end and being subjected to interminable interviews at all times of the day and night. As they remembered it, their captors ‘behaved like the Gestapo in films’, forcing their victims to squint into bright lights, while they paced up and down malevolently behind them, sometimes coming over to whisper things into their ears, at other times threatening to become physical. Some were beaten. Others were not. There was never any reason or logic to it. It was just something they knew they could get away with. Several of those who had been on the receiving end of Stasi interrogations remember their questioners playing a ‘good cop, bad cop’ game with them. After days of being harangued, misinterpreted and misquoted, disorientated by lack of sleep and the unfamiliarity of their surroundings, they would be approached by a younger officer who would tell them that he believed them. Although to the guards and prison administration it appeared completely usual and normal, when members

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50 Ibid, 121-4.
51 Interview with Dieter L.
of the general public witnessed the punishment meted out to young would-be escapers, they were sickened and openly voiced the opinion that those involved were as bad as the Nazis.

Lying on the ground, H. received a series of kicks and punches from People’s Policemen Martin and Forstner until, bleeding from the face, he was taken to the waiting prison van. Four other People’s Policemen were in the yard so no danger of a renewed escape existed. At the van, Police Superintendent Maass sent H. into the back with a kick so that he tripped and stumbled.

In the area where he was captured a crowd of about 30 people formed who expressed their indignation through calls like ‘SS and Gestapo methods – we're no longer under the Nazis you know (wir sind doch nicht mehr bei den Nazis)’.

In the yard of the offenders’ institute, once the prisoner had left the van he was immediately grabbed by Lieutenant Schmidt and the teacher Hojenski and beaten with kicks and punches until he reached the iron door. During these punches and kicks, H. fell several times to the ground and was also worked on with fists as he lay on the ground... In front of the door to the detention cells a pool of blood about 30cm wide had formed... Among the spectators [sitting on the steps watching the beating] were First Lieutenant Grießl, several other People’s Policemen and a few teachers and educators. 52

Nevertheless, in spite of the displeasure that such brutal methods aroused among the population, the regime repeatedly embraced draconian, ‘common sense’, knee-jerk solutions to the problem of youth nonconformity which in their language and methodology closely resembled tactics previously used (to ill effect) by the National Socialists.

Within local communities, the main responsibility for dealing with youth nonconformity fell on the ‘community policemen (Abschnittsbevollmächtigte or ABVs).53 The ABVs were tasked not only with providing a visible policing presence on the street, but in building up information about local gangs,

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52 ‘Sachstandsbericht über die Körperverletzung durch VP-Angehörige des Jugendhauses Torgau (Torgau, 12.7.63)’, STAL BDVP 24/1/956, 254-257.
harassing them and moving their members along for minor breaches of peace and order.\textsuperscript{54}

For the complete registration of all persons and groups of persons, who make an appearance as drop-outs (Gammler), or who are in contact with such, is foreseen:

1. All operative forces in accordance with carrying out their duties are to carry out identity checks on the above-mentioned group of people.
2. The ABVs are to draw up a list of these persons and groups of persons with their names, forenames, dates of birth, work and home addresses.
3. Vehicles used by the above-mentioned persons or groups of persons and which through their external make-up (colour, appearance, customization) stand out negatively in the traffic are to be stopped and the personal details of drivers of such vehicles are to be taken down as under 1.

In the eyes of many people, the ABVs were not all that dissimilar from the 'block wardens' (or Blockwärter) employed by the Nazis.\textsuperscript{55} As the 'eyes and ears' of the state, they relied heavily on local gossip and hearsay, officially characterised as 'reputation (Leumund)' for identifying potential deviants and trouble-makers.

The language and notions used to label and stereotype young people who did not fit into the regime's blueprint for youth often bore a striking resemblance to the language used in the Third Reich to describe young people who failed to conform to the norms of the 'national community'. Like the Nazis before them, the Communists were very worried about 'work-shy' tendencies and 'parasitism' among youth. The tendency of young, unskilled workers to change jobs frequently in order to increase their wages or independence and to avoid employers who did not treat them well merged for the SED with the skiving of young workers who were addicted to alcohol or who had problems ordering and


Female creations of this type differentiate themselves from the males in only two ways, the first of which is that their hair is regularly eaten away by rats, whereby one doesn’t know where the rodents do mere damage: on or inside the head...

Our streets should be dominated by a healthy youth ready to perform great things for socialism - and not by creatures who think that the career of a trafficker, gangster or a prostitute in West Berlin is the right one for them.
planning their lives.\textsuperscript{56} While at certain periods, the authorities chose to see the latter as people suffering from problems and who needed the regime’s help and supervision to overcome them and live healthy and productive lives, at other times it attacked what it saw as the deliberate refusal of such ‘feckless’ young people to contribute fully to the project of the construction of socialism. During periods when the pendulum had swung back to repression and coercion, ‘work-shy elements’ among youth were singled out for special treatment and ‘reeducation’ in work camps. There, in language highly reminiscent of the ethic of National Socialist Concentration Camps, they were to learn the value of hard labour.

Public vilification of young people often used the language of ‘filth’ and ‘infection’, depicting young people as disease-ridden parasites, in one instance with hair eaten away by rats.\textsuperscript{57} Frequently the negative images created of young people alluded to racial and sexual stereotypes. The fact that jazz and Rock’n Roll both had specifically black origins was referred to in comments about young people listening to ‘ape music (Affenmusik)’ and wearing ‘monkey shirts (Affenhemden)’.\textsuperscript{58} Although it was common in police reports to present young men who listened to black music as a threat to women and as potential rapists, when seeking to condemn the music in the press, the threat presented by the journalists was of aggressive and out-of-control female sexuality.

One of the young fashion victims blamed for the 1953 uprising, for example, was described as having ‘doubtful girls (zweifelhafte Mädchen) on his arm, for whom his boogie-woogie shirts and his Be-Bop haircut, t-shirt (spelt Niggihemd) and stripy socks were just right.’\textsuperscript{59} The implication was that youth subcultural style was not respectable and that only girls with impure motives could be drawn to such decadence. Later in the 1950s, female Rock’n Roll fans were said to believe that the career of a prostitute in West Berlin was the right one (die Laufbahn einer Nutte in Westberlin sei das für sie Geeignete)\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} Peukert, Inside Nazi Germany, 162.
\textsuperscript{57} ‘Vogelscheuchen in der Peterstraße’, LVZ, 23.7.58.
\textsuperscript{58} ‘Protokoll des Berichtes über die Arbeit im Klubhaus Erich Zeigner am 18.9.1953 (3.2.1954)’, STAL IV5/01/483.
\textsuperscript{59} ‘Diebe, Straftäucher, Brandstifter – das sind die "Ritter der abendländischen Kultur”’, Neues Deutschland, 1.7.53.
\textsuperscript{60} ‘Vogelscheuchen in der Peterstraße’, LVZ, 23.7.58.
Fig. 29: Caricature showing the effects of Beat music.

Erfolg
The exercising of freedom in dress and choice of company was equated with debasement and moral depravity.

During the campaign against Beat music in October 1965, *Neues Deutschland* printed a cartoon caricaturing concerts by Beat musicians. In it, a male musician with long hair and high heels bends over backwards, contorting himself to the excitement of his fans. The audience is entirely female and the girls can be seen in various positions of sexual ecstasy, mouths and legs wide open, screaming for more. One protruding fishnetted leg suggests a link to prostitution while another girl is shown simply with her legs in the air. Their faces contorted with aggressive glee, the girls are then shown clambering over one another to grab at the musician. The words 'POP' and 'POWER' are visible on their backsides. The last scene is one of devastation, the hall ruined, the musician half-naked, bald and bruised, both his hair and his instrument gone, the microphone lying flaccidly between his legs. Still visible on his left foot, however, is a 'striped sock', a stylistic feature which was long out of fashion with East German youth, but which nevertheless served as a convenient reminder for the SED of the link between youth subcultural nonconformity and counter-revolution.

The police authorities conceived of themselves as the defenders of young women's morals. If in police reports, it was common to portray gang members as would-be rapists and as a danger to women, any young woman who willingly consorted with them was perceived as recklessly exposing herself to the risk of infection. As a result, although they claimed to be protecting young women's honour, the authorities responded particularly aggressively to young women who willingly consorted with the gangs. Seeing them as worse than prostitutes, on at least one occasion, the police rounded stray girls up and forced them to undergo tests for venereal disease.

In the last few days, 11 young women were arrested in the park grounds, above all on the dancefloor, and of these, 5 girls had to be taken for medical and in-patient treatment as a result of a sexually-transmitted disease.

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61 Cartoon in *Neues Deutschland*, 24.10.65, 6.
Although SED denunciation of Rock'n Roll as 'infectious' and 'like a disease' reflects earlier National Socialist condemnation of Swing music, it is important to note that even in liberal democracies like Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, it was common to describe youth subculture as being 'like a disease'. 'People are somehow "infected" by delinquency, which "spreads" from person to person, so one has to "cure" the "disease".'

MORAL PANICS

Although the methods of conflict and coercion employed by the regime had both Stalinist and Nazi overtones, they also contained a novel component, that of the 'moral panic'. Stanley Cohen coined the term 'moral panic' to describe media-induced frenzies in which stereotypes and myths were created by the press and projected onto conspicuous groups of young nonconformists, so that they became identifiable as modern-day 'folk devils'. 'Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media.'

Examining the clashes which occurred between the mods and the rockers in English resort towns during the 1960s (immortalized in The Who's 1979 film, Quadrophenia), Cohen analyzed the role of tabloid-style exposés in exaggerating behaviour, attributing causes and motives and generally heightening tension. Media reports on youth subculture did a great deal to popularize a particular subcultural style, to give it associations and meanings as well as creating expectations about the sorts of activities and behaviour which went with the particular style of dress or haircut. 'Through symbolization, plus other types of exaggeration and distortion, images are made much sharper than reality.'

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[63] Cohen, Folk Devils, 62.
[65] Cohen, Folk Devils, 43.
An initial act of deviance, or normative diversity (for example, in dress) is defined as being worthy of attention and is responded to punitively. The deviant or group of deviants is segregated or isolated and this operates to alienate them from conventional society. They perceive themselves as more deviant, group themselves with others in a similar position, and this leads to more deviance.66

In the process, media coverage created a confrontation which would not otherwise have existed. In addition, Cohen pointed to the predictive power of the media in creating an expectation on the part of both young people and the authorities that under a given set of circumstances a confrontation would occur. ‘There is the implicit assumption, present in virtually every report, that what had happened was inevitably going to happen again.’67 As was frequently the case in the GDR, so too in the West, the media also persistently had the urge to uncover shadowy forms of organization lurking behind apparently mindless acts of hooliganism. The ‘indiscriminate persecution, local overreaction and media stereotyping suggested a ”cabalism”, that is, the solidifying of amorphous groups of teenagers into some sort of conspiratorial collectivity, which had no concrete existence.’68

In addition to presenting young people as ‘agents’ and ‘saboteurs’, deviants and people who transgressed community norms, the East German press also emphasized their alienness and otherness in a similar fashion and language to Western tabloids.

They don’t wash, they stink, their shaggy manes are matted and filthy, they avoid all work and study.69

As far as young Beat-fans were concerned, the campaign against their music, clothes and haircuts represented a deliberate misinterpretation of youth culture and an attempt to demonize their behaviour. ‘It’s like a sensationalist report by one of Springer’s hirelings in the ”Bild”-Zeitung,’ one reader complained, ‘Facts

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66 Cohen, Folk Devils, 18.
67 Cohen, Folk Devils, 38.
68 Brake, Comparative youth culture, 64; Cohen, Folks Devils, 63.
69 ‘Die Amateur Gammler’, Neues Deutschland, 17.10.65.
are mixed with lies and slanders in such an unbelievable way that the reader is presented with a distorted and untrue picture.\footnote{\textit{Analyse der Leserzuschriften zu Problemen der Jugend (Leipzig, den 26.11.65)}, StAL, SED IV A-2/16/464, 163.}

Reports on youth subculture in East Germany used similar techniques of exaggeration, laying stereotype on stereotype until they had created a phenomenon which bore little resemblance to the original. They then served as folk devils, or ‘visible reminders of what we should not be’. Once type-cast as deviants and rule-breakers, they became ‘disembodied objects, Rorshach blots (sic) onto which reactions are projected’.\footnote{Cohen, \textit{Folk Devils}, 25.} As in the West, East German reports on youth subculture had a counter-productive, self-realizing effect in warning of clashes and confrontations which then duly appeared. This was most notable during the run-up to the Beat demonstration in Leipzig in October 1965, when young Beat fans reacted angrily to what had been printed about them in the press. As far as youth subcultures were concerned, there was no such thing as bad publicity. Far from putting young people off a particular style, hostile press coverage only served to make it more popular. When members of a street gang in a village twenty miles away from Leipzig read about the Beat demonstration there, they were so impressed by the photos of tattoos supposed to put young people definitively off Beat that they copied the designs and slogans for their own Do-it-yourself tattoos.

After the gathering of Beat fans in October 1965, I saw a photo in the \textit{Leipziger Volkszeitung} showing a tattoo found on the body of such a person. Though I didn’t read the accompanying article, I liked the tattoo which had the words ‘USA’, ‘True’ and ‘Money’, which corresponded to my attitude as a result of the influence of Western broadcasts; and in order to make an impression on other youngsters, I made the same tattoo on my lower arm using needles and ink.\footnote{BSIU, Ast. Lpz., AU 762/67, Band II, 38.}

Cohen also described the process of ‘spurious attribution’ by which ‘one incident, type of behaviour, or type of person’ is associated ‘to a whole spectrum of problems and aberrations’.\footnote{Cohen, \textit{Folk Devils}, 54-55.} Through the creation of moral panics, the media conveys the message that the behaviour is related to a contemporary
Fig. 30: Sympathy for the Enemy. Youngsters demonstrating their preference for everything Western.
social malaise. As in the West, so too in the East, a number of different 'spurious attributions' competed to explain the phenomenon of youth subculture. As well as denouncing Beat fans as dirty and dishevelled, promiscuous and work-shy, the SED also argued that they were abusing the freedoms and opportunities made available to them by a generous Party. In spite of the regime's emphasis on the equality of men and women, working and particularly single mothers became favourite targets on whom to pin the blame for youth nonconformity.  

The major difference between the creation of moral panics in East and West, however, was the fact that, in the East, press and police were parts of the same structure of one-party rule. In the West, newspapers engaged in labelling and stereotyping to increase their sales figures while magistrates gave 'sound-bites' about 'long-haired, mentally unstable, petty little hoodlums... who can only find courage like rats, in hunting in packs' to increase their standing in the local community. In East Germany, the newspapers, police and judiciary persecuted and passed sentence on young people because they were closely controlled by the SED. Although Western newspapers often called for and helped to obtain a tougher response for youth subcultural offenders, in the East, both press coverage and sentencing were very much subordinate to the dictates of the Party. It was much easier for young people to be judged solely on their appearance and designated guilty of heinous crimes simply on the basis of spurious attributions and associations.  

In October 1965, an incident occurred in the working-class district of Rosenthal in Leipzig. On his way to meet up with friends on a recreation site, where they were in the habit of playing guitar, listening to transistor radios or playing football, the apprentice road builder C. passed a group of youngsters on their way to Jugendweihe lessons in the House of Young Pioneers. As he was passing, he heard someone in the group make a remark about him and turned round to confront them. When he demanded to know which one of them had

74 'Bekämpfung der Kinder- und Jugendkriminalität', (1962-64), StAL, RdB Bildung, Kultur & Sport 5449.
said it, one of them laughed so he hit him. He continued on to the recreation
ground where he met up with his friends.

‘At this moment, the witness S. found herself on her way to the Jugendweihe
lessons... and passed by the group. She was stopped by the Defendant C.
who demanded a kiss from her. At the same time he grabbed hold of her
covered breast (bedeckte Brust). The witness defended herself and hit him in
the face. During this act, the four other defendants were present at the
scene. The Defendant S. accompanied the witness to the Pioneer House
and obtained from her the promise that the two of them would meet later.’

The ‘mob’ subsequently went into the Pioneer House, but was thrown out by
the woman in charge for being noisy and disruptive. They went back to the
recreation ground and ‘lay in wait’ for the Jugendweihe participants. When they
appeared, the boys were given thick lips and hit over the head with torches.
Their pockets were emptied and a purse, a penknife, a lighter and a packet of
cigarettes were taken. The girls were stopped and held until they agreed to give
a kiss. One witness reported that the boys used dreadful profanities and swear
words. Another said she had had her skirt held up while one of the gang shone
a torch at her.

Although unpleasant and annoying for those affected, the behaviour of the
boys does not seem different from that of other youngsters on recreation
grounds and council estates, where relations between the sexes were often
crude and ‘hands-on’. Nevertheless, the sentences handed down to them were
extreme even by GDR standards.

The Defendant C, together with his accomplice P., has endangered the
healthy moral development of children. With violence they carried out
indecent acts against a woman in that they touched the latter’s covered
breast. They engaged in these indecent acts with persons under the age of
14. The Defendants were guilty of violent indecency with children according
to Section 176, Paragraphs 1 and 3. An act of violence was apparent from
the fact that they held each of the children before carrying out their acts.\(^{76}\)

\(^{76}\) ‘Urteil im Namen des Volkes! wegen Landfriedensbruch u.a. (January 1966)’, StAL
IVA-5/01/247, 190-209.
The reason this incident received such close scrutiny and provoked such a harsh reaction (P. and C. were sentenced to two and three years in prison respectively), was that it had occurred only two days before the Leipzig Beat demonstration. Although none of the young people involved took part in the protest, an important piece of evidence produced at their trial was a flyer for a demonstration by Beat fans and the unsubstantiated suggestion that they would have liked to take part in it.\(^\text{77}\)

In their attacks on youth subculture, the East German authorities drew on a range of elements drawn from Stalinism, National Socialist notions of national community together with prevailing international trends for castigating and misrepresenting youth as a threat to themselves and to society. But there was always a special added touch which differentiated East German repressiveness from other types of repression, that peculiar blend of pathos, cynicism and naivety that could make it seem like a good idea to call the wall imprisoning the population an 'antifascist protection barrier' or to hold military manoeuvres on the site of the Buchenwald concentration camp. In October 1965, representatives of the armies of the GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union met to pay their respects and demonstrate their readiness to use force against the enemies of socialism.\(^\text{78}\) In a speech marking the contribution of the People's Police to the manoeuvres, Comrade Major General Dahl, the Chief of Police, spoke of how they had found work for the criminal and work-shy elements who had protested against the ban on Beat:

In the last few days, we had young people, who were coming back from the Jugendweihe preparation who were attacked, robbed, harassed and young girls who were actually indecently assaulted...

On Sunday, taking the articles in the press as their starting point, the mass of youth showed that they distanced themselves from these elements. A few who gathered together came with the instructions provided by the slogans: 'We'll beat the People's Police!' 'The People's Police tremble before us!' 'Bring weapons with you!' The Gammel had pistols, knives and knuckledusters with them... We had them examined and it was found that precisely

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\(^{77}\) Ibid, 206.

\(^{78}\) 'Der Schwur von Buchenwald. Gedanken zum feierlichen Meeting der am Manöver "Oktobersturm" teilnehmenden Truppen und der Weimarer Bevölkerung', *Neues Deutschland*, 20.10.65.
these drop-outs – who can never belong to our youth and can never be the idol of hard-working youth – were so dirty and filthy, that we first had to hose them down and shave off their hair. Only then could we call the doctors because we had detected that various of them were sexually diseased.

It is also the task of the People’s Police to put a stop to these elements… We are strong enough to educate them as respectable people… They thought that they could use our clubhouses or our young people’s dance halls to smash up the furniture there and other things besides. We have ensured that we very quickly restored order and hygiene in our town and together with the population, we will enforce that for the reputation of our town and so that one can say: Jawohl, in Leipzig it’s possible to live respectably, nice and quiet!79

CONCLUSION

The SED was aware that many of its problems in controlling young people stemmed from the conditions they had grown up in in the aftermath of the war. As Erich Honecker put it:

We have a few young people who grew up in the ruined families of the post-war period, who did not reach the end of the 8th class, who were unable to take up a proper apprenticeship, who were hardly supervised by the youth organization, who even stayed away from work and in the end ended up on the wrong path. Such young people are particularly susceptible in relation to the imperialist sexual and criminal propaganda.80

Nevertheless, steeped as they were in antifascist myth, SED leaders were able to see youth subcultural nonconformists as ‘fascist spawn’.81 Not only were they unsympathetic to the plight of many of these supposed delinquents, but they were prepared to imprison them and eradicate their culture – ‘to eradicate the seeds of evil, whatever wind they are brought to us by’ – with a clear conscience.82 Young people had once been presented as the great hope for the future because they were the one section of German society (aside from the

81 Vorwärts (22.6.1953), 3.
82 ‘Der Vater verließ den Saal.'
Party leadership) untainted by National Socialism. But in the Winter of 1965, young people's privileged untainted position in relation to the past was revoked and taken away from them. They were no longer seen as safer, but as more dangerous because they lacked direct exposure to Nazism.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
RESISTANCE AND NONCONFORMIST SUBCULTURES

The contradictions inherent in the regime's message to youth were further compounded by the erratic pendulum swings youth policy underwent in the period 1955-1965. In addition to more traditional forms of immunity, alternative modes of dress and behaviour developed which challenged existing social norms. Youth subcultures emerged to fill the vacuum left by the FDJ's failure to interest and occupy young people. Particularly those from working-class neighbourhoods became involved in emulating Western fashions in music, clothing and hairstyles. Their interest in Western youth culture combined with their ongoing enjoyment of working-class forms of social interaction and recreation brought them into conflict with a party and police which although determined to rid society of bourgeois domination, were keen to uphold bourgeois notions of respectability.

