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Guests of the socialist nation? Foreign students and workers in the GDR, 1949-1990.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the everyday experiences of foreign contract workers and international students in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from 1949 to 1990. Starting with an overview of immigration policy in the socialist state, it demonstrates that this was influenced by older German police traditions as well as by Soviet practice. Although the state aimed at maximum control of foreigners' lives, its system of control and surveillance was never fully effective. As "subjects of social action", foreign workers and students were capable of recognising the extent and limits of state authority and could use the political, economic and social conditions in the GDR to their own advantage. Many foreigners saw the GDR as an opportunity to secure a better future or to explore social activities frowned upon or unavailable in their home countries. The pursuit of their own sense of identity and economic interests generated a mixed response from the East German public and the authorities. Racism did exist in the GDR but the state consistently denied this, claiming rather that East Germany embodied the principles of proletarian internationalism and solidarity. There was positive interaction between foreigners and East German citizens, demonstrated by the existence of social contact and binational relationships. Viewed with disdain by the general public, the authorities implemented extensive measures to prevent marriages taking place, effectively blocking any progress towards a multicultural society. These restrictive practices, along with the inbuilt shortcomings of the planned economy and the controlled media, served to reinforce popular misconceptions about foreigners, leaving a society ill-equipped to deal with minorities since the collapse of the state in 1989.

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Preface

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Abbreviations

ABF: Arbeiter- und Bauern Fakultät (Workers' and Peasants' Faculty)
Abt.: Abteilung (department)
ABV: Abschnittsbevollmächtigte (local police plenipotentiary)
ADN: Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst
ASt.: Außenstelle (branch)
BArch: Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive)
BdL: Büro des Leitung [des MfS]) (Office of the Leadership [of the MfS])
BDVP: Bezirksverwaltung der Deutschen Volkspolizei (Regional Police Authority)
BL: Bezirksleitung (Regional Party Directorate)
BPAA: Büro für Paß- und Ausländerangelegenheiten (Office for Passport and Foreigners' Affairs)
BStU: Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR (Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic)
BVfS: Bezirksverwaltung des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit (Regional State Security Authority
CP: Communist Party
CSSR: Czechoslovak Socialist Republic
DA: *Deutschland Archiv*
DEFA: Deutsche Film Aktien- Gesellschaft (GDR film studios)
DFD: Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands (Democratic Women's Federation)
DTSB: Deutsche Turn- und Sportbund (German Gymnastics and Sports Association)
DVI: Deutsche Verwaltung des Innern (German Administration of the Interior)
DVP: Deutsche Volkspolizei (German People's Police)
DVRA: Demokratische Volksrepublik Algeriens (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria)
FDGB: Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Free German Trade Union)
FRG: Federal Republic of Germany
GBl.: Gesetzblatt der DDR
GSSD: Gruppe der sowjetischen Streitkräfte in Deutschland (Group of Soviet Forces in Germany)
GST: Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik (Society for Sport and Technology)
HA: Hauptabteilung (Main Department)
HAPM: Hauptabteilung Paß- und Meldewesen (Main Department for Passports & Registration)
HI: Herder-Institut
HS: Hochschule (third-level college)
IS: Ingenieurschule (engineering college)
ISK: Internationales Studentenkomitee (International Students' Committee)
KAS: Komitee für Angelegenheiten ausländischer Studierender in der DDR (Committee for International Student Affairs in the GDR)
KB: Kulturbund (Culture Association)
KL: Kreisleitung (County Party Directorate)
KMU: Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig
KPD: Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
LfV: Liga für Völkerfreundschaft (League for Friendship of the Nations)
LStU: Landesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR (Regional Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic)
marks: Mark der DDR (GDR Marks)

MdI: Ministerium des Innern (Interior Ministry)
MfAA: Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (Ministry for External Affairs)
MfS: Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry for State Security)
ND: Neues Deutschland
NSV: Nationale Studentenvereinigungen (Foreign Students' Committees)
NVA: Nationale Volksarmee (National People's Army)
ÖMZ: Ökumenisch-Missionarisches Zentrum (Berlin Ecumenical Missionary Centre)
ONAMO: Office National de al Main d'Oeuvre (Algerian National Bureau for Labour)
SAL: Staatssekretariat für Arbeit und Löhne (State Secretariat for Labour and Wages)
SAPMO-BArch: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv (Foundation of the Archives of the Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archive)
SBZ: Sowjetische Besatzungszone (Soviet Zone of Occupation)
SH: Staatssekretariat für Hochschulwesen (State Secretariat for Higher Education)
SHF: Staatssekretariat für Hoch- und Fachschulwesen (State Secretariat für Higher- and Vocational Education)
SMAD: Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (Soviet Military Administration in Germany)
SPK: Staatliche Plankommission (State Planning Commission)
SR: Sozialistische Republik (socialist republic)
StGB: Strafgesetzbuch der DDR (GDR criminal code)
TH: Technische Hochschule (technical college)
TU: Technische Universität (technical university)
UASA: Union der afrikanischen Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR (Union of African Students and Workers in the GDR)
UGTA: Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (General Union of Algerian Workers)
VPKA: Volkspolizei-Kreisamt (county police station)
VR: Volksrepublik (People's Republic)
ZA: Zentralarchiv (Central Archive)
ZAIG: Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe (Central Evaluation and Information Group)
ZK: Zentralkomitee (Central Committee)
ZZF: Zentrum für zeithistorische Forschung (Centre for Contemporary Historical Studies)

Chapter 1. Foreigners in GDR history

In 1989 the number of foreigners in the GDR reached a highpoint of 190,000, which represented just over 1.2 percent of the overall population. Of this number, approximately 93,000 were contract workers while nearly 13,500 were international students. The remainder were either long-term residents of the GDR (mainly foreign-born spouses of East German citizens) or foreign workers employed by foreign construction companies working on specific projects. In addition to this number, approximately 400,000 Soviet soldiers were garrisoned in the GDR, bringing the total foreigner population to almost 600,000.

This thesis deals with the East German experiences of contract workers and international students. Over the forty year history of the state, the cumulative number of foreign workers and students was considerable. Between 64,000 and 78,400 students from 126 counties graduated from East German third-level institutions from 1951 to 1989 (see chapter 3). More significant was the total number of contract workers and it may be