Mixing 'modern thinking' with traditional behaviours, youth subcultures in the GDR developed their own styles, attitudes and argots. Because young people, themselves, were intimately involved in the process of creating meaning, their autonomous forms of 'bricolage' and 'identity-creation' proved much more successful at articulating the longings and desires of youth than the stilted and heavily-regulated youth culture spawned by the regime. Through their subcultures, nonconformists provided effective resistance to the regime's attempts to influence them by refusing to be constrained by the limits and boundaries the SED sought to impose.
7) Immunity, Opposition and Resistance

Although certain types of resistance were carried over into the GDR from the Third Reich, they were misperceived and misrecognised by a Party which believed itself to be the sole legitimate heir to the legacy of antifascist opposition. As in the Third Reich, the State’s attempts to dictate to young people what they should and could not do led them to try and escape its reach. Occasionally, it could also lead them to engage in direct opposition and protest against the illegitimacy of SED rule. This chapter explores such behaviour and asks what impact factors like class, gender, age and education had on the type of nonconformity young people engaged in. Recognising that resistance did not have to be fundamental to be effective, it emphasizes the broad range of different resistant behaviours which undermined, impeded and challenged the Party’s hegemony.

FROM ‘MONUMENTAL’ TO ‘EFFECTIVE’ RESISTANCE

The concept of ‘resistance’ as used by everyday historians does not just mean resistance in the narrow sense of working at great personal risk towards the downfall of the regime, but ‘a spectrum of behaviours’ ranging from retreat and withdrawal to active and covert opposition. Wilfried Breyvogel summarizes the various components of ‘oppositional behaviour’ which make up this wider definition of resistance as follows:

- **Resistenz** or immunity which refers to ‘the reservations and lack of enthusiasm of individuals and groups as a result of their social condition, milieu and beliefs’.
- **Dissidenz** (dissidence) & **Nonconformität** (nonconformity) stand for ‘the assertion and realization of a separate social space for actions which go beyond mental reservations and can be expressed, for example, in the maintenance of contacts and the keeping up of old networks of relationships’.

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- Protest covers any form of publicly expressed contradiction with the regime.
- Widerstand or 'fundamental resistance' which characterizes 'resistant activity in the narrower sense as planned actions against buildings and individual representatives of the regime with the goal of their removal and elimination under the condition of risking one's own life.' This concept of resistance normally necessitates the existence of Konspiration or conspiracy in the sense of the adoption of covert measures with the aim of avoiding detection.²

In the study of young people in the Third Reich, the development of everyday history approaches led to a shift from the original focus on the fundamental opposition and 'resistance' of groups like the White Rose (Weiße Rose) to include the more diffuse and everyday nonconformity of groups of Edelweiß pirates, the Meuten and fans of Swing music.³ There was a shift of emphasis from actions which could be monumentalized as instances of 'heroic sacrifice' to youth nonconformity which acted as an obstacle to the total claim. Such a move to study less monumental forms of 'youth resistance' continued to be resisted in the GDR. There, respect for ultimate sacrifice, even by 'bourgeois Christians' like Hans and Sophie Scholl, was prized above the lively, jokey and mischievous nonconformity shown by other groups of young people. The SED was keen to claim the Munich siblings as its own, naming schools and youth clubs after them, and using them as shining examples of bravery and conviction against the overwhelming morass of cowardice and compliance. Hence, it is possible to come across statements like:

The members of the 'Hans and Sophie Scholl' youth brigade distance themselves from these elements whose goal it is to poison our youth ideologically. [Furthermore they] state that they will not tolerate the creeping of such a pernicious ideology into their ranks. In a socialist societal order there is no place for western non-culture. It is high time that an end is prepared for this perpetually spreading excrescence.⁴

⁴ 'Informationsbericht (6.11.65)', StAL IV A-5/01/269.
Auch mit einem Meer von Blut könnt ihr die Wahrheit nicht auslöschen!

Fig. 31: The White Rose, Hans and Sophie Scholl, commemorated by the SED.
Ironically, East German historiography showed no awareness or interest in the opposition of the *Meuten* or the Edelweiß Pirates, despite the fact that both subcultures drew their participants almost exclusively from the working class.\(^5\) Around 1947, the FDJ published a book entitled *We Will Never Forget You*, dedicated to the 'young fighters against fascism'.\(^6\) Although the preface of the book contained a quotation from Heinrich Mann – 'the proletarian German youth has heroes it can look up to' – it and subsequent works contained no mention of the unorganized and leaderless opposition of working-class youth subcultures. Ian Kershaw argues that the 'near-exclusive emphasis' on the heroic underground resistance of the KPD meant 'the deliberate downplaying of all other forms of opposition'.\(^7\) Another possible explanation for the Communists' silence about the pirates and the *Meuten* is that there were residual sour grapes about their popularity – in Leipzig alone, an estimated 1500 young people were members of the *Meuten* in 1938 – together with a sense that working-class youth had deserted the party in its hour of need.\(^8\) This is certainly the impression given by *Vorwärts*, the 'organ of the working-class movement and antifascism', which in May 1946 published an article condemning the 'Edelweiß pirates' as a 'waste product of Hitler's cultural destruction' – 'brutalized and demoralized youths' who sought to 'maintain and strengthen Nazism'.\(^9\) The SED was not interested in remembering the existence of groups which had not taken its lead in the struggle against fascism and who, if remembered, would have weakened its claim to have exercised such a 'leading role' in opposition to the Nazis. Although they were subsequently ignored by the Communists, Detlev Peukert stressed that the *Meuten* had retained 'elements of Communist style'.\(^10\)

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6 *Wir werden Euch nie vergessen. Heimabend zum Gedenken an die jungen Kämpfer gegen d. Faschismus* (ca. 1947) held in the library of the Stadt museum, Leipzig.
7 Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, 152.
8 Frank Bajohr, 'In doppelter Isolation. Widerstand der Arbeiterjugendbewegung gegen den Nationalsozialismus' in Breyvogel (ed.), *Piraten, Swings & Junge Garde*, 17-35; The figure of 1500 was quoted during the judgement against Meute members. Klönne, 'Jugendprotest und Jugendopposition', 589.
10 Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 166.
An internal report written by Communist resistance fighters in Leipzig immediately after the war did recognise the opposition of the *Meuten*, but explained that they had been too 'undisciplined' and overtly hostile in their opposition to the Hitler Youth to be of any use to the party.

In the 'Hitler Youth' too – the huge coercive organization of German youth – there developed in the years 1940-42 in Bezirk Leipzig a great opposition movement against drill and corpse-like obedience (*Kadavergehorsam*), against the leader principle (*Führerprinzip*) and the power to order other people about of young Nazi show-offs and petty bigwigs (*Kleinbonzen*). Young Communists and former members of the Socialist Working-Class Youth Movement fought together with members of the Catholic and Evangelical Youth Movements. But the conscious antifascist youth did not always have the leadership of this wide oppositional movement, which developed under the name *'Bündische Jugend'* and had its own independent illegal groups like the 'Edelweiß Pirates' and similar. These groups boycotted service in the Hitler Youth, went on their own independent hiking trips and wore special youth clothing instead of the Hitler Youth uniform and often had punch-ups with Hitler Youth leaders and the patrols used against them. But this *'Bündische Jugend'* movement lacked clear political leadership and the necessary illegal experience.\(^{11}\)

The document's frank description of the 'wait and see' position adopted by 'many Communist comrades' clashed with official descriptions of the struggle against fascism. As a result, the report was never published and remained hidden away in the party archive with the remark that its contents 'do not correspond to the historical facts'.\(^{12}\)

In the West in the 1970s, a new generation of historians began to question the picture of 'monumental heroism' by the few presented by existing work on youth opposition in East and West and began to research and uncover less black-and-white, but nevertheless important and significant forms of youthful immunity and nonconformist opposition. These researchers were often informed by an everyday history approach and engaged in their work as part of

\(^{11}\) Kurt Rossberg & Carl Plesse, 'Fünf Jahre illegaler Kampf gegen Krieg und Faschismus (Geschichtliche Darstellung der Tätigkeit der Kommunisten im Bezirk Leipzig und Mitteldeutschland in den Jahren 1940-1945)'. Manuscript written in December 1945. StAL SED IV/5/01/442.

\(^{12}\) Rossberg & Plesse, 'Fünf Jahre illegaler Kampf'.

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an effort to re-write the 'history of the people' from the bottom up in conscious opposition to the orthodox historiography of their predecessors and the silence about the past of the generation of their parents. Their detailed, localized studies brought to light important new evidence about the complexity and diversity of life under National Socialism. Unfortunately, many of the early studies of oppositional cliques also fell victim to idealization of youthful protest behaviour. They were subsequently criticised for overemphasizing and romanticizing nonconformity, thereby replacing one set of monumental heroes with another.¹³

These idealized images were progressively attacked and undermined by studies which showed that young workers often rejected the tradition of their fathers in order to take up career opportunities in the Hitler Youth, the workplace and the military.¹⁴ In his recent study of the Edelweiß Pirates, Alfons Kenkmann, a former student of Detlev Peukert, has sought to reassess the complexities and ambivalence of their opposition, seeing them not as criminals or romantic heroes, but as young people from working-class backgrounds, driven by a combination of machismo, territorialism and a desire for action with few, if any, firm ideological beliefs.¹⁵ Kenkmann has shown that not only were members of the pirates drawn to service in elite units like the submarine corps and the Waffen SS,¹⁶ but after the war pirate gangs were involved in attacks on non-German displaced persons, who acted as competitors in controlling and occupying public spaces like railway stations to use for trading on the black market.¹⁷

YOUTH OPPOSITION IN THE GDR

A number of the cultures and traditions of opposition described above were carried over into the Soviet Zone / GDR – either as direct survivals or as

¹⁵ Alfons Kenkmann, Wilde Jugend (Essen: Klartext, 1996), 255-302; Carsten, The German workers and the Nazis, 4-5.
¹⁶ Kenkmann, 'Navajos, Kittelbach- und Edelweißpiraten', 154.
¹⁷ Kenkmann, Wilde Jugend, 362.
examples for young people to emulate. Both the Christians and the Communists sought to rebuild their youth organizations and resurrect their traditional symbols and rituals. In the Western zones of occupation, the Social Democrats reformed their own youth organization, the *Falken*. In the East, they were subsumed by the FDJ under Communist 'leadership'. As suggested in Chapter Five, the FDJ initially allowed a mixture of socialist and Christian traditions under a common 'bündische' heritage. Thus groups of Christians sought to pursue and maintain their group identity and beliefs by holding bible discussion groups underneath the mantle and flag of the FDJ.\(^\text{18}\)

The increasingly overt take-over and instrumentalization of the youth organization by the Communists, from 1947 onwards, with Christian points of view being increasingly sidelined and ignored, led young Christians and the Churches to spend more time and energy rebuilding their own autonomous youth movements - the Evangelical *Junge Gemeinde* and the Catholic *Jugendring*. Because they were represented in much larger numbers than Catholics in the East, the SED's attention was focussed primarily on the Protestants. Under the energetic leadership of Erich Honecker, the FDJ sought to halt the growth of an autonomous Christian youth organization controlled by a church with loyalties and an institutional hierarchy which straddled the frontier between East and West. By 'liquidating' the *Junge Gemeinde*, the Communists hoped to counter the most important rival to the FDJ and to intimidate the Evangelical church into cutting its links to the 'warmongering', Adenauer-supporting clergy in West Germany.\(^\text{19}\) Nevertheless (as is shown in Chapter Six), bowing to international opinion, the Soviets forced the SED to call off the attack.

The succour and support provided to young Christians by the churches and leaders of the so-called 'bourgeois parties' helped them to withstand the attacks by the SED and the FDJ. Using their outside contacts, the churches were able to mobilize press coverage and international opinion against Communist attacks. But their close ties and dependence on the church hierarchy also

\(^\text{18}\) Oehme (ed.), *Alltag in Ruinen*, 78.

\(^\text{19}\) 'Fernschreiben vom Erich Honecker an den 1. Sekretäre der Bezirksleitungen der Freien Deutschen Jugend (April 1953)', BArch SAPMO DY 24/11895, 40-1.
meant that the SED could easily claim that young people in the Junge Gemeinde were simply pawns of western-inspired plots to undermine the GDR. The fact that many leading churchmen had unresolved issues from the period the churches had spent under the Nazis added weight to the SED attacks.

A particularly strident stance was taken by Otto Dibelius, the Bishop of Brandenburg. Because his diocese fell either side of the border between East and West, he was nicknamed 'Bishop of the Iron Curtain'. Just because the state had changed its boundaries, Dibelius saw no reason why the Church should have to change its.\(^\text{20}\) 'A Christian could never consider a part of his fatherland as a hostile foreign country'. Dibelius drew parallels between the Communists and the National Socialists and argued that there was little to distinguish the FDJ from the Hitler Youth.\(^\text{21}\) His overt hostility to SED dictatorship in East Germany stood in marked contrast to the position taken by Pastor Martin Niemöller, who maintained the view that the Christians owed the Communists a debt of understanding and empathy for their suffering and sacrifices during the Third Reich. But as far as the East German authorities were concerned, it was only a reflection of the stance Dibelius had taken immediately after the Nazis had been voted into power.\(^\text{22}\) Then he had defended the actions taken by the new regime, stating that unlike the revolution of 1918, the 'new revolution' in Germany came about through 'the lawful decision of the German people'. Given the magnitude of the threat of Bolshevisim, it had been necessary for the government to take 'drastic measures' to remove 'the Communist agitators and their confederates from public life.' It was true that 'some excesses' had occurred, but this was hardly to be avoided in a country with a population of 65 million. 'Not one word in the hair-raising reports on the cruel and bloody treatment of Communists in Germany is true.' The removal of Jews from public administration was justified, he argued, because the Jews had exercised political power out of all proportion to their numbers in the population.\(^\text{23}\)


While the Communists saw the causes of fascism as being material—necessitating structural changes to the German economy and society, many Christians saw moral and spiritual decline as the reason why such a tragic fate had befallen Germany. The nation had been plunged into catastrophe because the population had drifted away from the Church. The only way to obtain national salvation was through spiritual rebirth and renewal. As far as the Communists were concerned, such rhetoric was nothing but a self-serving smokescreen designed to disguise the complicity of the Church and many Christians under Nazism and their ongoing succour and support for enemies of socialism (such as those dismissed from the teaching profession for having been members of the Nazi party). The overtly hostile stance taken by leading churchmen together with the pan-national structure of the Church made it a potent obstacle to the Party's plans. Even more alarming was the fact that the Church was strongest in those areas where the SED was weakest—in the Oberschule, in rural districts and among those people expelled by the Russians and Poles from the East.

From 1948 onwards, students also came under increasing pressure to show allegiance to the SED. Making reference to the pressure to comply under the Third Reich, several prominent spokesmen for the students refused to submit. For this demonstration of 'civic courage' they were arrested and imprisoned. Wolfgang Natonek, chairman of Leipzig University's Student Committee, was sentenced to twenty-five years hard labour, of which he was forced to serve eight. Another student Liberal, Arno Esch, an assistant lecturer and member of the Mecklenburg party executive, was taken to the Soviet Union and executed.24

In addition to Christian immunity and outspoken opposition by members of the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and LDP (the Liberal Party), a tradition of school pranks (Schülerstreiche) existed in both the GDR and the Third Reich,

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concentrated, in particular, in the grammar schools. Such institutions created enclosed environments separate and isolated from the prevailing atmosphere outside. Conscious of their superior intellect, grammar-school pupils developed a mischievous sense of humour and *esprit de corps*.

They were proud to be pupils of the [Catholic] St. Benno School and [when the school was closed and pupils and teachers were transferred to a state grammar school] they formed cliques there... [These cliques] expressed their subversive critique of the measures taken by the Führer and the state by means of heckling during lessons, the singing of ironic songs (for example about Rudolf Hess, etc.). English songs like 'It's a long way to Tipperary' were also sung.\(^{25}\)

Without necessarily being aware that their predecessors had carried out similar stunts during the Third Reich, a tradition of elaborate visual and practical jokes also developed in the GDR. In January 1967, for example, a pupil of the Karl-Marx-Oberschule Döbeln, who was also the son of a worker and member of the SED, changed the slogan on the wall newspaper from 'Bonn – enemy of all peoples' so that instead of 'Bonn' stood Walter Ulbricht.\(^{26}\) The portraits which were disfigured or turned upside down were those of Walter Ulbricht and Comrade Stalin rather than Adolf Hitler and the taboo radio station which was required listening was Radio Luxembourg rather than Radio Moscow or the BBC, but the motivation remained essentially the same.\(^{27}\)

In certain circumstances, these defiant jokes could escalate into overt protests. In September 1961, during a flag ceremony (*Fahnenappelle*), the boys of the 12th class at the Anklam Oberschule learned that in spite of their steadfast refusal to sign up for military service voluntarily, they had nevertheless been conscripted to serve in the National People's Army (NVA).\(^{28}\)

The headmaster told the whole school, 'The boys of Class 12B have accepted that they are going to serve in the army'. Then we were supposed to sing a folk-song, 'What a wonderful day (*Halt einen wunderschönen Tag*)' and I [as the class FDJ secretary] said, 'Keep your traps shut'. We all

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\(^{25}\) Arno Klönne, 'Jugendprotest und Jugendopposition', 591.
\(^{26}\) STAL, IV A-2/9.02/353.
\(^{27}\) Klönne, 'Jugendprotest und Jugendopposition', 591.
\(^{28}\) BArch SAPMO, DY30/ IV2/905/27.
stopped singing and gradually all the others in the square noticed that we
were silent and stopped singing too.  

The next day they took their protest further. Everyone in the class, including the
girls, was asked to come to school the following day dressed in black. Only one
boy could not find a black shirt or pullover at home so he came to school
wearing a black armband. Halfway through the morning, a teacher told him to
take it off. In between lessons, some 'joker (Spaßvogel)' put a red sweet on top
of the armband which was lying on the teacher's desk. This was interpreted as
the 'death of the party' and a 'perfidious attack on the honour of the working-
class'.

A number of groups in the Oberschule took their implicit sense of opposition
and defiance further and formed opposition groups in order to carry out acts of
resistance against the SED regime. In the still heavily Soviet dominated,
Stalinist atmosphere of the early GDR, these actions – most commonly
involving criticism of the illegality of SED rule and the undemocratic nature of
single-list elections – carried with them very severe consequences for
participants if caught. To have any chance of success, those involved had to
act conspiratorially. Nevertheless, the chances of remaining undetected for any
length of time were slim. Those involved in 'conscientious resistance' tended to
be older and more educated. Usually, they came from the middle-class. They
often had a set of political or religious beliefs to justify and support their actions.
Even though the odds were heavily stacked against them, they hoped that their
opposition would achieve something. Even though they did not act on the spur
of the moment, those involved are prepared to admit to a certain 'youthful folly',
in believing that by their actions they could actually bring down the regime.  
Acting in the name of the constitution and of an undivided Germany, they
demanded genuine democracy and civil rights together with an end to one-party
rule.

29 Interview with Herr P.
30 Ibid.
31 Johann Frömel, 'Bemerkungen zu den politischen Zielsetzungen des "Eisenberger Kreises" in
von zur Mühlen, Der "Eisenberger Kreis", 233-237, 236.
The most successful and long-lasting of these groups was the Eisenberger Kreis. The circle was made up of a group of young Oberschüler, who were shocked and sickened by the way in which the SED had tried to purge members of the Junge Gemeinde from the Oberschule in 1953. Several key members of the group nevertheless maintained a pretence of loyal support for the regime by being active in the FDJ and as 'police helpers' (the uniforms acting as good disguise and alibi for late night leaflet drops). The group consciously emulated the White Rose and tried to pass their message of opposition on to the population via home-made leaflets and slogans painted on trains and bridges. In the end, however, the conspiratorial measures adopted by the group were insufficient to prevent them from being identified and arrested. Nevertheless, in spite of the slim chances of 'getting away with it', this tradition of 'conscientious opposition' persisted among students and Oberschüler into the late 1960s. Young people from educated, professional and particularly Christian milieus were at the forefront of protests against the destruction of Leipzig's historic university church and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

In addition to conscientious protests in schools, with youngsters refusing to sign the obligatory declarations of support for the regime's actions, two students orchestrated a dramatic protest during a prize-giving ceremony in the Leipzig Congress Hall. Just as the prizes were about to be awarded, a banner rigged up to an alarm clock mechanism was unfurled to reveal the slogan '1968. Destruction of the former University Church. We demand its rebuilding'.

As Alfons Kenkmann has shown, working-class oppositional youth subcultures like the Edelweiß Pirates were carried over into the post war period, but were involved primarily in fending for themselves by trading on the black market. These activities brought them into conflict with Polish 'DP [Displaced Person]' competitors and the occupying authorities, who greeted their tales of

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32 von zur Mühlen, Der "Eisenberger Kreis".
33 See the 'incident reports' for August-October 1968, STAL BDVP 24.1/360.
35 Alfons Kenkmann, 'Edelweiß und FDJ in der Besatzungszeit' in Gotschlich, Lange & Schulze (eds.), Aber nicht im Gleichschritt, 79-86.
opposition during the Third Reich with suspicion and disbelief. Their Wanderlust and their disregard for authority often led the occupiers to mistake them for Werewolf gangs of die-hard Hitler supporters. Although they had been resolutely opposed to the Hitler Youth, beating them up whenever they got the opportunity, those in the gangs were not entirely immune to the rhetoric of National Socialism. Forever on the wrong side of ‘political correctness’, they continued to use terms denoting their national and racial superiority over others in defiance of the new political conditions reigning over a defeated and divided Germany. They sang the same songs, but just changed some of the words.

Thus ‘Wenn die Fahrtenmesser blitzen und die HJ’ler flitzen’ became ‘Ja, wenn die Fahrtenmesser blitzen und die Polenschweine flitzen, Edelweißpiraten greifen an’.

Although all of the occupying authorities were worried about the potential existence of ‘Werewolf gangs’, the Soviets were particularly severe in their overreaction, rounding up, imprisoning and deporting several thousand young men on the flimsiest of suspicions about their possible involvement in National-Socialist inspired opposition. Kenkmann argues that, ironically, the punishments meted out to members of the working-class pirate gangs by the Communists were often more severe than had been the case under the Nazis.

Not only were the Western occupiers less severe in their treatment of the gangs, but they brought with them clothes, cigarettes and music which had immediate appeal to young people. New ideas were tried about how to organize youth leisure time. Egalitarian ‘clubs’ with less ostentatious rules and regulations replaced hierarchical organizations as spaces in which young people could relax and be among themselves. In both East and West, a class split continued to exist between middle-class fans of ‘serious’, ‘authentic’, high-art jazz and working-class fans of more common and vulgar, ‘down and dirty’

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36 Landesarchiv Berlin STA Rep. 303/9, Nr. 80.
37 Kenkmann, ‘Edelweiß und FDJ’, 82.
39 Kenkmann, Wilde Jugend, 334-6, 350-4.
With their striped socks and Bebop haircuts, the ‘Bubis’ acted as inheritors to the working-class traditions of rebellious youth subculture. Both the Communist authorities and respectable society continued to be shocked by their pursuit of hedonism through ‘wild’ music and dancing.

Conspiratorial protest and opposition posed a threat to the regime’s stability and authority, by demonstrating that its usurpation of power did not go unchallenged. Nevertheless the regime perceived the threat posed by passive opposition and immunity, together with overt working-class rebelliousness and defiance as being far greater. In the eyes of the SED and its leaders, the two most significant barriers to the penetration of socialist ideology were Christian immunity in rural areas and the problem of urban, street-based, working-class subcultures. While Walter Ulbricht was prepared to envisage and sanction conscription and internment camps for young people in the street gangs (see Chapter Six), he viewed the threat posed by the young Christians as being equally serious:

The ‘Junge Gemeinde’ in Berlin belongs to the most counter-revolutionary of forces. Today a trial against their groups begins in Berlin. The ‘Junge Gemeinde’ is worse than the young Social Democrats. They work in the houses of the church. The West-CDU propaganda stems from them. They are supporters of NATO and of clericalism. Social Democratic functionaries are often cowardly, but those of the ‘Junge Gemeinde’ are fanatical. They are ready to die for God and for Adenauer and are ready to commit crimes.

Young Christians came into conflict with the SED’s belief that only atheists could become true socialists.

[R]eligious beliefs inhibit the development of a socialist consciousness. The more a person is attached to their religious beliefs and the less exact their knowledge of the real world, the more the activity of a person in the transformation of nature and society is inhibited. Religion is also used by reactionary forces in the struggle against scientific socialism, the socialist working class movement and the socialist world order... In view of these facts and the high level of responsibility it holds as a socialist youth organization,
the FDJ can never adopt a position of coexistence between Marxism-
Leninism and religion. 42

Those in the working-class gangs, by contrast, fell foul of the Party’s notion that true proletarian consciousness could only develop through exposure to education, hard work and ‘sauber’ German culture. Both forms of immunity sat uneasily with the SED’s vision of how socialism would transform society. Because they failed to fit into the Communist blueprint for the future, they were perceived as being backward-looking and anti-modern. Not only did they encourage large numbers of young people to ignore and boycott the FDJ, but they also acted as reservoirs for more serious forms of opposition and resistance.

Although vilified and attacked in a similar way (see Chapter Six), significant differences existed between respectable Christian youth culture and working-class street culture. It is true that what both the young Christians and the gangs desired, above all, was to be left alone by the state and its official youth organization. But this by no means meant that they saw one another as natural allies in the struggle against the SED. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, in the East as in the West, the churches tended to react to the growth of youth subcultures and to more relaxed and open relations between the sexes with moral indignation and hostility. On 19 October 1967, it was reported by the People’s Police that local youth pastor K., who during the war had been a flight sergeant and pilot in the *Luftwaffe*, gave a talk to the local young Christians on the theme ‘Heavy boys and light girls (*Schwere Jungs und leichte Mädchen*), Jesus save us’.

Pastor K. spoke in this talk of a girl by the name of Neda, who in spite of her youth – she was only 12 years old – had already had many men. She was a whore, said K. and repeated this word several times. You think that if you’re pretty, K. said, addressing himself to the girls in his audience, then men will love you. But what is then love – pure love doesn’t exist. That’s all filth! Then he told a story about Lacky, the cat (*Lacky, dem Dachhasen*). He was a young crook, who had gone bad and only lived from break-ins and thieving.

Again and again he linked the story to the present and said to the youngsters: 'you think you’re real lads when you write a few lines in school, but what’s that already? For sure, you’ve already taken money from your mother’s purse or stolen one or two chocolate bars from the self-service part of the HO or Konsum...

Pastor K. went on to tell the parish youth a parable about a Christian student group who had met a group of ‘drop-outs (Gammler)’ while out hiking and, after suffering a few initial blasphemies about Jesus Christ, had nevertheless managed to bring the Gammler back to God and make them ‘respectable Christians (ordentliche Christen)’ again. He also told them about a pornographic book, which he said was really hard to come by, with the title 'I loved a girl'. ‘You won’t believe your ears, but on the front cover was a picture of a skinny nigger woman (eine drahtige Negerin)!’ Even in rural Pritzwalk, the pastor’s lecture on morals was perceived as being somewhat out of date. During the talk on ‘Heavy boys and light girls’, some of the youngsters failed to show complete agreement with his remarks and ‘expressed their displeasure through [loud] murmuring’.43

Dividing the two most important sources of immunity and youth opposition from one another was the barrier of ‘respectability’. Christians tended to come either from educated, middle-class professional backgrounds or from the countryside. Gangs, by contrast, formed on the ‘mean streets’ of the GDR’s large urban centres, in the historically separate and distinct proletarian neighbourhoods with traditions of marginality and hostility to outside interference. Differences in education, upbringing and culture continued to separate respectable, middle-class forms of protest and opposition from those of working-class youth subcultures and street gangs. Culturally, too, the two oppositional cultures moved further apart. The street gangs had always been in favour of cigarettes and alcohol, loud music and clothing frowned upon by Christians. But the development of consumer opportunities within the reach of ordinary working-class youth created an additional barrier between them and the young Christians who regarded consumption for consumption’s sake as sinful and who found their enjoyment in healthy group hikes, local wind

43 'Tätigkeit der Kirche, Kreisamt Pritzwalk (27.10.1967)', BArch DO1/10.0/170/1.
orchestras and parlour games which were regarded by other young people as being boring.

In contrast to Christian immunity and the conscientious opponents of the regime, working-class oppositional cultures challenged the regime's cultural rather than its political hegemony. Although they too were capable of calling for an end to the regime and were at the forefront of more physical forms of 'direct action' against SED and Soviet domination during the 1953 Uprising, members of the working-class street gangs tended to eschew political theory and debates about how to overthrow the state in favour of more immediately gratifying occupations and experiences. Their hostility to any attempt at indoctrination meant that they readily identified with any symbols or figures that the SED held up as being hostile to socialism. Although they were known to provoke the authorities with shouts of 'Down with Ulbricht' and 'Up the Kaiser', the focus of the gangs' opposition tended to be the local police, ABVs, FDJ order groups and volunteer 'police helpers', many of whom were students. These were the representatives and embodiments of the regime with whom they came into conflict on an everyday basis. Knowing that they had little, if any, chance of effecting changes on the people 'up there', they instead focussed their attentions on getting their own back on those directly involved in bullying and cajoling them 'down here'.

As will be shown in Chapter Nine, when periods of liberalization temporarily brought the local police and cultural officials out of step with the party leadership, young people in the youth subcultures could have difficulty in perceiving who their friends were and who their enemies. Thus it was possible for Klaus Renft to write to Erich Honecker, the person responsible for organizing the crackdown on Beat music in the mistaken belief that he might be willing to overrule the narrow mindedness of local functionaries. While musicians like Renft increasingly found themselves pushed into an awkward position between their fans and the regime, for their part, those in the gangs continued to adopt a stance of hostile self-segregation. In contrast to the deeply thought-through and grammatically correct formulations of 'conscientious opponents', their favoured means of expressing opposition were verbal and physical. Likewise, they eschewed conspiratorial tactics and infiltration of
regime organizations in favour of inner emigration and overt defiance. They cared less strongly about their democratic rights as citizens or the niceties of constitutional law than about defending their space and their cultural freedom in the face of SED narrow-mindedness and repressiveness. For those involved in youth subcultures, they represented not just opposition to the imposition of a Communist youth organization and political indoctrination, but a desire to develop and preserve their own lifestyle and identity in the face of official hostility.

Nevertheless (as will be shown in Chapters Eight and Nine), members of youth subcultures were also capable of highly effective political protest. At several junctures, what was ostensibly a diffuse and non-political movement of youth defiance flowed over into political protest. In 1959 and 1969, youth subcultural dissidents succeeded in disrupting the regime’s 10th and 20th anniversaries. Just as the celebrations marking the tenth anniversary of the GDR (in October 1959) had been marred by ‘wild dancing of Rock’n Roll’ in Leipzig’s Klara-Zetkin Park, so too, was the twentieth anniversary spoiled by young people rushing to hear the Rolling Stones who were rumoured to be playing on the Springerhaus in West Berlin (and having to wade through the massed ranks of FDJler who stood in their way). What started out as the pursuit of a politics-free space became transformed into a highly political challenge to an overpoliticizing regime. The lines between ‘political’ and ‘non-political’ were too narrow and easy to cross for one to make separations based on a priori assumptions. As Mary Fulbrook argues (echoing Ian Kershaw), by labelling ‘anything that was not completely conformist as politically relevant (whether or not it was intended as such)’, the SED actually produced a degree of disaffection which might not have been so pronounced in a ‘less interventionist regime’. The reason why the authorities were so afraid of Beat and Rock’n Roll was that the feelings of opposition and discontent to the regime’s restrictive cultural policies could easily lead to expressions of direct opposition to the regime itself.

Although these politicized forms of cultural opposition and resistance had similarities with the conflicts which took place in West Germany during the

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44 BArch. SAPMO, DO1/38215.
45 Fulbrook, Anatomy, 163
same period and the conflicts over Swing music during the Third Reich, a form of resistance which had no equivalent outside the GDR (apart perhaps in relation to desertion from the army) was *Republikflucht*. Before the border with West Berlin was sealed off, millions of people, a great many of whom were youngsters 'voted with their feet' by turning their backs on the GDR. After the building of the wall on August 13, 1961, young East Germans were left with no legal means of escaping the GDR. They risked lengthy prison sentences if they were caught even planning or discussing how to commit *Republikflucht*. Large swathes of territory to the South and the West were out of bounds to non-residents because they bordered Czechoslovakia and West Germany. Identity checks were regularly carried out on passengers in trains leaving Leipzig station. Large numbers of school children were picked up in railway carriages heading in the direction of the border with only the vaguest ideas about how they were going to attempt to cross it after arguments with parents or fears that something they had kept hidden was about to be discovered ('lost' report cards, petty thefts, sales of valuable stamp collections to classmates).

Young people who had been in trouble with the authorities had their passports removed and replaced with papers which further restricted their movements, usually forbidding them from visiting the capital, East Berlin. Nevertheless, in spite of the restrictions and the dangers, every year thousands of 'assaults' were made on the frontier separating East from West. Young people were repeatedly shot or drowned trying to cross the frontier. The risks involved meant that any attempt at escape was interpreted by the West German authorities as an act of resistance. Successful 'wall jumpers' were guaranteed citizenship and financial aid by the Federal Republic. By contrast, the evidence collected by the Stasi on those attempting to escape would suggest that the majority of those caught were fleeing for a mixture of social and economic reasons rather than out of clear political opposition to the regime. But it is

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important to remember that, given the risks involved, a direct assault on the border constituted the last resort for many people and that those with the most freedom, education and technical know-how had the best chance of getting out successfully whereas it was often the most disenfranchised and ill-provided-for who found themselves caught trying to scale the wall.

Of the 420 people from Bezirk Leipzig identified as trying to leave the republic in 1965, only 63 (15 percent) had succeeded in doing so; thirteen of whom were female. At least 76 percent of those who had been successful had also managed to complete their schooling. By contrast, those who had not reached the goal of the eighth class and were therefore condemned to menial, unskilled labour were over-represented among the unsuccessful. 43 percent repeatedly changed jobs and workplace and 'stood out as being work-shy and alcoholics'. 'Particularly among this type of offender, the view was widespread that as unskilled workers in the West they had the chance of earning more.' They did not just want to escape to East Germany, but often had the hope of being able to migrate to Canada or Australia.50

CONCLUSION

Youth dissidents and opponents of the SED were divided less by differences of 'heroism' or 'courage' than by differences of culture and education. The SED faced opposition both from apprentices and young workers who did their best to escape and avoid the Party's educational reach and from Oberschüler and students who underwent politicized education in the Oberschule only to become 'well-educated enemies' of the SED. Working-class youth opposition was dismissed as juvenile delinquency. Those involved were referred to as being 'primitive' and uncouth, little better than a fascist-controlled mob or rabble. Educated opponents, by contrast, were condemned as traitors who had feigned conformity to gain privileges only then to turn on the Party that had made them possible. The focus in the next two chapters is on the youth subcultures which spread to Leipzig in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Recognising their


50 'Ermittlungsverfahren wegen Grenzverletzungen und Verstoß gegen das Paßgesetz (24.5.1966)', StAL, BdVP 24.1/435.
character as a blend of different overlapping cultures, old and new, the chapters explain the development of autonomous subcultures, with particular emphasis on how the pursuit of difference could come to act as a potent and politically-important source of resistance.
8) Rowdyism & Rock’n Roll

I've got a girl called Sue,
she know just what to do,
she rocks to the East,
she roll to the West,
she’s the gal that I love best
(Elvis Presley, Tutti Frutti, 1956)

During the late 1950s, a problem emerged concerning ‘extremely loudly dressed young people between the ages of fourteen and eighteen’ for which, in spite of their ‘scientific laws of socialism’, the East German authorities could find no easy remedy. With the onset of Rock’n Roll and the emergence of an overtly rebellious youth subculture, the regime’s attempts to manufacture an image of submissive consent were shattered by the ‘loudness’ of young people’s music, clothing and demeanour. In both West and East Germany there were a series of Krawalle or riots in which young people reacted en masse to police attempts to wade into large crowds to arrest people for dancing Rock’n Roll.

Although the poses struck by youth nonconformists were more of an attack on older generations’ notions of what was respectable and decent than an assault on the state, they undermined the Party’s claim to be able to plan, order and control society. Fans of Rock’n Roll were a visible demonstration of failure: ‘on the public street they sang Western hits and rocked wildly’. When the authorities sought to crush their culture, the slogan ‘Long live Elvis Presley’ became accompanied by ‘Down with Ulbricht’.¹ The methods the authorities attempted to use to suppress the problem quickly proved ill suited, heavy-handed and counter-productive. They succeeded in increasing the visibility of youth subculture without managing to make it disappear.

¹ ‘Meldung des Staatssicherheitsdienstes (29.11.59)’, BArch SAPMO DY30/IV2/16/230.
ACCESS AND EXPRESSION

The biggest obstacle to SED attempts to prevent young people becoming interested in Rock'n Roll was the presence of several hundred thousand American GIs stationed in West Germany – including at one stage the king himself, Elvis Presley. AFN, the American Forces Network, bridged the gap between young East Germans and the rising stars of Rock'n Roll by providing them with direct access to the very latest hits from America thereby allowing them to bypass the censors of taste in both East and West Germany.

Nevertheless, access to and enjoyment of Rock'n Roll in East Germany was inhibited by two factors. The first and most important hitch was the difficulty involved in received strong enough signals from the West. In the first decade and a half after the war, young people were dependent on the bulky wirelesses or 'people's receivers (Volksempfänger)' left over from the Third Reich. These were normally situated in the living room, meaning that parents could exercise a significant amount of control over the volume and choice of station. Records could be smuggled in from West Berlin, but only at great cost due to prohibitive exchange rates. The really serious Rock'n Roll fans built or adapted their own reel to reel tape recorders. The only problem was that their tape machines were too bulky to be easily transported and 'it wasn’t much fun listening to them on your own between four walls'. As a result, Rock'n Roll fans were always in search of a space which was public enough to attract other young people's attention, but private enough to avoid the heavy hand of the law.

The advent of cheap transistor radios transformed young people's lifestyles and experiences of youth by giving them the ability to listen to music collectively whenever and wherever they wanted. The first transistors or 'box radios (Kofferradios)' began to appear in 1959. Although a lot less bulky than 'wirelesses', the first 'portable' radios still required mains electricity. Even when fans had the right equipment and a power point, weak signals from the west limited their choice of what stations to play.

2 'Bekämpfung des Rowdytums (26.3.60)', StAL BDVP 24/113, 162.
3 Interview with Manfred Stopp.
4 'Rowd tym und Bandentätigkeit (15.12.59)', StAL BDVP 24/113, 102.
„Musik wird störend oft empfunden, weil stets sie mit Geräusch verbunden.“ Aus allen Ecken des Städtischen Kaufhauses drang sie an unser Ohr. Ein Lautsprecher versuchte den anderen zu übertönen, sicher in der nicht verwertlichen Absicht, seine Klangfülle und Tonreinheit zu beweisen, doch gemeinsam - chaotische Disharmonien... Doch wer dieses Messehaus am Neumarkt nicht zum ersten Mal besucht, weiß, daß das Stelllicht der Rundfunkgeräte und Fernsehapparate, der Tonbandgeräte und Plattenspieler immer mit einem akustischen Rendezvous der verschiedensten Frequenzen verbunden sein wird.

Großes Interesse bei den Messebesuchern findet „Stern 1“, der neue Transistoren-Kofferempfänger des VEB Sternradio Rochlitz.

Fig. 32: The Leipziger Volkszeitung proudly presents transistor radios 'Made in the GDR' as they were demonstrated for the first time at the Leipziger Messe in 1959.
Radio Luxembourg was short wave, 90m band, so it always came with this whistling sound and was always disappearing and then coming back, so it wasn't easy receiving it.®

For young Rock'n Roll fans, the state's opposition to the new music was both easy and, at the same time, hard to understand: 'basically, the state had something against the music. And we were the people who brought the music in... or, how should I say it... we loved this music. The state did not approve of American music.'® The only types of music acceptable in socialism were those with tonal harmonies which made them appear perfect, complete and capable of resolving all tensions – in other words, music which could act as anaesthesia.® Instead Rock'n Roll constituted 'American atonal noise', 'deafening, brutish noises which really have nothing to do with music'.® In January 1958 an 'Order governing the programme planning of dance music' was introduced which demanded that henceforth 60 percent of the works played at dances be produced by 'composers who live in the GDR, the Soviet Union or the People's Democracies'.®

Rock'n Roll, the authorities argued, was used by the Western militarists and warmongers to render young people primitive and unscrupulous, 'raw enough' to be directed into any kind of barbarism. Not only was the music imported from abroad, but it was also infectious. 'With the music you were contaminated. Those were the phrases they used.'® Behind this notion of music being infectious lay racial and sexual stereotypes. Throughout Europe, adult authorities dismissed Rock'n Roll as being primitive largely because of its origins in the black ghettos. Thus, Sir Malcolm Sargent in the Times referred to the music as 'an exhibition of primitive tom-tom-thumping... There is nothing new or wonderful about the music. Rock'n Roll has been played in the jungle for

® Interview with Klaus Renft.
® Ibid.
® 'Orgie der amerikanischen Unkultur', Neues Deutschland, 29.10.58; "Vogelscheuchen" – und was sagen ihre Eltern?", LVZ, 31.7.58.
® Stopp Interview.
centuries. In the GDR too, political leaders sought to capitalize on criticisms of Rock’n Roll as a debasement of culture. After a Bill Haley concert in West Berlin had ended in a riot, Neues Deutschland reported that:

On Sunday evening in the Sports stadium in West Berlin, the dehumanising effect of an anti-music was demonstrated... In a land which produced Bach and Beethoven, today young people are transformed into violent beasts with the help of ‘music’.

Another article was headlined ‘Orgy of American Non-Culture’. The East German authorities firmly believed that young people who were exposed to ‘hot’ music were at risk of becoming overly sexually charged. In their eyes, the ‘inflaming rhythm’ of Rock’n Roll stimulated dancers to gyrate their bodies in ‘wild contortions’ at great risk to their health and morals.

Although the opportunities for accessing Rock’n Roll were more restricted in the GDR, in Leipzig in particular, there were nevertheless several avenues by which the music was able to enter. One major source of contamination was the Kleinmesse, Leipzig’s semi-permanent annual fair. In addition to candyfloss and sugared almonds, the stallholders and carousel-owners brought with them the latest in Western music. ‘At the Kleinmesse, on the ramp there, that was the meeting point. Now and again, they played a couple of Bill Haley records.’

Another favourite haunt was a milkbar in the Petersstraße. According to Klaus Renft,

There was a lightning conductor and you went to the conductor with your radio and then you could hear Radio Luxembourg... That was where we heard our first Little Richard [number]...

The fans also used telephone wires to strengthen their signals. Manfred Stopp described how:

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11 Martin & Segrave, Anti-Rock, 32-35, 47.
12 ‘Bill Haley und die NATO’, Neues Deutschland, 29.10.58.
13 ‘Orgie der amerikanischen Unkultur’, Neues Deutschland, 29.10.58.
14 Report on Rock’n Roll in the Clara-Zetkin park (14.8.62), StAL, BDVP 24/113, 91.
15 Renft Interview.
16 Ibid.
17 ‘Lage im Klara Zetkin Park’, StAL, BDVP 24/113, 172.
We were forever trying to find somewhere in the centre of town where the music was played – especially if there were a couple of shooting stands there and they had a record or some recording and it was more interesting for me to hear it in the group than alone at home between four walls... Or we went to some ice-cream bar and suddenly they had a tape recorder there and we were always there [until] the ice-cream bar got into difficulties and the police went in.\(^{16}\)

No sooner had fans found somewhere where they could listen to the music, than the local police would appear to confiscate the tapes and berate the proprietor. After several months of such incidents, the police finally realised that the young 'rowdies' were paying no heed to their warnings and were 'playing a game of cat and mouse' with them.\(^{19}\)

During the Messe, Leipzig's bi-annual trade fair, the authorities were obliged to tolerate everything they found dangerous and unacceptable.

In the Messehalle, then, when it was the Leipzig Messe and the firms set up speakers with music, they also played such titles. And then there were hundreds [of people] there, and the police attempted to keep them away from the stand, but they couldn't create any trouble, because they had an audience and there were bound to be trades people and representatives in amongst us. In that case, there wasn't much they could do. [We had an innocent reason for wanting to be there]. We wanted to look at their prospectuses.\(^{20}\)

When the trade fair came to town, Manfred copied down a list of the latest hit records and sent a request to AFN so that he could then record them. ‘We knew how to offer contact with them so that they would agree to play our request.’\(^{21}\) In their repeated altercations with the police, the fans sought to educate the people's policemen about the origins and importance of the music as an expression of suppressed Afro-American culture at odds with that of middle-class, white America.

\(^{16}\) Stopp Interview.
\(^{19}\) Stopp Interview.
\(^{20}\) Ibid.
\(^{21}\) Ibid.
When we came into conflict with the state authorities, we could say that they're Negroes, in other words blacks, who sing that. And in America at that time they were second-class citizens and there, from the state side, they often didn't know how they should react to that.\textsuperscript{22}

Unable to resist subtle digs at the police for their ignorance about youth culture, they also used to make out that all Rock'n Roll singers (Elvis Presley and Bill Haley included) were black.

M.S.: We made out that they were all Negroes, whereby [Elvis] was white and Bill Haley was also white. Fats Domino was half-black and Chuck Berry was also not 100 percent black, he was also a bit half-and-half.

M.F.: So you knew how to use it [their race]?
M.S.: To take advantage of it, yes.
M.F.: And did it work?
M.S.: [Yes,] sometimes it worked.\textsuperscript{23}

Police harassment did little to dampen the fans' ardour for the music. It only increased the lengths to which they had to go to enjoy it. As soon as the police closed one loophole, young people would find another, travelling to nearby towns to hear music banned in their own.\textsuperscript{24} Manfred Stopp remembered on one occasion cycling 80km to hear a particular Rock'n Roll song. Unfortunately when he finally got there it was to find that they did not even have it.

I went to Bad Lausberg in Wahren. There's a small town there, south of Leipzig. After work, I rode 40km on my bike to get there and 40km again to get back. That was 80km after working all day. On the way there, I had the wind behind me but 40km with the wind against me coming back! And then only to hear five songs. And they didn't even play the right ones, the ones I wanted to hear. We wanted to hear R.O.C.K. by Bill Haley, that was the latest single at the time. It had just come out in '57 and we said that if we put our backs into it we could get to hear it.\textsuperscript{25}

Not all young Rock'n Roll fans went to such lengths to indulge their passion for the new music. For many teenagers in East and West, Rock'n Roll remained

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{24} 'Rowdytum (Dec. 1958)', BDVP 24/67, 252.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Stopp Interview.
\end{itemize}
a private transgression, a musical orientation which had to remain closeted. Although their class and/or gender prevented them from publicly demonstrating their affiliation, privately they were some of the most dedicated fans. While boys generally wanted to be the singers and could actively identify with them by copying their hairstyles and clothing, girls tended to imagine themselves as the star's girlfriend. By collecting pictures, posters and information about the singer (his date of birth, star sign, birthmarks, etc.), they created their own romantic dreams about him. Winni Breines argues that sexism 'in mainstream and alternative cultures constrained and shaped their defiance into forms not easily recognisable by analysts not predisposed to discover gender rebellion. But it was gender rebellion. The stirrings prefigured its full-scale articulation a decade or so later.'

To illustrate the sexually-liberating and life-transforming impact of Rock'n Roll, in spite of the ongoing patriarchy and sexism, Breines cites Sheila Rowbotham as writing that Rock'n Roll music created a 'sense of release, an explosion of pentupness. Every rock record went straight to the cunt and lit the bottom of your spine.'

Although singers like Elvis and Little Richard were striking by their otherness - their raucous and sexually-charged blend of lower class Southern black and 'poor white trash' culture - West German producers soon commercialized their own, much more tame and familiar versions with singers like Conny Froebess and Peter Kraus - all happy, teethy smiles and cute asexuality - the German equivalents of Cliff Richard.

> During the day, Radio Luxembourg played Peter Kraus and other slush (Schnulzen) then, from 9pm, they brought the English-language programme [with 'real' Rock'n Roll].

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29 Renft Interview.
Fig. 33: The Freddy-Quinn Club.
With his exotic, half-American past (including a brief stint in the French foreign legion), Freddy Quinn still had something of Rock'n Roll's raw sex appeal, but he was presented in such an unthreatening way for it to be possible for every girl, even nice girls, to fall in love with him.\(^{30}\)

Covert listening to Rock'n Roll fell within the borders of respectability as long as it was not too loud. But once young people started to dance (or 'gyrate') to the music, they started to transgress norms and taboos. Rock'n Roll constituted not just a fundamental attack on the eardrums and sensibilities of older generations, but a new form of dancing apart, which shocked, fascinated, attracted and repelled. For older generations brought up on the need for rigid restrictions on all sexual urges, the freedom exhibited by Rock'n Roll dancers was indecent and intolerable. Unlike the 'closed', 'taught' forms of dancing dominated by mock upper-class conceptions of etiquette and rigidly controlled by notions about what 'the man' and 'the woman' should do, Rock'n Roll, by contrast, seemed like a hedonistic free-for-all, without rules about how, when and why a young person could dance. To dance Rock'n Roll was not only to reject tradition, but also to challenge decorum with dancers creating a space in which social and gender relations were temporarily suspended. Together with the new forms of clothing and haircut, Rock'n Roll symbolized an attitude of rebelliousness that challenged existing conventions and values. Hostility to uninhibited forms of dancing was not new. Like Swing before it, as a music with black origins, Rock'n Roll, too, was seen to lead to sexual excess:\(^{31}\)

In the homes of individual young people, they celebrate 'Rock'n Roll' parties and busy themselves with games [of such a nature] that decency forbids description.\(^{32}\)

Apart from the explicitly sexual lyrics (which were only partially understandable to East German audiences), the dancing of Rock'n Roll had obvious sexual connotations. Although the male was generally expected to be in command, female dancers could turn convention on its head by upending

\(^{30}\) 'Mein Leben hör t sich an wie eine Erfindung', \textit{Die Zeit}, 37 (9.9.99).


\(^{32}\) 'Keine Frage der Mode, sondern der Politik. Was steckt hinter den "Vogelscheuchen"?', \textit{LVZ}, 31.7.58.
Fig. 34: Rock'n Roll - An Attack on Respectability.
their partner and flinging him around the floor. Whoever was in charge, skirts flew, sweat poured and dancers left the floor feeling drained, but elated. The images that endure of Rock’n Roll tend to be of the most proficient, acrobatic couples, but little attention has been paid to the nervous ‘first time’ experiences of dancers making their initial foray out onto the dance floor, a youth cultural space in which girls often had the upper hand. As one male interviewee confided, although he was duty bound to give the appearance of being casual (lässig), nonchalant and effortlessly cool, underneath, there was a great fear of failure. Nevertheless, to the victor came the spoils; prowess on the dancefloor guaranteed success with the opposite sex.

While for grammar school kids, Rock’n Roll provided the soundtrack for otherwise tame class parties, for young people in the street gangs, Rock’n Roll was much more important as a statement of overt rebellion and opposition. Although gang members still engaged in fights and ‘tests of courage (Mutprobe)’, the Halbstarke style provided them with new and other ways of ‘terrorizing society’. ‘Naturally’ there were still groups which defended their territory, who would fight if someone intruded on their patch. ‘There was a whole set of rituals surrounding it, but how far it was serious, in any case nothing like the way it is today.’ The shock created by new, mass-produced forms of clothing meant that young people could acquire an air of danger simply by dressing differently. ‘We provoked them simply through our presence. For the [petty] bourgeois [that goes without saying], for the socialists double as much.’

The most important item in the Halbstarke wardrobe was a pair of jeans. Still called ‘rivet trousers (Niethosen)’, these were universally black. A slogan popularized by the SED at the time was that ‘In every rivet trouser there hides a divot (In jede Niethose steckt eine Niete)’, playing on the double meaning of Niete as rivet and ‘dead loss’. At an exchange rate of four to one, they were hugely expensive. To reduce their value, the police would tear off the back

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34 Interview with Hans-Peter D.
35 Renft Interview.
36 Ibid.
pocket or take the badge off the belt. To add to their appeal, the boys wore ‘James Dean Jackets’, ideally made of leather, but more often made of an artificial synthetic (Ölkunstleder). On their feet, they wore moccasins or winklepickers, ‘shoes with pointed toes’. ‘I never had a pair of them, but there were also black shoes with white uppers like those that Pat Boone has on nowadays. We also ran around like that.’ For girls, too, it was the fashion to dress in black, with ‘beautiful trousers and pullovers’. Rock’n Roll brought the fashion for petticoats. ‘Petticoat dresses and ballerina shoes, you couldn’t dance Rock’n Roll with heels on’.

As asked how older people reacted to the new fashions in clothing and haircuts, Manfred Stopp replied:

M.S.: They shook their heads sometimes. As it still is today perhaps, they did exactly the same then.
M.F.: And how did they react to Rock’n Roll?
M.S.: Who the old ones?
M.F.: Yes.
M.S.: Many said that it was Ami-trash.
M.F.: Did they also describe it as ‘nigger music’?
M.S.: That too, that too.

OVERLAPPING CULTURES

A ‘delinquescent’ subculture developed in which those who looked and dressed like juvenile delinquents mingled and mixed with those who actually were. The teenage rebels existed in a twilight zone between conventional conceptions of respectability and criminality. Although to outsiders, they all seemed universally ‘hostile or even criminally inclined’, the ‘Halbstarke’ phenomenon constituted an overlapping of styles and cultures. The most shocking thing about them was that one of them was tattooed – Der Weiße (the white man), he had a palm tree and a girl badly tattooed on his arm, but that was it. It was exceptional really.

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37 Ibid.
38 Stopp Interview.
39 Interview with Christa Stopp.
40 Stopp Interview.
42 Renft Interview.
There were those who held respect because of their physical and fighting ability, those who acted as leaders and spokesmen for the gang and those who simply hung around and got drawn into some of the gang’s activities, but were not really in the gang as such. With the rise of Rock’n Roll, these hangers-on became more and more numerous, crystallizing around the nucleus of the original gangs to form something quite new and different – an amorphous, structureless subculture of music fans and aficionados. ‘I got recognition not through my strength but through the music... [Because of that] I was tolerated... Through the music you were respected, nobody touched you.’\(^43\) The music acted as a bond between the fans and others who were more interested in traditional gang activities per se. Together, they stood like outlaws on the edges of respectable society, menacing it with a vision of an uncontrolled, unsafe future and threatening to tempt away its weaker, more susceptible members.

On the one hand there was the West and on the other was the feeling of being different, of being against this Boy Scout, this FDJ shit. There was no one who loved the FDJ shit, apart from those who made their careers in the system. Given the choice, I went for the [Halbstarke subculture] because it was different, because it was anti- (Kontra)... and sexy (geil)!\(^44\)

The place to be seen was in front of the cinemas. ‘We wanted to be seen, of course, we didn’t want to stand in a side street.’\(^45\) Those in the new semi-delinquent subculture were naturally drawn to the in-between space offered by the silver screen. It did not matter that East German picture houses were not allowed to show gangster movies, Westerns or films like Blackboard Jungle. Standing outside them, young people could act like their heroes. The medium itself challenged and pushed back the boundaries of respectability.

‘Sources of danger’ for young people were mainly to be found ‘in the park grounds in the centre of Leipzig, the central station and the winter market, in particular streets... but also in [the spaces] in front of particular cinemas, where it is common for crowds of young people to gather.’\(^46\) In Leipzig, the authorities

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.
\(^{46}\) Jahresanalyses der Kreise... (1958).
continued to call these knots and clusters of young people ‘packs (Meuten)’. By the late 1950s, the three Meuten (Reeperbahn, Hundestart & Lille) that had given the Hitler Youth patrols so much trouble during the Third Reich had grown to five:

- To the North, the Wahrerner Meute, which had been meeting up outside the town hall in Wahren since at least 1953.
- To the East, the Thälmann-Str. Meute, which met in front of a cinema on the Thälmann Straße (today the Eisenbahn-Str.) running through Reudnitz.
- To the South, the Adler Meute, which met in front of the Adler cultural centre.
- To the West, the Lindenfels Meute, which met in front of the Lindenfels cinema.
- And, in the centre of Leipzig, the Capitol Meute, which got its name from the Capitol cinema on the Petersstraße.

According to the police, the Capitol Meute was the first to contain girls. This posed a new problem for the authorities, who were used to describing the gangs as a threat to women and being habitually engaged in ‘harassment of passers-by, mostly young women and girls’. In contrast to the women presented as passive victims of rowdy harassment, the girls who enjoyed their company were presented as jezebels who actively led them astray. Their mere presence was seen as being enough to provoke the boys into even greater displays of disorderliness.

In fact, the position of girls in the Meute was ambiguous. Within the street culture as in the traditional working-class culture generally, male sexism was dominant. Wini Breines argues that disaffected girls often became the girlfriends of male dissidents and delinquents because ‘girls’ identities were inextricably bound up with boys’, their acceptance [being] determined by whether or not they belonged to a male. Klaus Renft makes no secret of gender politics in the Meuten: ‘yeah, naturally we were machos...’

Outnumbered ‘perhaps ten to one’, the role of the girls within the Meuten was

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47 ‘Der Kampf gegen Jugendkriminalität und Rowdytum (ca. 1959)’, BDVP 24/113, 111.
48 Peukert, Inside Nazi Germany, note 24, 268.
49 Breines, Young, white & miserable, 143-4.
50 Interview with Klaus Renft.
limited and they were kept subordinate on the fringes by the boys' rampant machismo. On the other hand, as a relatively small minority within the group, they had 'power' in being able to 'pick and choose' between the boys. Although in no sense 'equal', within the gang, they felt relatively free from the constraints of patriarchy by the standards of the time. 'And with whom I was in love, it worked or it didn't. That's how easy it was.' said Christa, a female member of the Capitol Meute. Although a subordinate minority, they were also prized and protected, free to be themselves within a circle of male admirers. As Klaus Renft put it, 'Yeah, there were a few girls, but they were mostly spoken for.'

Nevertheless, even in the Meuten prevailing conventions continued to emphasize marriage and eventually 'settling down'. Having met one another in the Capitol Meute, both Manfred and Christa had each been in different 'steady' relationships (in one case to the point of engagement) before falling in love with one another and getting married. When I spoke to them, they had already enjoyed over forty years of marriage together. To be sure, the passing of time has tended to romanticise relations between boys and girls in the gang, as revealed by this exchange between Mr and Mrs Stopp:

M.F.: And what were the relations between the sexes like at this time?
Her: Outstanding (Hervorragend).
Him: What, the whole October Gang?
Her: They never did anything to anybody.
Him: Na ja, it happened.

The gap between their lives then and their lives now inevitably colours how far they are willing to reveal certain aspects of Leipzig's Rock'n Roll culture. Both Mr and Mrs Stopp were keen to play down the potentially violent aspects of the 'Meute'.

Her [reading from a newspaper report about a gang member with a knife]: A knife! ... I don't know anything about that... I didn't know any of them who had such a thing...
Him: Oh yeah (Ach so).

51 Interview with Christa Stopp.
52 Interview with Klaus Renft.
Her [reading from a report about the gangs 'making whole parts of town unsafe']: such a peaceful troop... I don't know how they managed to do that. If you weren't there you could easily believe that, but...

Him: [laughs]

Even when he admitted that violence did occasionally occur, Mr Stopp was sensitive about the suggestion that such events might have had a gang-like character.

M.F.: In the police reports, it says that there were forever fights at the fairground. Did you experience that?
M.S.: Yeah, we experienced such things... it was probably personal disputes or something but not a rivalry between different 'packs' in inverted commas.

Klaus Renft, by contrast, nursing his image as a veteran East German 'rocker', was happy to play up the 'dangerous' and 'outlaw' image of the Meuten.

M.F.: In the police reports, the Meuten were described as fighting gangs.
K.R.: Yeah, of course, when the Meuten ran into one another. In Leipzig there was the Lindenuer and the Thalmann-Str. That was in the East. They also had their own 'territories (Reviere)' one could say. That was just the way it was... they dominated here and the others dominated there and if they were there and the others here [he mapped out their positions on the tabletop] and they crossed one another...^  

Nevertheless, he himself 'was hardly involved'. 'There were always two or three people who kept back'. He was involved with the Meuten 'more for the music, that was more important for me'.^ If Mrs Stopp chose to remember the boys as being perfect gentlemen, it was because she had no wish to let the authorities' slurs against her friends stick. 'I always felt relaxed with the boys. It was the police who gave me the shits.'^  

The police were concerned to establish that the Capitol Meute possessed 'a gang-like character (einen bandenartigen Charakter)' and a 'ringleader (Anführer)' so that they could claim the existence of a subversive, conspiratorial

[^54]: Interview with Klaus Renft.
[^55]: Ibid.
[^56]: Interview with Christa Stopp.
organization. The fact that the ringleader remained in the background and ‘did not appear much in public’ was considered even more significant (and sinister) as was the fact that the members of this group mostly only knew each other by their nicknames (Spitznamen). Over excitement and high jinks became ‘organized’ incidences of subversion co-ordinated and controlled by foreign espionage agencies. In addition to their jeans and ‘Texas shirts’, members of the Capitol Meute were reported as wearing fascist insignia round their necks in the form of ‘the Iron Cross and even the Ritterkreuz’. But while it was important for the authorities to have overt symbols and labels with which to stamp young people as being ‘other’, not all the pro-fascist elements attributed to the young nonconformists were fictitious. Because the forms which had traditionally been used by the working class for rebellious assertions of their aloofness and ‘otherness’ had been so effectively appropriated and taken over by the regime, it was not surprising that in reaction, working-class young people frequently appropriated some of the symbols, songs and customs of its discredited nemesis.

Through their loud, intimidating and unruly presence, the Meuten tended to get a bad name with local adult opinion and the police. In January 1958, for instance, it was reported that there was ‘increasing disquiet in the population, above all among residents of the Ernst-Thälmann-Straße about the public nuisance (grober Unfug) and the ganging together (Zusammenrottungen) of young people in the streets’. One of the ‘bad things (Unsitte)’ they were reported as doing was throwing ‘jumping jacks (Knallfröschen)’ in front of passing adults. The younger gangs tended to get their inspiration from comics, giving themselves names like ‘Revolver-Jimmy, Texas-Bill, Grey der Gangsterschreck, Messer-Joe’. The older, more important gangs, composed of 15- to 17-year-olds made themselves noticeable with ‘impoliteness, crude over-familiar remarks and arrogance’. According to Klaus Renft, their leading members – Der Weißie, Elvis, Locke, Banane, Klotz, Knut, Christschow & der

58 See, for example, 'Vorkommnisse in Hohenpriessnitz (5.4.1967)', StAL, IV A-2/9.02/353.
59 'Der Kampf gegen Jugendkriminalität und Rowdytum'.
60 'Local youth protection reports (1957)...'
61 'Rat des Landkreises Döbeln: Jugendhilfe (4.1.55)', StAL RdB Bildung, Kultur und Sport: 1723, 90.
62 Jahresanalysen der Kreise... (1958)'.
Lange – became ‘infamous celebrities’ among young people in the town.\(^63\) A number of those in the Meuten were said to have been young men who had gone over to West Germany in the mid-1950s, but who had come back home to the East to escape being conscripted into the West German army. Although the regime was officially proud that they had decided to return home, unofficially, they were also accused of importing ‘Wild West methods (Wildwest-Methoden)’ that they had picked up in West Germany.\(^64\)

The great majority of those in the Meuten never did anything sufficiently serious to justify arresting them, even though the authorities repeatedly trotted out a long list of heinous crimes such as rape and indecency which individual Meute members had allegedly committed. Although older and more respectable people may have felt intimidated by their numbers and behaviour, for the most part, they simply stood around and chatted, were loud and cheeky, activities which even in the GDR did not constitute arrestable offences. As a result, ABVs and the local police patrols (Schutzpolizei) had little alternative but to take down their names and addresses for their ‘rowdy card file (Rowdykartei)’ and to try and get them to move along.\(^65\) Given their numerical and physical superiority, this was no easy task. Even if they could get the gang to disappear for half an hour, they were bound to be back on their old stomping ground again as soon as the police’s backs were turned. Repeated run-ins with the local police and ABVs tended to lessen young people’s fear and respect for them. ‘Well, [we were] forever [coming into conflict] with the police and their like and gradually it came to a head.’\(^66\)

In the end, the same old outdated lectures and wagging index fingers simply induced sneers, sarcastic comments, feigned naivety, interruptions and other audible and visible jokes as the ‘pack members’ clustered around the hapless policeman. One person in particular, usually an older, streetwise male, would act as spokesperson for the gang. Important qualities in such a person were the ability to make the figure of authority look utterly ridiculous, yet at the same

\(^63\) Schütt (ed.), Klaus Renft, 48.  
\(^64\) Jahresanalyses der Kreise... (1958)).  
\(^65\) ‘Niederschrift über Fragen der Jugendkriminalität und des Rowdytums (30.10.58)’, StAL, BDVP 24/113, 86-89, 88a.  
\(^66\) Stopp Interview.
time, if need be, to feign to take responsibility for the gang to get them out of trouble.  

Nevertheless, on occasions, the *Meuten* got carried away enough by the spirit of misrule or by a grievance at their unjust treatment at the hands of the authorities for them to step over the limits and engage in overt assaults on the authority of the police and the legitimacy of the regime. Often these acts of collective defiance took place when there were large enough crowds to act as an audience and potential supporters for their action. One major cause of ‘uproar (*Aufruhr*)’ by the *Meuten* was the invasion of one of ‘their spaces’ by the authorities. In an attempt to feign popular support, the SED was in the habit of claiming particular spaces, notably the Clara-Zetkin park, and forms of popular and youth culture as its own. Such an event occurred in June 1960 when the park was taken over for a cultural event under the motto ‘Friendship Games for Friends’ to which the Soviet consul together with leading functionaries of the Party and administration had been invited.  

The local cinema management had also arranged for the American film ‘Trapeze’ [starring Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis] to be shown and about 1000 filmgoers had gathered to see it. The film showing could not, however, begin as arranged at 9pm because the cultural event which was occurring in the same place lasted until 9.45. Among the filmgoers, above all among the young people, a negative mood developed, caused by the delay in starting the film. In order to guarantee that the cultural event went off smoothly and that control was exercised over entries and exits, the special unit (*Sonderkommando*) and a radio patrol car (*Funkstreifenwagen*) of the local People’s Police [had to be] put into action.  

Such incidents were obviously embarrassing for the local party leadership and they were keen to avoid them. Nevertheless between the late 1950s and the mid-1960s, Leipzig saw a number of highly public clashes between members of the *Meuten* and the police. Unfortunately for the SED, the means it had at its disposal were unsuited for dealing with the threat posed by Rock’n Roll inspired youth subculture.

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68 ‘Veranstaltung im Klara Zetkin Park (June 1960)’, StAL BDVP 24/73, 235b.
THE EFFECTS OF ‘PUBLIC CRITICISM’

A common source of amusement for working-class street gangs was disrupting other people’s entertainment, especially if it was seen as being overly respectable. When the regime suddenly decided that it wanted to appear young and popular, having spent so much effort trying to repress their culture, members of the Meuten were keen to show their appreciation through loud and vocal ‘audience participation’.

The incident which sparked the most important clash over Rock’n Roll took place at the end of the Pressefest organized by the Leipziger Volkszeitung in June 1958. An evening of events organized for young people in the Messehalle was supposed to underline and cement the population’s support for the GDR, the Soviet Union and the SED together with its local press organ, the LVZ. According to Manfred, who was one of the ‘rowdy elements’ involved, those in the Capitol Meute did not think very much of one of the singers and showed their lack of appreciation by booing her.

There was a singer and a sports competition and all that. It was doubtless a singer we didn’t like and somehow it got disturbed. [We wanted to hear something else and started whistling. They showed a film, I think, called ‘A Communist’ and we were also able to annoy them about that.] The police at the Pressefest, they waded in with their batons. [Although there were 800 people in the Messehalle the police just ran in]. As is often the case in such clashes, they also hit the wrong people.²⁷²

According to the People’s Police, the Rowdies had necessitated their intervention by dancing Rock’n Roll.

About 150 to 200 young people organized a disturbance and disrupted dancing in the Messehalle with wild Rock’n Roll dancing. From it developed a fight. The special commando and 5 radio patrol cars came into operation. The People’s Police energetically asserted their authority. Quite a few hooligans were arrested and the hall was cleared.²⁷³

²⁷² Stopp Interview.
²⁷³ STAL BDVP 24/65, 243b.
In the space of a few minutes, the people’s police, who were never particularly popular at the best of times, had managed to turn a crowd of eight hundred people against them. They were only brought back under control, when the police enlisted the services of a team of semi-professional wrestlers from the National Sports University in Leipzig. ‘Authors of these planned disturbances were the so-called Banana-gang.’

The Pressefest incident became a turning point in the authorities’ attitude to the gangs. A few ‘rowdies’ had managed completely to destroy their carefully planned and orchestrated ‘demonstration’ of popular support. Not only were leading members of the Capitol Meute arrested and charged with riot and defaming the state (Staatsverleumdung), but a campaign of harassment against Rock’n Roll youth subculture was instituted at all levels. The ‘ringleaders’ were to be subjected to ‘permanent surveillance (laufend überwacht)’ and the gangs to be ‘eliminated once and for all (endgültige Beseitigung).’ Embarrassed by what had happened, the authorities sought revenge on the young people who had caused it by subjecting them to public humiliation. Under the headline ‘Scarecrows in the Petersstraße’, the LVZ declared:

They use the throat as a junk shop for worn out coins from all the imperialist countries (Herren Lânder). In order to make the money fully worthless, they punch a hole in it and dangle it from a chain. Shirt bright and short – according to the motto: the more tasteless the better. And the trousers? The upper part is kept intentionally so narrow that everyone can see that the youngster wearing them has nothing in his trousers.

‘What should one do with such scarecrows?’ the author asked.

What’s clear is that they have nothing to look for on our streets. Our street picture should be dominated by a clean youth, one determined to perform great things for the work of socialist construction and not from some figures or other who believe the career of a trafficker, of a gangster or of a prostitute in West Berlin is the right one for them.

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71 Ibid.
72 ‘Bericht über die Pressley und 42er Bande (10.12.58)’, StAL BDVP 24/113, 90-91
73 ‘Vogelscheuchen in der Petersstraße’, LVZ, 23.7.58.
74 Ibid.
Vogelscheuchen in der Petersstraße

They use the throat as a junk shop for worn out coins from all the imperialist countries. In order to make the money fully worthless, they punch a hole in it and dangle it from a chain. Shirt bright and short - according to the motte: the less tasteful the better. And the trousers? The upper part is kept intentionally so narrow that everyone can see that the youngster wearing them has nothing in his trousers.

Fig. 35: The SED's version of Rock'n Roll youth culture: Scarecrows in the Petersstraße.
If their aim was to make the rowdies submit quietly, the authorities had made a fundamental miscalculation. They had selected the group in society least likely to give in quietly. They had no interest in staying on at school and, in most cases, were already earning money. This gave them a sense of self-confidence and self-worth that it was very difficult to take away from them. A conception of masculinity emphasizing toughness meant that it was more important to prove one’s courage and suffer the consequences than to back down and lose face within the group. Far from shying away from negative publicity, the Halbstarke revelled in the attention they were getting. The attempt to humiliate them only served to goad them into further, more overt displays of defiance. According to the police, they reacted to the article by organizing a riot.

Because of the ‘scarecrows in the Petersstraße’ article which appeared in the LVZ the accused ganged together to form a mob and carried out a so-called protest demonstration.

At 21.30 hours, a group of about 30 young people moved in the direction of the market shouting and roaring.75

Their intention, it was claimed, was to find the person who’d written the article and beat him up. Manfred, one of the people involved, had a different story to tell. He said that they had no intention of finding the article’s author. In any case, how could they? They’d been swimming in the afternoon and were on their way back to the centre of town when they began singing a Bill Haley number.

M.S.: We simply set off. It wasn’t organized.
M.F.: What did you do?
M.S.: We sang.
M.F.: What?
M.S.: Hey Mambo, The Mambo Rock.76

Asked why they had done it, Manfred said that it was in protest at the attempts to ban their music and to deny their existence. They wanted to show them that they were there – and that they weren’t about to go away.

75 StAL, BDVP 24/65, 98.
76 Stopp Interview.
We wanted to show them that we were also there and that they were banning us [from hearing] the music. That was the main concern, that we showed that we stood by this music. That was all.\textsuperscript{77}

The price that he and the others paid for their protest was six months imprisonment without trial. '[There was] never a political background. They'd have loved to have been able to ascribe one to us.'\textsuperscript{78} Asked if he had not known that this would happen, Manfred just shrugged. As far as he was concerned, it was the authorities who produced the protest by challenging his and his friends' masculinity. By the time the incident was reported in the LVZ, it had been blown ever so slightly out of proportion.

These young people moved through the streets singing American songs in their original version. At the same time they spat at passers-by and pulled the trigger of air pistols in front of their faces. They pushed old people from the pavement onto the street. Telephone boxes and benches were smashed up senselessly. But they made no halt even before bigger crimes. Thus five gang members stole no less than 21 cars. Seven others indulged in coarse abuse of the functionaries of our state and, in addition, stole 10 motor scooters.\textsuperscript{79}

Following the 'protest demonstration', the \textit{Leipziger Volkszeitung} published a whole series of mugshots of young people under the heading 'not a question of fashion, but of politics'. The photograph of 'their haircuts' was juxtaposed against record covers seized in house raids revealing 'their culture' (\textit{ihre Kultur}). Displayed next to the '\textit{Texaskleidung} (Texas clothing)' was a collection of \textit{Schundliteratur} (for the most part Zorro comics), medallions, knuckle-dusters, knives and pistols. The message was clear, contamination with western non-culture led to crime as well as political and moral deviancy. The article went beyond simply deriding young people's fashion sense and questioning their masculinity. Instead it argued that their activities were to be interpreted as a political act – part of a plot designed to undermine the fabric of the GDR. Rowdyism was a conspiracy orchestrated by Western intelligence agencies to infiltrate East Germany with rigidly structured, criminal gangs whose task it was

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} "Vogelscheuchen" – und was sagen ihre Eltern?", \textit{LVZ}, 31.7.58.
Fig. 36: Alien and other: 'their haircuts' and 'their culture'.
to gather information on Soviet military installations and cause uproar and provocations against the regime.

The clothing is the outward feature. Behind it hide proper gangs, rigidly organized according to special articles of association. These statutes include for example that a member of the gang is not allowed to be a member of the FDJ, cannot sing Eastern songs and instead must sing Western songs loudly in American on the street.

A few of these youngsters manifest exactly the picture of moral depravity as is glorified in Western trash literature. Young people get this 'literature' from West Germany. From there they also receive their Rock'n Roll records. From there they get morphine cigarettes and their weapons. These gangs have proper ties to gangs of a similar nature in West Germany and maintain 'exchanges of experiences' with them. In other words, the spiritual fathers sit in West Germany. They're the same ones who deaden West German youth with their brutal nonculture [and] educate them to brutality and desire for murder... Countless are the attempts by the intelligence agencies in West Germany to smuggle their ideology into our republic in order to weaken it.®°

Fritz Beier, the first secretary of the Leipzig party organization took it upon himself to counter energetically 'the false conception that the tendency of many young people towards Rock'n Roll, criminal adventure stories and wild haircuts is only a crazy fashion'.

Behind this fashion lies more. With it is ultimately also tied the question of war or peace. Interrogations by the criminal police have clearly proved that some of these gangs are in contact with West German agencies. These agencies want for our youth to stand outside society so that they will be vulnerable for the imperialistic ideology of killing and aggression.®¹

The Meuten were much too amorphous and without structure to fit the authorities' paranoid description of 'organized hooliganism (organisierte Rowdytum)', inspired and orchestrated by intelligence agencies in West Berlin. Nevertheless, there was a sense in which protests were choreographed by the expectations and self-understandings of those involved. As suggested in

®° 'Keine Frage der Mode, sondern der Politik. Was steckt hinter den "Vogelscheuchen"?', LVZ, 31.7.58.
®¹ 'Vogelscheuchen" – und was sagen ihre Eltern?'.
Chapter Six, regime attempts to vilify youth subcultures proved counter-productive because they created an atmosphere of excitement and expectation which would not otherwise have existed. By publicizing incidents involving fans of Rock’n Roll, the authorities provided negative role models for groups of young people who had not yet come into contact with the subculture and examples of how to behave when confronted by the police.

ATTEMPTED SOLUTIONS

A number of different attempts were made to put a stop to what was becoming an increasingly serious problem. Under the auspices of the National Front, for example, a series of talks were held in different institutions and workplaces with the aim of dissuading young people from engaging in such activities and getting the rest of the population involved in the fight against rowdyism. One much trumpeted attempt to wean young people off Rock’n Roll was the Lipsi a new, socialist dancestep. The Lipsi was the brainchild of a Leipzig trio, René Dubianski and the dance teachers Christine and Helmut Seifert. The ‘i’ on the end gave the word an American ring, but in actual fact it was a shortening of Lipsia, the roman name for Leipzig, home of the dancestep’s creators. Couples ‘danced it to a faster rhythm, but they avoided any of the dangerous “openness“ of dancing apart.”

In their attempts to teach young people about the evils of drinking, dancing and becoming rowdy, however, the authorities found that they were preaching to the resolutely unconverted. Far from decreasing interest in youth subculture, the effect of focussing increased attention on it seemed, instead, to increase its appeal. The basic problem for the authorities was that by scrutinising the problem, they unwittingly tended to magnify it. Clothes and behaviour highlighted by the regime experienced an increase in popularity. By drawing attention to them the authorities provided gang members with local notoriety and kudos with their peers. As a result of their ‘incomplete school education’ they were not in a position to take in what was being said to them.

83 Ibid, 87b.
Having tried a highly public and not particularly successful information campaign, the authorities began to consider other ways of dealing with the problem. The options considered ranged from employing a youth worker (eine Art Betreuer) to help young people who had received a poor upbringing at home to selectively branding young people as 'ringleaders' and accusing them of treachery and espionage. One particularly popular idea was a plan to round-up young people and to confiscate their jeans. Another was that hairdressers should be encouraged to hang signs in their windows saying that 'exaggerated haircuts (übertriebene Frisuren)' would not be made available to young people. Indeed, in June 1958, the gang question was considered sufficiently serious to merit organising a special forum, held on 12 August 1958, which both employers and parents were encouraged to attend. In addition to educationalists and representatives of the party and youth organisation, talks were held with hairdressers, musicians and publicans to discuss measures designed to prevent the spread of youth subculture (die westliche Unkultur einzudämmen). Although the hairdressers generally showed understanding for the measures and agreed not to assist in the production of such haircuts, pub landlords proved more obtuse. In spite of 'glaring evidence to the contrary', several denied that any of their customers were 'rowdies'.

While outwardly it was claimed that this public education campaign had been highly popular and successful, the minutes of a meeting of the heads of Leipzig's People's Police show that, internally, it was felt that these measures had not been very effective in changing young people's attitudes. Citing Walter Ulbricht as arguing that young people such as these 'just don't know what they should be doing' in their free time, the authorities resolved to help organize it for them. In order to do this, it was agreed that a distinction should be made between those who otherwise worked well (and were therefore still capable of being saved) and the 'real Rowdies (wirklichen Rowdys)' who led the others astray. There was, the police chiefs said, a small group of young people who came repeatedly to police attention and who proved highly unwilling to

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84 StAL, BDVP 24/113, 133 & 87b.
85 'Niederschrift (30.10.58)', 86b.
Although prepared to consider and even pay lip service to more moderate solutions, the underlying push was towards further politicization and punishment. As far as the head of the local Leipzig police (Major M.) was concerned, the Volkspolizei were dealing not merely with a particular fashion, but with groups which were prepared to make political demands. Examples of such demands included calls for the abolition of the armed forces, the border police and the special task forces (Kampfgruppen). This was a clear sign, he said, that through listening to RIAS they had been influenced by the class enemy. For Comrade K., the state prosecutor this meant that the time for talking was over:

As far as the young people who are outright provocative are concerned, there’s no point talking any more, because they are already so far gone (derart verhetzt) that one does not get any further using the methods of propaganda work.

The rowdies were publicly humiliating the authorities, a situation they were not going to tolerate for long. Although it was possible to identify the ‘real’ rowdies ‘from their clothing alone’, it was important to gain the population’s support for repression and to make sure that it occurred after the election.

Among all these young people there must be two or three for whom it can be proved that they are acting on behalf of one or other western [secret] service. That should then be published.

Major M. ominously replied: ‘we have already begun to make such enquiries.’ If in the West, the provocative activities associated with adolescence came to be mistaken for delinquency, in the GDR they became interpreted as premeditated acts of treason and as a threat to the state. The authorities had a much clearer idea of the sorts of associations they wanted to pin on young people than the sorts of behaviour rowdies were actually involved in (described vaguely as ‘such

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86 Ibid, 87.
87 Ibid, 86b.
88 ‘Niederschrift (30.10.58)’, 87b.
89 This is almost exactly the same view as that taken by the prosecution during the trial of members of the Leipziger Meuten in January 1940, when it was also stated that membership (Zusammengehörigkeit) was recognisable from appearance alone. See Klonne, ‘Jugendprotest und Jugendopposition’, 589.
90 ‘Niederschrift (30.10.58)’, 88a.
behaviour' and 'such haircuts'). Underlying the discussions was an uncertainty about whether to consider these young people as delinquent and criminal or merely as rebellious and insubordinate. While on the one hand the 'very poor upbringing most of them receive at home' was used to argue that they were delinquent, on the other hand there was a recognition that 'Not all the young people who loaf around (herumlungern) on the streets in the evening are bad.' Although 'rowdy-like (rowdyhaft) clothing and haircuts' were prevalent in certain factories and pubs, it was difficult to argue that the youngsters who wore them were delinquent because their employers could confirm that they worked hard and earned well. Once they had a bit of money in their pockets, they 'just wanted to draw a bit of attention to themselves (nur etwas auffallen will). There were also, unfortunately, even 'a few of them whose fathers are members of our party'. One such father, a work leader from Böhlen, was alleged to be in the 'petty bourgeois' habit of giving his son pocket money in addition to his earnings.

The 'coercive measures' to which the authorities resorted involved, on the one hand, a series of high profile trials sentencing gang leaders for espionage and, on the other, the encouragement of 'vigilante' attacks on the established well-known gangs.

When the Presley gang again took over the pavement towards the end of 1958, they were thrashed in such a way that some of them had to receive medical treatment. Through this "organised self help" by the citizens, the 42nd gang was also dissolved at this time.91

Acting 'in solidarity with the police', 'progressive citizens in connection with state bodies' summarily dealt with by members of the gangs. But although such actions proved temporarily successful in 'restoring peace and order to the Petersstraße', the authorities were unable to prevent the formation of groups in the evenings in the Ernst-Thälmann Straße in the eastern part of Leipzig. These gatherings were on such a scale that crowds of as many as five to six hundred people gathered there every evening.92

91 'Bericht über die Pressley und 42er Bande (10.12.58)', StAL, BDVP 24/113, 90b.
92 'Bericht über die Entwicklung des Rowdytums und dessen Bekämpfung (21.1.60)', BDVP 24/113, 147.
In addition to these extraordinary para-legal measures, the authorities began an intensive information-gathering operation. Where previously the main means of finding out information had been through interrogations of gang members once they had been arrested, the gangs were now subjected to more permanent and systematic surveillance. The authorities believed this information would allow them to 'grab individual ringleaders through rapid actions'; 'ban entry to particular streets'; and 'disperse trouble spots and signal their movement to other parts of town'. At its most sophisticated, the information the police were able to gather on the gangs consisted of a list of people with names like 'Billy', 'Micky', 'Banana' and 'Blondie'. Nevertheless, even the smallest, most embryonic gangs were now subjected to surveillance. All sorts of informal groups were registered and subjected to 'coercive measures' whether or not they previously posed a serious threat to the public. Once they were subject to blanket surveillance, it was not hard for the authorities to find something suspicious about them. Again, however, the main effect of subjecting the problem to more intensive analysis was to magnify it. Where previously, they had been dealing with four or five main gangs, the authorities discovered the existence of upwards of twenty.

These groups call themselves Banden or Meuten and give themselves names such as 'Broadway-Meute', 'Front Post of the Free World', 'Cowboy-Meute' etc. They see their goals as being, following the western example to disturb the peace and safety of the public. They bother citizens, especially women, disturb socialist meetings, provoke fights, commit hatred and defamation of the state and go over into organized attacks on party comrades and policemen as well as voluntary policemen.

Names like 'Front post of the Free world' were either consciously chosen to annoy or were invented by the authorities. In either case, gang members seem to have increasingly identified with the Feindbild (or image of the enemy) created by the regime. By subjecting the gangs to more intensive surveillance and harassment, the regime succeeded in fulfilling its own prophecy. The gangs

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93 'Jahresanalysen der Kreise... (1958)'.
became more and more openly rebellious and their attempts to preserve their autonomous cultural space became linked to more general themes of political opposition. During the course of 1959, several gang members were convicted of treason and espionage.

From the experience of those gangs already liquidated, one must conclude that these groups are also involved in carrying out enemy activity in the form of encouraging defection (Abwerbung), smears (Hetze), defamation of the state and other crimes.95

In the first quarter of 1959 seventy young people between the ages of 17 and 20 were arrested and accused of acts of violence against property and females. On the 15 April 1959, the "Wahrener Gang" undertook a protest march ("Aufklärungsmarsch") in the north of Leipzig with the aim of 'enlightening the population about their true nature'. In the course of this march, they 'instigated hatred against state functionaries' and 'glorified western non-culture' by shouting:

'We don't want no Lipsi and no Alo Koll.
We want Elvis Presley with his Rock'n Roll.'96

Thanks to 'the swift action of progressive citizens' in informing the police, those involved could be arrested and put on trial for breach of the peace, violent sexual offences, breaking and entering, defamation of the state and wilful damage of property. The people designated as ringleaders – labelled 'The Boss' and his 'Second-in-command' – were both 'returnees' from West Germany who had passed through a transit camp in West Berlin.97 Although in their interrogations they strenuously denied having been recruited as agents, the prosecution believed that they had more than enough proof of a culpable western influence. Thanks to the GDR's pliant judicial system, the young people concerned were sentenced to 'considerable terms of imprisonment'.98

96 Alo Koll was a local dance band popular with the regime. 'Der Kampf gegen Jugendkriminalität und Rowdytum im Bezirk Leipzig (ca. 1960-61)', BDVP 24/113, 216.
97 'Bekämpfung der Jugendkriminalität und des Rowdytums (11.3.1960)' BDVP 24/113, 159.
98 'Der Kampf gegen Jugendkriminalität und Rowdytum (ca. 1960-61)' BDVP 24/113, 216.
Even when the 'ringleaders' of the Meuten were arrested and given long prison sentences of up to four years for 'spying', other youngsters stepped in to fill their shoes. The excessive punishment meted out to those young people they did succeed in catching is a measure of the authorities' impotence and inability to control the problem. The authorities were incapable of understanding that youth subcultures were constantly regenerating phenomena. As older members left, usually to settle down in a steady relationship, they were replaced by younger kids. The police believed that if they could round up the ringleaders of the gangs, then the problem would go away. Unfortunately, the gatherings which occurred of young people were highly fluid and unstructured. As a result, police razzias failed to net the whole 'gang membership'. The young people who met up on the street often knew very little about each other apart from the shared interest in Western music and culture. They developed a shared sense of belonging through their common clothes, haircuts and interests. Again and again, the police claimed to have 'liquidated' a particular gang only to find that a few weeks later young people began to meet up again in the same place.

CONCLUSION

Although the SED was prepared to explore a number of different potential solutions to the problem of dissident Rock'n Roll youth subculture, in the end, it was forced to resort to a mixture of wrongful arrest and imprisonment, vigilante violence together with petty and narrow-minded restrictions. Nevertheless, official attempts to control young people's clothes and haircuts proved much less effective than the more subtle influence of teenage magazine articles and the pressure of commercialization in the West. The GDR's much more overt attempts to manipulate youth fashion by imposing restrictions on tailors and barbers were hopelessly heavy-handed.

In the end, the regime's fears about rowdies becoming politicized proved to be self-fulfilling prophecies. Cultural dissidence easily spilled over into political

protest, particularly when it was subjected to excessive politicization by an interfering regime. As long as the SED remained rigidly opposed to the spread of Western youth culture, it remained vulnerable to opposition on the part of young people. The Party's attempts to manufacture an image of mass popular support could easily be undermined by the activities of a small group of 'rowdies'. By proclaiming to the whole world, 'We are going to control these people, we are going to control this problem', the party set itself up for a fall. In fact, none of the official attempts at control succeeded in making any kind of dent on Rock'n Roll. What killed it in the end, was that it went out of fashion, a victim of its own success. Just as the authorities had convinced themselves that they had succeeded in regaining the upper hand, a new style of music came out of Liverpool and the conflict began all over again.
9) Beat and the ‘Gammlers’

This chapter explores the home-grown Beat music ‘scene’ which developed in the GDR in the mid-1960s, during the brief period of toleration inaugurated by the 1963 Jugendkommuniqué. By spreading across the frontier of respectability and undermining official notions of ‘modernity’, the new subculture engendered a reaction which in turn spurred one of the most concerted and overtly political expressions of opposition and resistance by dissident youth.

THE BIRTH OF ‘BEAT MUSIC’

The key achievement of The Beatles was to make black music acceptable to white audiences. Heavily influenced by blues, Rock’n Roll and rhythm-and-blues records which entered Liverpool via its harbour-city import shops, The Beatles spent two years ‘putting on musical muscle’ playing poorly paid and physically demanding gigs in Liverpool and Hamburg (to raucous audiences of sailors, criminals and prostitutes) until they emerged in 1963 as a ‘charismatic powerhouse’, something wild at the fringes of British pop.

Reviving the Fifties’ rock-and-roll rebellion in the mid-Sixties with cover versions of records by Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Larry Williams and the Isley Brothers, The Beatles acted as a major conduit of black energy, style and feeling into white culture, helping to restore it to its undernourished senses and thereby forwarding the ‘permissive’ revolution in sexual attitudes.¹

Another key feature of the Beatles’ music was their ‘breezy unorthodoxy’: ‘Lennon and McCartney had a wry disregard for education and training, shunning technical knowledge in the fear that it would kill their spontaneity and tame them into sounding like everyone else.’² The Beatles’ appearance in 1962-63 coincided with the fall of Conservatism in Britain and a youth-led consumer boom. Hair lengthened, skirts shortened and the ‘sexual repression of the past had all but vanished from the world of the newly classless

² Ibid.
metropolitan young’. Ian MacDonald characterises the atmosphere of the time as ‘post-Christian nowness’ in which ‘immediate sexual gratification became the ideal of a society in which church-going was falling in inverse relationship to the rise in television ownership’. The Beatles were perfect models for this change in outlook: ‘their early lyrics are careless, streetwise, immediate, sensationalistic – the expression of minds without respect for age or experience, interested only in the thrills, desires and disappointments of the present.’

With ‘his’ scooter, pills and music, the ‘mod’ also characterised the spirit of the age:

Living on the pulse of the present, resurrected after work only by a fierce devotion to leisure, and creating through the dynamics of his own personality (or more accurately through the dynamics of the collective personality of the group), a total style armed, albeit inadequately, against a patronising adult culture, and which need look no further than itself for its justifications and its ethics.

Although the style they adopted differed considerably from that of the early British mods with their hush puppies, Levi jeans, vespa scooters and speed pills, the subculture which emerged in both East and West Germany was dominated by a similar attitude to life (and in the later 1960s by ubiquitous parkers). In the GDR, Beat concerts provided young people with a means of letting off steam about their ‘discomfort with the uniformity, pressure to conform and inhibited ideas about morality’. Although they referred to themselves as Beat fans, the authorities in East and West labelled them Gammler or dropouts.

For young people in the GDR, Beat music was much more accessible than Rock’n Roll. The major reason was that transistor radio technology had developed sufficiently to allow small, cheap and most importantly portable mass-produced radio sets to come onto the market even in the Eastern Bloc. A further reason for its increased appeal was that Beat was played on a greater number and range of stations than had been the case for Rock’n Roll. In the

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3 Ibid, 19.
Fig. 37: For the groups clustering around the entrances to cinemas, transistor radios became an essential fashion statement. The identities of those captured by Stasi covert surveillance have been obscured.
half decade since Rock’n Roll had first burst onto the scene, less offensive, hybrid forms of youth-specific music had gradually pushed out the boundaries of toleration on the part of broadcasters. Although particularly strict, socially conservative parents still bridled at the din coming from the radio, young people enjoyed more freedom about when and how to listen to their music.

The guitar groups usually possess a large ‘fanbase’. This fanbase does not represent a fixed group of young people, but changes in relation to the quality of the particular group from concert to concert. The best FDJier (above all from the EOS) can belong to this fanbase as can those young people whose spiritual needs exist only in relation to listening to hot rhythms and dancing.®

As discussed in Chapter Five, the onset of Beat music coincided with the period of greater toleration inaugurated by the 1963 youth communiqué. The Politbüro made significant concessions in relation to youth culture, curtailing the authorities’ right to make unwarranted interferences. The Party’s new, more liberal attitude was summed up in the phrase:

Welchen Takt die Jugend wählt, ist ihr überlassen:  
Hauptsache, sie bleibt taktvoll!  
It’s up to youth to choose their step:  
The main thing is that they are discrete.®

Although the clever wordplay masked continuing ambivalence, it was open to conflicting interpretations. For progressive-minded lower-ranking functionaries, it could appear that young people were now allowed to do what they wanted in their enjoyment of youth culture. But although the party leadership was allowing young people to choose their own dancesteps, it was reserving the right to decide whether or not such a choice was ‘tactful’. It thereby maintained its ‘duty’ to act as the arbiter of what constituted respectability.

Nevertheless, by the ‘Germany meeting (Deutschlandtreffen)’ of May 1964 it was important for party leaders to be able to portray the GDR as being young

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and dynamic, with all eyes focussed on a glorious future. This meant that functionaries were encouraged to err on the side of liberalization. Although very few of them had actually read the communiqué, young people eagerly exploited the space opening up within the system for ‘independent initiatives’ and ‘creative expression’. Before Ulbricht had even conceived of the communiqué, young people had already been busy creating a Beat music scene that was literally ‘underground’. Taking over communal basements and cellars, young Beat fans decorated them with their own collages and posters turning them into subterranean pied-à-terres for the enjoyment of Beat music. Particularly among the boys, there was a desire to go further than simply dressing like The Beatles, but to start copying their music too. Guitar groups with names like the "The Bottels", "The Brittels", "The Butlers", "The Shatters", "The Five Stones", "The Musik Stones" and "The Nameless" formed in the neighbourhoods, quickly winning reputations and status for themselves among their local youth populations. The impact of the youth communiqué was to allow these amateur musicians to earn money by putting on performances for larger audiences.

Money was important because it allowed them to buy better equipment and amplifiers. Much of their equipment had to be cobbled and soldered together because the cost of proper amplifiers and sound desks was much too high. According to popular myth, electric guitars and other items were smuggled into the GDR via the diplomatic bags of Third World embassy staff. In addition to the musicians themselves, a Beat group would often possess a hinterland of friendly technicians, fixers, and amateur smugglers who could acquire things for them through ‘vitamin B’ (standing for Beziehungen or ‘contacts’). This mixed bag of artists and assistants was often joined by former schoolmates who helped carry their gear and girlfriends who provided glamour. Together, they created an aura of something happening around the band. Time not spent playing or practising was usually taken up by drinking, swapping stories and travelling around to see what else was happening in the scene.

Getting a chance to play in public nearly always entailed negotiations with petty-minded local bureaucrats and a few sleights of hand. The sixty-forty rule also applied to live concerts and gigs. As a result, it was officially expected that 60 percent of the songs played would be of socialist production. Had any of the
bands actually stuck to the ruling, then they were likely to have been booed off stage and had their equipment smashed to pieces. Fortunately, however, the self-appointed monitors of decorum and good taste were sufficiently recognisable – as tired and disapproving forty-something SED hacks amid a teeming sea of excited teenagers – for the musicians to be able to notice their arrival and deftly switch (often mid-song) from capitalist to socialist musical production. The sheer range and incoherent jumble of different institutions and organisations involved in catering for young people meant that it was impossible for the authorities to exercise all-encompassing surveillance and control. It was always possible to find a work canteen or somewhere on the edge of town, where the exercise of political control was more lax.\(^7\) Dick Bradley argues that ‘group listening to live music by youth-cultural members... is likely to be the site of the strongest collective experiencing of the articulation of resistant communality, up to the level of "symbolic fusion" and its "magical" or ritual character.’\(^8\) The shared sense of complicity which existed between musicians and fans is likely to have heightened these feelings of ‘resistant communality’ in the GDR Beat music scene by giving all involved a sense of genuine subversiveness.

The lack of commercialization in the early GDR Beat music scene created a much more intensive bond between fans and musicians akin to that enjoyed by The Beatles during their early Cavern-club performances. As far as the fans were concerned, they had put the musicians where they were and consequently the groups belonged to them. Without their continuing financial support, the bands could not afford to continue growing and becoming more successful. In return, they demanded that the musicians gave the concerts everything they had. For their part, the musicians made up for what they lacked in sophisticated sound and lighting equipment with powerful, crowd-pleasing stage performances. Through their costumes, their look and gestures, they imitated the intense emotions of bands like The Beatles and The Stones, playing as if they were performing to full stadiums rather than in a dingy local hall. Musicians

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Fig. 38: Pushing themselves and their music to the limits. The Guitar Men in concert. According to the Leipziger Volkszeitung, they were 'half naked' and 'dressed in leopard skins'.

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and fans fed off one another to create an atmosphere as close as possible to
the real thing, thereby transporting themselves far away from the GDR and its
mundane reality. A key component of this imaginary transportation was style.
As Dick Hebdige explains:

The basis of style is the appropriation and reorganisation by the subject of
elements in the objective world which would otherwise determine and
constrict him. The mod’s cry of triumph... was for a romantic victory, a victory
of the imagination; ultimately for an imagined victory. The mod combined
previously disparate elements to create himself into a metaphor, the
appropriateness of which was apparent only to himself.¹

Much more than was the case with Rock’n Roll, the fashion surrounding Beat
music offered young people a genuine alternative lifestyle. The Gammler (or
dropouts) as Beat fans became known in Germany were a heterogeneous
collection of different characters and types. The ‘Halbstarkeri’ had been almost
exclusively working class and non-intellectual in outlook. Illustrating what he
called the ‘generally low intelligence quotient’ of the Halbstarke subculture,
Klaus Renft said that one of the boys in the Capitol Meute went to an
Oberschule. His nickname in the ‘pack’ was ‘the professor’. Overt identification
with Beat music spread much further to include both Oberschüler and students.
The Gammler style therefore encompassed a range of different outlooks and
expressions.

Once again there were different [strands]... there was really an attitude of
partially philosophical protest, I mean an attitude of conscious engagement
[and opposition] and partly it had more to do with dislike [of the system which
expressed itself] ever more in groups.

Even a group which at first seems like a group is never a whole system.
When you look closer, it falls into different types, different motivations...
especially with these ripped jeans which then came or such like – ripped and
washed out – often they were covered in holes and there were those who
really went for it and sewed and scrawled on them and stuff until they took on
a completely different form... so much effort... it was somehow an attitude

and it was great because it was against this annoying petty bourgeois mentality or whatever. Jeans were this rebellion.¹⁰

For some, it was an almost philosophical rejection of the dominant hegemony with attitudes equivalent to those of the beatniks and the early hippies. The most overt expressions of ‘Dropout-ism (Gammlertum)’, however, continued to come from the street-wise members of working-class gangs.

CONFLICTING CONCEPTIONS OF MODERNITY

The 1964 Deutschlandtreffen brought Western-inspired youth culture onto the fringes of mainstream, officially-orchestrated events for the first time. By letting young people ‘do their thing’ unhindered, the regime was obviously hoping to avoid embarrassing incidents such as had occurred during the late 1950s when its ‘bread and circus’ shows had been disrupted by unruly youth-cultural dissidents. This time, the regime endeavoured to win favour for itself by ensuring that the view from the outside was of attractive and nubile youth enjoying themselves. As the Spiegel reporter Hermann Schreiber put it, the West German delegation was met by a ‘crowd of young Saxon girls with bunches of flowers and white nylon blouses, slightly damp from the drizzle’. Although visiting correspondents like Schreiber were impressed by the sight of twisting FDJler, the official orchestration did not go entirely without incident. A protest occurred when the Beat music was prematurely turned off. Practised in the socialist art of shouting out slogans, the ‘young builders of socialism’ marched along the Frankfurter Allee shouting ‘in part indecent, in part simply rebellious slogans’ until they were stopped by a police roadblock and the more vocal among them were arrested.¹¹

In the year following the event, there were signs that sections of the administration were moving in different directions, often in complete contradiction to one another. To avoid being swamped by the wave of enthusiasm for Beat, functionaries within the FDJ tried to stay on top of it. In the process, they opened up opportunities for amateur Beat musicians to perform

¹⁰ Renft Interview.
under their aegis. According to Kurt Turba, this move had been directly encouraged by Erich Honecker who had advised him: 'either we let the Beat wave run its course or we put ourselves at its head and put our stamp on the movement. We have to do the latter.' Meanwhile, bridling at the new-found freedom they were enjoying, local cultural functionaries began to increase the pettiness of restrictions on performances. In defending their music and fragile autonomy from such encroachments, The Butlers found support and encouragement from an unusual and unlikely source. Neues Deutschland, the 'organ of the SED', weighed in on the side of the young Leipzig musicians arguing that theirs was the same music as was played on the civil rights march in Selma, Alabama and that the sacrifices they made for their music were more than compensated for by the pleasure they gave to their fans. The article described 'the unbelievable love' the Butlers showed for their music, noting that they practised almost every day 'often until two in the morning'. In May 1965, the author, Heinz Stern and the cultural editor of Neues Deutschland were called to a special meeting held by the SED regional authorities. Defending the Butlers against charges from the provincial authorities that they were work-shy, the journalists from Berlin joked that 'The Butlers work so hard to please their public that they should be allowed to sleep in once in a while.' Stern described the campaign by the Leipzig authorities against the Butlers as constituting a 'terror'. Following the meeting, in a move which was interpreted by the Leipzig authorities as 'a deliberate provocation', The Butlers were invited to play at Neues Deutschland's press festival.

Stern even went so far as to commit ideological heresy by arguing that it was impossible to divide dance music into categories of socialist and capitalist: 'dance music cannot be divided into imperialist and socialist. [I say] give free rein to youth and to their music.' Within the administration, Stern's article sparked a debate about what kind of socialist society the GDR should aim to be. Did everything in it still have to be rigidly controlled or was there instead space for a limited degree of autonomy and 'letting off of steam'? Was western-

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13 Schütt (ed.), Klaus Renft, 63-64.
14 Schütt (ed.), Klaus Renft, 58-64.
15 Heinz Stern, 'Butlers Boogie', Neues Deutschland (4.4.65).
inspired youth culture compatible with the development of socialist consciousness or was the survival of the GDR dependent on ensuring that East and West remained rigidly separated?

Within the Politbüro, opposition to Ulbricht’s drive for ‘modernization’ and liberalization began to form around Kurt Hager and Erich Honecker. Both men had been instrumental in creating the rigid and unbending hierarchies for youth and culture which had been criticised and condemned by those responsible for the youth communiqué. Without coming out into the open with their resentment, they began collecting evidence designed to prove the disastrous effects of the relaxation in youth policy and pointing the finger of blame for young people’s ‘excesses’ at writers and filmmakers for producing work unsuitable and dangerous for youth.

Differences of personality and outlook aside, the SED’s leaders were faced with a fundamental contradiction in their stance towards modernity. Ulbricht had hoped to use the communiqué as a means of modernizing the economy and society. Yet while young people were keen to embrace ‘modern’ developments, what they meant by the word ‘modern’ was very different from the conceptions of those in the regime leadership. For Ulbricht, in particular, modernity was about fulfilling the vision of socialism by lowering the gap between rich and poor and satisfying the population’s wants and needs in terms of material consumption. The only way to achieve this was by means of increased productivity. To overcome the challenges of the future, to produce the much needed technological improvements and innovations and to cope with the demands of increased technocracy and ‘scientific’ planning, young people needed to possess the appropriate qualifications and attitude of hard work and determination.

For young people, however, being ‘modern’ was about having ‘modern’ clothing and haircuts, possessing progressive, forward-looking attitudes and having access to the latest technology and consumer products. ‘I am for the long Beat-cut. It’s an expression of a modern young person.’

16 Meinungen zum Artikel der LVZ “Dem Mißbrauch der Jugend...”, BArch SAPMO DY30/IVA2/16/68.
Fig. 39: Images of the underground Beat music scene as captured by Stasi surveillance.
conception of ‘modernization’ demanded delayed gratification and self sacrifice in the name of society, young people’s ideas about how to be modern placed emphasis on immediate rather than delayed gratification and consumption as an expression of individuality and difference. It did not really matter to them what they had to do at work as long as they had the money and the opportunities to do what they wanted in their free time. ‘The mod was determined to compensate for his relatively low position in the daytime status-stakes over which he had no control, by exercising complete dominion over his private estate – his appearance and choice of leisure pursuits.’ Above all it was the elaborate consumer rituals of subcultures, ‘their apparently insatiable appetite for the products of capitalist society’ that perplexed and perturbed the SED.\(^ \text{17} \)

The continued emphasis in SED propaganda on youth as the ‘house masters of tomorrow’ belied a growing sense within the party that young people’s vision into the future was obscured by their long hair. At the beginning of 1965, the Ideological Commission of the Politbüro, led by Kurt Hager, stated that ‘the personal interests of young people still stand in the foreground [while] contacts with the FDJ become ever more superficial, and the influence of the school... and the teacher is... [no longer] the most important factor.’\(^ \text{18} \) The youth communiqué had coincided with a huge wave of energy and enthusiasm. But instead of being channelled into building socialism by transforming East German industry, it was being dissipated and misspent in the ‘mania’ surrounding the Beatles. In the power struggle which ensued between those within the administration who were in favour of continued liberalization and reform and those who wanted to revert to an emphasis wholly on ideology and control, the rapid upsurge of Beat seemed to offer an incontrovertible argument that reform was misguided. Having trumpeted their acceptance of ‘modern music, modern clothing, modern haircuts and modern forms of dance’, party functionaries fully expected to be accused of being opposed to modernity. In an endeavour to counter such accusations, a memorandum was issued advising

\(^ {17} \) Hebdige. ‘The meaning of mod’, 91-2.

\(^ {18} \) Reports to the Politbüro (Jun-July, 1964), BArch SAPMO DY 30/IV2/16/50.
them no longer to refer to Beat music as being ‘modern’, but instead to describe it as ‘recent (neuzeitlich)’.\textsuperscript{19}

**THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST BEAT**

Ironically, the event which gave the reactionaries within the regime leadership their chance to come out against Beat occurred not in the East, but in the West. On 15 September 1965, a concert by The Rolling Stones in the *Waldbühne* in West Berlin ended in uproar as fans ran amok smashing furniture and one another. Immediately, an FDJ-sponsored guitar competition designated to take place in the Walter Ulbricht stadium in East Berlin was cancelled. The catalogue of crimes and misdemeanours supposedly committed under the pernicious influence of Beat music – still described as American non-culture despite being British in origin – was put to the Politbüro in the absence of both Walter Ulbricht and Kurt Turba.

Although official statistics showed that there had actually been a fall in youth crime, the Politbüro was presented with a report suggesting that youth criminality had risen to dangerously high levels as a result of the influence of Beat music.\textsuperscript{20} In consequence, the hardliners adopted a resolution imposing an immediate ban on all amateur groups with a ‘decadent repertory’.\textsuperscript{21} The only chance a group had of ever playing again was if it swapped its English name for a German one and agreed to submit itself to stringent tests of political outlook and musical ability carried out by local culture functionaries. In addition to providing proof of their positive attitude to the workers’ and peasants’ state, group members had to prove that they were gainfully employed. Those who did not immediately seek a ‘proper job’ were to be sent to work camps.\textsuperscript{22} Groups with ‘American’ (in other words English) names were rejected forthwith. Of the 49 amateur groups registered in Leipzig, only five succeeded in obtaining permission to play again.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{19} 'Reaktion der verschiedensten Bevölkerungsschichten auf den Artikel der LVZ "Dem Mißbrauch der Jugend keinen Raum" (21.10.65), BArch SAPMO, DY30/IVA2/16/68.


\textsuperscript{22} 'Beschluss der Bezirksleitung vom 13.10.1965', StAL, IVA-2/16/453, 155-156.

\textsuperscript{23} 'Durchführung des Beschlusses des Sekretariats der Bezirksleitung "Zu einigen Fragen der
Invented allegations about widespread tax evasion were used to justify wholesale confiscations of instruments and equipment as well as to present the amateur musicians as criminal and anti-social elements, parasitically living off the hard work of their fellow citizens while pursuing their own selfish and slovenly existences. Illustrated with photographs of Beat concerts and slurs about their lack of personal hygiene, these claims were published in the local and national press under the headlines ‘No room for the misuse of youth’ and ‘The Amateur Drop-Outs’. According to these articles, the musicians and their fans were ill educated, unsuitably employed, unwashed, unrestrained and ‘whipped into a frenzy’. The editorials claimed that the enemy had used Beat music to turn young people against their state.

Reader responses to these articles were mixed. Those who approved of the measures taken by the authorities often betrayed far from progressive notions about what to do with nonconformist youth together with traits of altogether authoritarian, not to say fascist personalities:

The only thing that would help would be a few sturdy men, armed with truncheons, washing powder and brushes to give them a decent scrubbing on the spot and then give them a good punching in the belly. If one of them were to insult me, I’d smack his head in, even if it meant myself having to go to prison. Discussion serves no further purpose.

When I see and read what is in the newspaper, I wish one of them came between my fingers... I guarantee that I won’t let my state and my property be insulted, otherwise there’ll be broken limbs.
(Comrade H., Tram Driver)

A cold shiver ran down my spine at the sight of such photos, scenes and actors. Where is the sense for beauty and harmony that should be awoken in young people?

We find it wrong that such cultureless people are allowed to produce dance music. It proves that wherever such music groups give a performance, they
Fig. 40: *Neues Deutschland* turns on Beat fans, labelling them as 'amateur dropouts'.
Dem Mißbrauch der Jugend keinen Raum!

Hemmungslos, aufgepeitscht, ungewaschen... - Anfänge, denen wir wehren wollen


Fig. 41: The Leipziger Volkszeitung attacks local Beat fans as being 'uninhibited, frenzied and unwashed'.
are followed by fights. We are for a decent dance music, clean clothing and respectable behaviour of all young people.\textsuperscript{25}

Deliberate misattribution in the press ensured that stigma was attached not only to young people who performed particular delinquent acts or who wore certain clothes, but to a particular social status, that of the adolescent. Young people as a whole were deemed to be irresponsible, immature, arrogant and lacking in respect for authority. In spite (or perhaps because) of their much more direct and complicit experiences of war and Nazism older generations were eager to point an accusatory finger at young people. Long hair was not only an affront to their conceptions of masculinity, but also to processes of self-justification in which they believed that following the war they had ‘paid for’ their own mistakes through abnegation and self-denial.\textsuperscript{26} By rejecting their values and self-conceptions, young people were seen to be mocking their sacrifices. By embracing the notion that the preservation of social order necessitated cultural purity, hardline supporters of the regime began unconsciously aping Nazi rhetoric. As an antidote to the ‘disease’ caused by foreign influences, they suggested a large medicinal dose of good, clean German culture (\emph{saubere Volkstümlichkeit}).

This epidemic of systematically lost inhibitions is an ideological disease, which if development and young people are left to themselves infects and spreads. Above all young people but also parents, the workplace, the school, entertainment providers not to mention the cultural association should strive for the damming of these aberrations.

(\textit{Dr. T, National Academy for Sport, Leipzig})\textsuperscript{27}

Others, however, were less convinced by the SED’s rhetoric and pointed to errors and contradictions in the authorities’ logic:

\textit{First we gave these groups permission, then we praised them and now they’re to be subjected to wholesale condemnation.}

(\textit{Students of the Building Academy})\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{25} ‘\textit{Meinungen zum Artikel der LVZ "Dem Mißbrauch der Jugend" (1965)}’, BA\textsc{rch SAPMO DY30/IVA2/16/68.}

\textsuperscript{26} ST\textsc{AL, BDVP 24/1/856.}

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Meinungen zum Artikel}'.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
Many people could not understand why The Butlers were being criticised when earlier in the year they had been so highly praised in *Neues Deutschland* not to mention the warm reception they had received when they had played to the FDJ’s regional conference. For many in the Beat scene, the FDJ’s sudden lurch to the right was impossible to understand. Klaus Renft, lead singer of The Butlers, argued with the culture officials that ‘it was only thanks to the FDJ that they had gained the necessary popularity and backing and then suddenly everyone is working against them and is opposed to them. [According to Renft] with this article we had stabbed The Butlers in the back.’

The Butlers do not agree and also do not recognise the problem that with their music, they have infiltrated us and encouraged ecstasy among youth which found its climax in the excesses which occurred in Bezirk Leipzig. Several times they stated that they had to join in with this racket on grounds of competition and, in part, because they were verbally abused by the youngsters where they were playing because they were supposedly playing too slowly.29

The Shatters were even more outspoken, arguing that neither the article writer nor the culture officials had any idea about their music.

[They said that] we would never be able to understand their music because we had different views. We were in no position to judge how often they had sacrificed their free time to make music for the 14-to-18-year-olds… In the past they had often made great sacrifices for their music, gone without food and only eaten horsemeat.30

Even though they had very little chance of being published, a few young Beat fans wrote letters to the editor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* condemning the sweeping judgements, prejudices and blatant misinformation about western-influenced youth culture.

Is there any truth in what was written in the LVZ today and can it be proved? I’ve heard that the leaders of ‘The Butlers’ and the ‘Guitar Men’ studied at university.

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30 Discussion with The Shatters, ibid.
(An apprentice from Grimma)

We don't believe what was written in the LVZ. It was really exaggerated. We know these groups. We find this music really good and there's no way it should be banned. We don't believe there are any young people who go on stage stinking and without having washed.

(Four young hairdressers between the ages of 16 and 23)

The Butlers are a great group. When they played on 17.10.65 in Schmölln they themselves made sure there was order. This is our youth band. We reject bands like Walter Eichenberg.

(Several young people from Kreis Schmölln)

What's it got to do with the workplace or whoever else what young people do? That's their private affair.

(Young people from the People's Own Cocoa and Chocolate Works, Delitzsch)

The problem is artificially blown up out of all proportion by such publications. The young people will then begin to act correspondingly.

(Social science students at the Karl-Marx-University)

The article was written by old men who have no understanding for youth [The incident] on the market was nowhere near as bad, I was there.

(Apprentice)

THE BEAT DEMONSTRATION

Other fans responded in a more direct and immediate fashion. During the 'day in production' at the Kirow works, pupils of the Karl-Marx-Oberschule burned the LVZ article. In Leipzig, fans started producing flyers for a demonstration in opposition to the ban.

Not all adults joined in with the reaction against Beat. A music teacher from the 27th Oberschule declared to his pupils, 'Kids, I am for the Beatles and their music.' The Stasi were informed that three teachers at the 16th Oberschule had told pupils that they were 'for the Gammler and could fully understand why

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31 Meinungen zum Artikel der LVZ.
32 StAL, IVA5/01/269.
BEAT-FREUNDE!

Wir finden uns am Sonntag, den 31.10.65
10 Uhr - Leuschnerplatz
zum Protestmarsch ein.

Beatgruppen müssen
wieder spielen
setzt euch dafür ein.

Die Polizei ist
Nachtlos!

An alle Deutschen
Wir fordern die Aufhebung des Verbotes der Beat-Gruppen sowie die Einheit Deutschlands und endlich freie Wahlen.

die Deutsche Jugend

Fig. 42: Home-made leaflets calling for a demonstration against the ban on Beat, with demands which became increasingly political.
the young people had acted in this way'. The Headmaster of the 56th Oberschule declared, 'We should not carry it too far and generalize from a few individual incidents. What we are doing now is but a campaign.' Youth club leaders, in particular, expressed concern at the official over-reaction and argued that destroying young people's idols would prove counter-productive.

Despite arresting the 'ringleaders' the night before the 'Beat demo', the police nevertheless ensured a good turnout by going round to schools and factories and urging young people to stay away. Many of those who were arrested on the actual day had come merely out of curiosity to see what was going on. Under Honecker's supervision, the police and Stasi had made preparations to stage a counter-demonstration of force to crush what they saw as signs of anarchy and 'Beat-fanaticism'. Reports on police preparations show that they were armed for a major insurrection with machine pistols and truncheons in addition to water cannon and police dogs. Despite outnumbering the 'demonstrators' almost ten to one, the 'security services' were nevertheless unable to ensure that everything went according to plan. Leipzig's geography and the large numbers of bystanders prevented the authorities from effectively boxing the demonstrators in. The fact that the demonstration was held on the same day as an international football match with Austria was a considerable complicating factor. At one point the police descended on a large group of young people reported to be carrying banners, only to find that they were Austrian football supporters on their way to the stadium. Throughout the morning, the police were unable to gain control of the situation. Plain clothes police reported back that as soon as the water cannon came into view the demonstrators simply scattered, hid in the crowd or behind trees. Several innocent members of the public had complained about being hit by the water cannon (which according to some accounts contained animal faeces as well as stagnant water). Halfway through the day, Honecker sent an urgent message telling the police to change their tactics from that morning and on no account to provoke any trouble inside the stadium. When the Beat fans returned to the town centre after the match they were beaten to the ground by the police and thrown onto the back of trucks.

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33 Information (31.10.1965), StAL IV A-5/01/247, 98.
34 StAL, SED IV A2/16/464, 154
35 Schütz (ed.), Klaus Renft, 68-69.
Beatles
Ledernacken
Aggression

Fig. 43: The Beatles with Guns. Proof of the threat posed by Western non-culture.
Dozens of the 267 young people arrested were sent straight to be re-educated in the brown coal mines in unhygienic and highly demeaning conditions. Once they arrived at the mines, they were forcibly shorn. They were forced to spend the next week wearing only the clothes they had been arrested in. At night, they were made to sleep in unsanitary conditions without access to proper toilets or washroom facilities. During the day, they were forced to carry out hard labour. At home in Leipzig, the LVZ heralded the measures as a victory for the authorities. The *Leipziger Volkszeitung* justified the official measures by publishing a picture of the Beatles carrying weapons. The picture was supposed to link Beat excesses to war crimes and genocide in Vietnam.

For those of you who don’t recognise it, this is a picture of the Beatles, carrying not guitars, but weapons. These are the same types of weapons used by the Americans – with the support of the British government – to propagate war crimes and genocide in Vietnam.

Today Beat – tomorrow sub-machine-guns...
Today Brutalization – tomorrow war against a peace-loving country.

This is the imperialistic policy, driving the feelings of young people in false and dangerous directions, manipulating them for their class aims (*Klaßenziele*).

The imperialist powers use the Beatles to propagate their psychological warfare, by suggesting the Lone-Ranger-model to young people. It is no accident that this picture was found in the possession of young Leipzigers.

This picture shows the absurdity of the oft-repeated claims about the peaceful and harmless nature of the Western way of life.

The official *Feindbild* made it all too easy for the regime to justify its reactionary measures by projecting fascism onto the West and then back onto young people in East Germany. Beat-music was interpreted as a means of waging psychological warfare, subverting young people and making them the ‘agents of fascist-imperialism’. Unfortunately, the Beatles did not make particularly good role models for this vision of aggression. ‘It was a mistake to generalize from the picture of the Beatles. The Beatles’ anti-war views are well known. Perhaps the picture comes from one of their songs, which is directed

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36 *StAL, BDVP* 24.1/236; ‘Ich war sechzehn... Erinnerungen von Jürgen Wede’, *Freitag* Nr. 48 (23.11.90).

against the war. Although in September they had received MBEs from the Queen, this had sparked a furore among the British establishment with several holders of the award sending their medals back in protest. Beat fans failed to be convinced by the SED’s black propaganda and questioned whether the picture was genuine.

What on earth is that in the paper, it’s all a load of cockle-doodle-do, [Beat] has nothing to do with Vietnam.

(Youngster, the People’s Own Woolen Garments Factory)

The Beatles are misused by the imperialist forces for their dirty goals! The Beatles themselves spoke out against xenophobia and racial hatred.

(Richard-Wagner-Oberschule)

We don’t agree with the picture of The Beatles with weapons. When it was precisely The Beatles who spoke in favour of the freeing of the black inhabitants of the USA and gave concerts for peace.

(People’s Own Street-Lighting Works)

Meanwhile young Beat fans continued to engage in protest verbally and by means of an array of painted slogans condemning the arbitrary arrests and the unwarranted repression of their culture.

Down with police terror!
Down with Ulbricht! Long live The Beatles!
The revenge of the Gammler will terminate in blood
Scene of the crime: bed. Time of the crime: midnight
In place of water, iron bars and police, just Beat! Strike for it!
To all Germans! We demand an end to the ban on Beat groups together with the unity of Germany and at long last free elections. The youth of Germany!
Beat groups must play, the police are powerless.
Are you for the republic? No, no, no!

In their schools and workplaces, Beat fans resisted attempts to convince them that the authorities’ response had been legitimate and justified.

38 StAL, IVA5/01/269.
39 MacDonald, Revolution in the Head, 325-6.
40 ‘Meinungen zum Artikel der LVZ’
41 ‘Tätigkeit der Beatgruppen bzw. Gammler (13.11.65)’, StAL BDVP 24.1/348.
Fig. 44: Even after the arrests, protests continued against the ban on Beat.
On Sunday the state proved its weakness. 
Our freedom of speech is guaranteed in the constitution. 
Long hair is a fashion. Whoever is against it infringes personal freedom. 
Is there the right to strike in the GDR or not? 
Was it necessary to use tanks and water cannons against young people? 
The People’s Police did not need to intervene. It wasn’t right either to ban Beat music. 
Why did they have to go in with fixed bayonets though?42

Over the following month, school children continued to annoy their teachers by producing flyers for new demonstrations. One teacher received a note with the words ‘We’ll get you, you party dog – signed the gang angel’.43 When a youth forum was held in November 1965 to discuss the dangers of Beat music, members of the ‘Guitar-Men’ group gatecrashed. They and their fans dismissed claims that they were ‘uninhibited, frenzied and unwashed’. Categorically denying that they were lazy or work-shy, they drew attention to the massive exaggerations in the party’s reporting and parried the counter-factual statements which had been made about them with straightforward assertions that going on stage with bare feet could hardly be construed as constituting dancing ‘half-naked’.44 In the words of the functionaries involved, some of the pupils ‘tried to complicate the clarification of the matter through provocative questions laughed when they received correct, consequent answers and applauded backward opinions’. The last question a pupil was able to ask before the forum was prematurely dissolved was ‘Why is the friend from the Beat group interrupted, why is he not allowed to speak anymore?’

Even if it had been their intention to do so, the angry Beat fans had no chance of unseating the regime. The threat that Beat posed to the regime was in undermining its rhetoric and self-legitimization. However much the regime sought to dress up its attack on Beat, it clearly marked a retrograde step and stood in marked contrast to the SED’s pro-modern and pro-youth rhetoric.

42 ‘Informationsbericht (5.11.65), StAL, IVA5/01/269.
43 Ibid.
Meine Jugend
die Epoche
der BeatFans
und Gammler

Fig. 45: Embroidering a legend about Beat.
Modern haircuts shouldn't just be equated with Western ideology. A total ban on such guitar groups would be wrong.

(Pupils at the Erweiterte Oberschule Borna)\textsuperscript{45}

Although power was clearly weighted against them, the Beat fans could feel that in October 1965 they had achieved a moral and a symbolic victory.

We are young. You can't change that. Before there was applause and nothing happened. Today it's time to boo and hiss. Old people just don't understand. What happened on the Karl-Marx-Platz that was something sensational.

(Pupils from the 9th class of the 34th Oberschule)\textsuperscript{46}

Though ultimately enigmatic and theatrical, the Beat fans' protest had temporarily succeeded in denting the party's self-assurance. For a brief moment, it seemed to them like they were taking over the country. This exaggerated sense of their own importance was bolstered by the massive overreaction of the authorities.\textsuperscript{47} But there was something in their slogan 'The State is powerless' which stuck and continued to be used by youth subcultural nonconformists throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Although it had firm control over the mechanisms of repression, the SED had been powerless to influence them and had visibly failed to convince them of its message. Although by no means all young people at this time followed and supported Beat, they represented an important and significant cross-section of their generation. Most alarming of all for the Party, there was little to distinguish the interest shown by the otherwise ideologically committed and those young people who were pro-Western anti-Communists.

In the aftermath of the demonstration, the Minister for State Security, Erich Mielke, drew up a new set of guidelines for dealing 'systematically' with nonconformist groups by means of sustained surveillance and infiltration of nonconformist groups:

\textsuperscript{45} 'Meinungen zum Artikel der LVZ'.
\textsuperscript{46} 'Meinungen zum Artikel'.
\textsuperscript{47} Hebdige, 'The meaning of mod', 93.
The imperialist threat, in particular the measures of the West German imperialists for the preparation of a concealed war against the GDR force us to be more energetic in putting an end to the occurrence of such groups and above all to ensure that such herds do not arise in the future. This is all the more urgently necessary because the appearance of such groups can easily be used by the enemy as a means of feigning "resistance".48

All sorts of nonconformist behaviour now came under the Stasi's remit, accelerating its expansion into society. In schools, similar structures of reporting and surveillance were implemented. Margot Honecker was determined to overcome scepticism and inner conflict with renewed indoctrination and pressure to conform.

CONCLUSION

In a period of social transformation the attempt to reduce conflicts and preserve the ideal of a conflict-free society often leads to renewed emphasis on supervising, educating and controlling youth as a result of its symbolic role as harbinger of the future.49 But as Margot Honecker recognised after the collapse of the GDR, the SED's greatest failure had been its inability to coopt young people.

'I see it as a great weakness that we did not succeed in penetrating the huge sphere of free time (diesen riesigen Freizeitbereich). So much was provided as a basis, so much was fed to them that could not be discussed in a school day or a school week let alone an hour. This continually increasing need to become active in their free time, not just to take things in, but to be a part of something was the characteristic of a more educated and emancipated youth. We discussed this a great deal. But nothing happened.'50

49 Youth was 'discovered' as a separate social category/group at the same time as the 'youth problem' was first identified by middle class reformers at the end of the nineteenth century. Detlev Peukert, Grenzen der Sozial-Disziplinierung. Aufstieg und Krise der Deutschen Jugendfürsorge, 1878-1932 (Köln: Bund Verlag, 1986).
50 Reinhold Andert and Wolfgang Herzberg, Der Sturz. Honecker im Kreuzverhör (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1990), 306.
The state’s radical inability to tolerate their culture meant that all but a minority of young people were prevented from genuinely expressing wholehearted acceptance of the message preached by the regime. Because the regime had invested so much in the successful outcome of its educational experiment (seeing youth as the solution to the Party’s deficit of legitimacy), it was unable to tolerate the existence of signs that the experiment might be failing. But as Mary Fulbrook argues, the regime’s own policies succeeded in simultaneously labelling ‘anything that was not completely conformist as politically relevant (whether or not it was intended as such) and in the process actually produced a degree of disaffection which might not have been so pronounced in a less interventionist regime.’ In the course of its crackdown on Beat, the SED succeeded in politicizing dissident lifestyles and culture to the extent that those engaged in them became involved in overtly political forms of opposition and resistance.

51 Fulbrook, Anatomy, 163.
Conclusion

The SED equated its own brand of state socialism with modernity. Seeing youth as one of its greatest assets, capable of transforming society, the regime attempted to exert control over young people’s socialization and personal development. In the name of the GDR and thereby in the interests of youth, the Party sought to monopolize and control education and leisure. Expropriation of young people’s free time and free spaces took place under the cloak of ensuring that young people used their free time ‘sensibly’. As a result young people’s own sense (Eigen-sinn) was denied. The consequence was an official youth policy that was out of touch with young people’s interests and needs and a youth organization that proved repeatedly incapable of competing with alternative forms of leisure and culture. Over-regimentation and politicization ensured that organization actively repelled young people.

ALTERNATIVES AND AMBIVALENCE

Unfortunately for the SED’s attempts to mould the younger generation according to its own notions of what was good for them, the attempt to control and influence youth was undermined by both immunity to attempts at incorporation and the development of new forms of identity. It proved impossible for the state to prevent ‘its’ youth from becoming subject to alternative, competing influences. They grew up steeped in the cultures of their socio-cultural milieus, which helped to insulate them from the Party’s message. In addition, young people were subject to the drip-drip effect of Western media, which offered them alternative interpretations together with news about the latest music, ideas and fashions. The modernization the regime so desperately strove for and sought to impose from above proved more complex and equivocal than it had hoped. In the West, the 1950s saw changes in culture and identity which increasingly identified youth as a separate social category with its own interests and ideals. These changes, fostered by the increasingly international mass media, stripped away not just at the ‘traditional padding’ and authority of the state, but also at the school and the family by bringing into
question previously unchallenged moral systems and worldviews.\(^1\) The SED was encouraged by the fact that more and more young people drifted away from Christianity, particularly in urban areas. But it was slow to realise that it too was caught up in a process of 'de-sacrilization' which undermined the symbolic and 'spiritual' effects of its ideological claims. Although the Party strove to create a society in which individuals sacrificed their interests for the good of the collective ('the step from "I" to "We"'), by extending horizons and providing access to new ideas and outlooks, changes in education and the media fostered the growth of subjectivity and individualism. Technological changes, themselves encouraged by the SED, meant that young people had access to a far greater range of sources of information than ever before and were able to tap into the Zeitgeist which existed among their peers in the world outside. Transistors put into their hands a potent symbol of rebellion, but also a simple and straightforward means of contradicting and disproving the regime's messages and claims. The authorities were forced to recognise that 'even in the GDR', the desire for freedom became 'a key component of young people's outlook on life'.\(^2\)

The combined effect of being bombarded from all sides with competing and conflicting messages was often to produce a state of ambivalence and confusion. Although their heads may have 'always been turned to the West', in their hearts, young people often felt a deep sense of attachment to their families, friends and immediate surroundings in the East – to their Heimat.\(^3\) SED attempts to create an 'imagined community' remained ambivalent and, in part, chimerical. The state's desire to win the population's trust and support was continually challenged by its need to orchestrate demonstrations of make-believe 'unadulterated loyalty'. What the state took away with one hand, it often offered with the other, providing young people with ambivalent opportunities.\(^4\) The consequence of this ambivalence was a 'chafing between affirmation and rejection'.\(^5\) State attempts at control were dogged by scepticism, disbelief, inner conflict (Zwiespalt), passive resistance, self-segregation, escapism and

\(^2\) Report on 'criminal groups' (1966), BStU, ZA, JHS MF 346, 18.
\(^3\) Interviews with Manfred Stopp, Hans-Peter Dahms, Dieter L.
\(^4\) See Chapter Four.
evasion. Young people responded to attempts at control by switching off, retreating and embarking on 'inner emigration'.

The SED's struggle to impose its own norms on society took place during a period in which young people throughout the developed world were developing new ways of rebelling against adult-imposed norms. The reasons why young people rejected and rebelled against authority – the desire for autonomy, for self-experimentation, the wish to escape the feeling of being controlled – were similar in both East and West. As they neared maturity, they began chafing at the restrictions imposed on them and demanding sufficient recognition of their changing status. News about what young people were doing elsewhere in the world provided young people in the GDR with alternative images and models. They began to search for and test the limits – seeing what reactions were provoked by the adoption of an attitude of opposition and nonconformity. Experimentation with clothes, haircuts and identity allowed them opportunities to explore and express what kind of person they wanted to be. The culture they embraced shocked their elders by challenging existing societal mores and promising liberation and escape from the drudgery and constraints of everyday life.

Although young people could find certain aspects of the regime's social and educational provisions useful and worthwhile, the view became increasingly widespread that 'in the GDR... there is no freedom... not every citizen can express his opinion freely.' The narrowness of life, 'the tendency of the apparatus to "kneel on people's souls"', to give them all kinds of orders about how they should dress, what haircuts, how they should dance, how they should go to the theatre and how they should go on holiday' led young people to try and escape the state's reach. After August 13, 1961, the single most important symbol of the lack of freedom for young people in East Germany was the wall preventing them from freely visiting and exploring for themselves the world outside the GDR.

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ATTEMPTS AT COOPTION AND REFORM

In the 1970s and 1980s, certain forms of officially coopted youth culture did prove relatively popular with young people. Bands like the Puhdys enjoyed success in both parts of Germany while others could shelter from the pressures of commercialism under the aegis of the ‘Department of Culture, Section Rock music’. The radio station DT64 (a spin-off from the 1964 Deutschlandtreffen) and magazines like Sibylle provided ‘the kids’ with youth-specific music and fashion news. ‘Ostrock’ represented an attempt by the SED to tame rock’s ‘excesses’ while providing youth with a sense that they had a culture of their own. By contrast, the attempts made in the 1950s and 1960s to harness youth culture in the service of the state were much less smooth and efficient. Painfully slow to get started, the overly bureaucratic hierarchy became very difficult to steer or control. In an attempt to shake them out of their lethargy, Ulbricht unleashed violent shifts of policy which either presented young people as the ‘constructors-of-socialism’ or condemned them as ‘victims-of-western-influence’. The utopian urge to find a solution to social problems overlapped with the dictatorial imperative to impose the regime’s authority and reassert its control. As a result, responses remained contradictory and ambivalent. Recognition that young people might have their own specific consumer and leisure interests was tempered by a failure to accept that young people had a right to be interested in Western music. There was a failure to recognise the legitimacy of young people’s desire for autonomy and self-determination. Compromises and concessions on fashion and music were soon reneged on in a return to campaigns against Western ‘infiltration’. Not only did they expose the ambivalence and contradictions in the SED’s project, but they also revealed cleavages within the state hierarchy with different official agencies championing divergent concepts.

Each of the attempts at compromise and cooption (or ‘liberalization’ and ‘reform’) contained within it the seeds of a possible reconciliation with disbelieving, marginalized youth. More often than not, however, extending the hand of friendship to young people ‘standing on the sidelines’ constituted yet a

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8 Pilkington, Russia’s Youth, 95.
further attempt to colonize their lifeworlds. The disingenuousness of the reformers together with the erratic nature of policy shifts greatly reduced the effectiveness of these periods of toleration. The party's attempts to create a more enlightened and progressive image for itself were rapidly submerged by a return to the same old attitudes of intolerant incomprehension and repression. But in the process of reacting to uncontrolled youth subcultural phenomena, the authorities accidentally succeeded in stimulating them. Far from wiping out undesired cultures, 'liquidation' served to magnify and publicize them, attracting allies together with emulators, who began to identify with the negative image that the regime, itself, had created. While Rock'n Roll had acted as the stimulus for innate, intuitive forms of rebellion against the stifling and oppressive norms governing appearance and behaviour, it was the over-reactions of the authorities which provoked the most embarrassing displays of protest and opposition, undermining the authority of the regime. In the process, all sorts of behaviours were rendered 'resistant' which in a less determining society would not necessarily have been considered as such. The defiant pursuit of difference by nonconformists not only made the regime appear foolish and incapable; they also succeeded in exposing the regime's worst traits. Just as the growth of youth subcultures undermined the regime's claims to be modern, so too did its own wild overreactions contradict its claims to 'civilization'. What it described as 'civilization' was actually little more than self-restraint.® Discipline, obedience, hard work and self-sacrifice were the values and virtues prized and trumpeted by the regime.

NONCONFORMITIES

The narrowness of life in the GDR together with the lack of fit between ideal and reality led many young people into positions of dissent and implicit opposition with the regime. Nonconformity occurred when the desire of young people to act out their changing notions of identity and growing feelings of alienation and opposition came into conflict with the limitations and constraints of the system. In some cases, groups of young people sought to enlarge the scope of the allowable by countering and protesting against restrictions on their

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ability to listen to Western music. In other cases, young people found themselves and their behaviour branded as alien and intolerable because the regime had moved the goalposts of what it constituted as acceptable behaviour.

But while many young people harboured innate feelings of resentment and opposition, the overtness and articulacy with which they were expressed depended heavily on their education, gender and milieu. Far from being united in opposition to the state, society was deeply divided. Just as in non-dictatorial systems, young people in the GDR were faced with very different pressures depending on whether they were middle class or working class, male or female. The 1950s and early 1960s saw a sharp distinction between ‘respectable’ and non-respectable forms of opposition. At one end of the extreme were the private, respectable nonconformities of Christians and young people in the Oberschule. At the other, loud and highly public forms of ‘rough’ protest revelled in by ‘rowdies’ at the annual fair (Kleinmesse). Young people who, in ‘bourgeois’ society, would have been considered as useful contributors to that society because of their acceptance and conscientious fulfilment of middle-class norms were, in the GDR, subjected to political discrimination because of their social status or religious beliefs (which were seen as hampering commitment to socialist construction). While Christian nonconformists suffered for their faith, renouncing access to higher education and incurring manifold forms of petty persecution, non-Christian nonconformity was largely motivated by the desire for enjoyment and fun.

How much and how far young people expressed opposition to the regime depended, in large part, on how much they had to lose. For Oberschüler with an interest in going on to university, expressions of nonconformity and disagreement with the regime had, of necessity, to remain private and concealed from their teachers. But in order to gain the respect of their peers it was necessary to show signs of being ‘oppositional’. Knowledge about western music and fashion and the world beyond the GDR served as an important means of expressing difference and of maintaining popularity. Academic success brought the chance of future rewards, upward mobility, and a good job. Acting oppositional brought more immediate gratifications like recognition and respect from their peers and attractiveness to the opposite sex.
Girls who failed to conform to rigid gender norms risked the most by endangering their respectability. The street, the arena in which most subcultural activity took place remained in many ways ‘taboo for women’, associated with danger and shame.\textsuperscript{10} ‘For many girls escaping from the family and its pressures to act like a “nice girl” remains the first political experience.’\textsuperscript{11} Although from the mid-to-late-1960s, girls began to emerge more into nonconformist subcultures, the first obstacle to participation they had to overcome was that posed by parental restrictions on clothing, makeup and escape from the confines of the domestic sphere. In this sense, the creation of an official youth organization allowed girls significantly more scope for autonomy from their families, opportunities to engage in their own activities and possibilities to interact with one other and with the opposite sex than they would have been allowed if forced to stay at home.\textsuperscript{12}

Although increasing numbers of young people showed an interest in Western forms of youth culture, there continued to be important differences in the degree to which they manifested or expressed such an interest. In the conflicts which occurred on the street, it was gangs, predominantly composed of working-class boys (and ‘their’ girls), who demonstrated their allegiance to the music in the face of state hostility and police harassment. Without career aims or qualms about respectability to hold them back, they had the greatest freedom to defy and rebel against the regime’s restrictions. They continued to be motivated by a macho sense of working-class habitus emphasizing physicality and the ability to ‘look after oneself’ (the characteristics which Alf Lüdtke originally described as \textit{Eigensinn}).\textsuperscript{13} Not only did young workers struggle to retain their occupation of spaces that had traditionally been theirs, but they developed their own forms of carnival and misrule. The fairground (\textit{Kleinmesse}) in Leipzig repeatedly provided the location for riots by young people who joined together to stage misrule and thereby symbolically undermined the authority of the state. Youth subculture developed as an extension of gang activities and as a response to changes in youth identity and the growing feeling of restlessness.

\textsuperscript{10} McRobbie & Garber, ‘Girls and subcultures’, 39.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, 42.
\textsuperscript{12} See Chapter One.
\textsuperscript{13} Lüdtke, ‘What happened to the "Fiery Red Glow"?’, 226-227.
and rebellion against adult restrictions and controls. While the SED emphasized the foreign and alien character of Western youth culture, smuggled into the GDR as part of a deliberate effort to undermine socialism, what the police actually attacked was the continued existence of working-class street culture which was re-labelled ‘rowdyism’. In this way, the SED succeeded in turning against itself young people from the class it claimed to represent. By attempting to take ‘their’ spaces away from them, the SED alienated young workers and called forth their stubborn resistance.

Although much more overtly rebellious and oppositional, their nonconformity tended to lack the degree of interiorization which characterized resistance by girls and Oberschüler. ‘They revolted with the deed not the word. They shirked work, dressed strangely and spoke little, withdrawing into rude silence or private argot.’\(^\text{14}\) The boys in the gangs cultivated a ‘meaningful taciturnity’ while taking delight in the fact that they struck others as being deviant. A contradictory mixture of cultures and identities, old and new, they demanded the right to privacy and self-determination, at the same time as physically occupying public spaces and annoying other people. Although their rampant machismo led them to challenge respectability, it could also lead them to appropriate the songs and symbols of National Socialism and engage in attacks on groups like homosexuals, who they saw as being other and ‘queer’.\(^\text{15}\) Nevertheless, although the SED attempted to justify its deep intrusion into the sphere of youth culture by claiming that young people were at risk of fascism, in actual fact, it was the attitudes of the East German authorities to youth nonconformity which most closely resembled those of the Nazis.

‘POLITICAL’ AND ‘EFFECTIVE’ RESISTANCE

The shadow cast over the West German historical and academic landscape by memories and descriptions of 1968 tends to lead to the assumption that, in order to be considered relevant of historical enquiry, youth nonconformity has to


take the form of an over-arching, generation-wide political and cultural revolt.\textsuperscript{16} But as Dorothee Wierling argues, the conditions militated against such a generation-wide political-cultural revolt in the GDR. An intrusive, over-politicizing state which wrapped itself in the mantle of antifascism strengthened the bonds of solidarity between parents and children and led nonconformist youth to emphasize the non-political nature of their claims to autonomy.\textsuperscript{17} To this day, former nonconformists continue to describe themselves and their actions as 'unpolitical'. What they mean is that they did not formulate or articulate their feelings of opposition in overtly 'political' terms and defined themselves as 'anti-political' in relation to the imposition of Marxist-Leninist ideology. For young people in the subcultures, their culture, the 'modern' culture of the English-speaking world, seemed to offer freedom from narrow-minded constraints prevalent in the GDR. It stood for casual, easy-going attitudes and an emphasis on pleasure and experiences rather than on compulsion and self-discipline. It was in the process of defending their right to make their own decisions that they managed to challenge and undermine societal norms.

But however unpolitical they felt, their actions nevertheless had political effects. As carriers of alternative values, lifestyles and identities, the dissident subcultures posed potent and subversive challenges to the regime's legitimization.\textsuperscript{18} The desire to be different and to be free led them to resist and oppose the encroachments of an intrusive and would-be moulding dictatorship. All they demanded was to go about their business of pursuing enjoyment and not to be subject to interference. And yet, their pursuit of an alternative culture and lifestyles put them on a collision course with the state. In the West, mass culture was blamed for the depoliticization of youth.\textsuperscript{19} In the East, however, mass culture, and the subcultures that it spawned, created the battlelines for conflicts between self-determination and determination by the state.

Although given a wide birth by respectable members of society because of their rough-and-ready ways and their cheeky sense of humour – directed not

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 244-6.
\textsuperscript{18} Lindenerberger, 'Sonnenallee', 95-96.
\textsuperscript{19} This argument is explored in Chapter Two.
just against the Party, but at all self-important adult figures of authority – youth subcultural nonconformists did, in a certain sense, act as 'frontier posts for the free world'. They ostentatiously occupied the spaces set aside for leisure, exploiting the 'grey area' between the tolerated and the non-tolerated. Through their language and dress, they articulated otherness and thereby the possibility of alternatives. Whereas in other societies they were simply a nuisance, the 'cultural struggle' which was taking place between the opposing blocs transformed them into 'semiotic guerrillas', smuggling and distributing contraband meanings. Although they often lacked the vocabulary to describe what it was that they were feeling and expressing, they nevertheless articulated a desire for freedom at odds with the ideology and policies of the regime. 'A frequent derisive remark with him was "it's all a load of shit", without it being clear to myself or my husband what he concretely meant by that.'

For the Stasi, the particular 'mentality and psyche' of youth in the 1960s was expressed by 'a spirit of opposition, pig-headedness, confirmation of their own self, inexperience and immaturity, desire for adventure, etc.' There was, it is true, much that was romantic and self-aggrandizing in their conceptions of themselves as rebels. In many ways, theirs was a 'pseudorevolt' (Attali) against the world of pettiness constituted by adults. But within the much more starkly politicized conditions and context of everyday life in the GDR, their revolts acquired considerable import and significance. Ostensibly non-political forms of youth nonconformity posed a threat because, 'in their sweep, they possessed a relatively wide support among the youth population and, to a certain extent, spread contagiously'. Not only did the state itself perceive the existence of subcultures as political, but state reactions to nonconformity succeeded both in politicizing nonconformity and in turning immunity into opposition. On several occasions, (the most notable being the ban on Beat), what was ostensibly a diffuse and non-political movement of youth defiance flowed over into political protest. Their stubborn challenges to official notions of culture easily also became challenges to the political system per se.

22 Attali, Noise, 110.
23 Klönne, 'Jugendprotest und Jugendopposition', 620.
The focus in this research has been on young people and their cultures rather than on organizations and structures. By broadening the definition of ‘resistance’ from a narrow focus on the activities of the parties and the churches to cover a broad range of youthful nonconformity, immunity, protest, opposition, dissidence and refusal, the thesis eschews making political and moral judgements about who ‘deserves’ to be remembered and commemorated. Instead, it offers opportunities for integrating the study of youth nonconformity in the GDR within wider discussions about the role played by youth subcultures in postwar changes in outlook and mentality.

The resilience and creativity young people showed in elaborating and preserving their own cultural forms is an important qualification to the thesis of the ‘absorption’ or ‘dying away of society’. Yet, in contrast to totalitarian arguments which see society as being united in opposition to the regime, the study of youth nonconformity shows that although a wide range of young people came into conflict with the total claim, they did so in different ways and for very different reasons. As Martin Broszat argued, what counts is not so much what was desired or intended, but what was actually achieved or brought about by the action, whether or not such an effect was intended. Many brave actions, although stemming from ‘mere’ preservation of interests or defence of individual freedom, gained a political quality, even when they were not based on principled political opinions under the dictatorial conditions of the GDR. Several of those who refused to submit to bans on Rock’n Roll and Beat music paid for their intransigence with sentences of up to five years in prison. Nevertheless, after each attempt at ‘liquidation’, new youngsters stepped in to take their place, making the gangs near impossible to control or suppress.

Contrary to the image of an all-moulding and all-deforming state, significant numbers of young people refused to be dictated to and failed even to come

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26 Broszat, ‘Resistenz und Widerstand’ 698
27 Broszat, ‘Resistenz und Widerstand’, 699
within the state's reach. A report on 'endangered youth' by Leipzig town council estimated the number of young people 'who appeared negatively in groups and concentrations' at around 9% of the youth population. Although in schools, the Party was able to force young people to hide their scepticism, disbelief and nonconformity, on the street, in the park, at the fairground, however, the Party's supporters and defenders found themselves in enemy territory. As one SED functionary complained, he couldn't go into the local youth clubhouse without being verbally abused. Such spaces remained on the fringes, 'wild' and uncontrolled. Ultimately, there were limits to the paramaters the Party could set on how young people lived their lives.

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29 'Informationsbericht über die Durchführung des Beschlusses des Sekretariats der Bezirksleitung "Zu einigen Fragen der Jugendarbeit und dem Auftreten der Rowdygruppen" vom 13.10.1965', StAL, IVA-5/01/269, 221.
List of Abbreviations

Abt. Vb. Department for Education (Abteilung Volksbildung)

ABV GDR Community Policeman (Abschnittsbevollmächtigte)

AFN American Forces Network

APW Academy of Educational Science (Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften der DDR)

Ast. Lpz. Leipzig Branch (Außenstelle Leipzig)

BArch. German Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv)

BBC British Broadcasting Corporation

BDJ West German neo-Nazi organization (Bund Deutscher Jugend)

BDM Nazi League of German Girls (Bund Deutscher Mädchen)

BDVP Regional Authorities of the German People’s Police (Bezirksbehörde der Deutschen Volkspolizei) held at the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig (StAL)

Bt&RdB Files of the Regional Government, Bezirk Leipzig (Bezirkstag und Rat des Bezirkes) held in the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig (StAL)

BStU Federal Office for the Documents of the State Security Service of the Former GDR (Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik)

CDU Christian Democratic Union (Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands)

CCCS Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham

DP Displaced Person

DSF German-Soviet Friendship Society (Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft)

DT64 Youth-orientated radio station set up during the Germany Meeting (Deutschlandtreffen) of 1964

FDGB Free German Trade Union (Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund)

FDJ Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend)

FDJler Member of the FDJ

FRG (BRD) Federal Republic of Germany

GDR (DDR) German Democratic Republic

GST Paramilitary training organization, the Society for Sport and Technology (Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik)

HJ Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend)

HO The GDR’s state-owned retail outlet (Handelsorganisation)

JHS Juristische Hochschule, a training institute for MfS personnel

IM Unofficial informer for the Stasi (Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter)

IzJ Institute for the Contemporary History of Youth (Institut für zeitgeschichtliche Jugendforschung)
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>KPD</td>
<td>Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands)</td>
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<td>LDP, later</td>
<td>Liberal Democratic Party (Liberal-demokratische Partei Deutschlands)</td>
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<td>LDPD</td>
<td>Agricultural Collective (Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft)</td>
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<td>LVZ</td>
<td>Leipziger Volkszeitung, the local SED newspaper in Leipzig</td>
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<td>MfS</td>
<td>Ministry for State Security (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit)</td>
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<td>MMM</td>
<td>Movement of Young Technicians of Tomorrow (Messe der Meister von Morgen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td>Neues Deutschland, the SED national daily newspaper</td>
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<td>NDPD</td>
<td>National Democratic Party of Germany (National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands)</td>
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<td>NKFD</td>
<td>National Committee for a Free Germany (Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland)</td>
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<td>NVA</td>
<td>National People's Army (Nationale Volksarmee)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>Party of Democratic Socialism, the SED's successor party</td>
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<td>RdB</td>
<td>Files of the Regional Council, Bezirk Leipzig (Rat des Bezirkes) held in the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig (StAL)</td>
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<td>RIAS</td>
<td>Radio in the American Sector</td>
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<td>SAPMO</td>
<td>The Foundation for the Archives of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR under the Federal Archives of Germany (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBZ</td>
<td>Soviet Zone of Occupation in Germany (Sowjetische Besatzungszone)</td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>Security Service of the Third Reich (Sicherheitsdienst)</td>
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<td>SDP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SED</td>
<td>Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands)</td>
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<td>StAL</td>
<td>Leipzig holdings of the State Archives of Saxony (Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig)</td>
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<td>Stasi</td>
<td>State Security (Staatssicherheit)</td>
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<td>Stv&amp;RdSt</td>
<td>Files of the Town Council of Leipzig (Stadtverordnetenversammlung und Rat der Stadt), held in the Stadtarchiv Leipzig</td>
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<td>VEB</td>
<td>People's Own Firm (Volkseigener Betrieb)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZA</td>
<td>Central Archive (Zentralarchiv)</td>
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<td>ZIJ</td>
<td>Central Institute for Youth Research (Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZR</td>
<td>Central Council (Zentralrat)</td>
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Mr & Mrs Stopp (8.9.99)
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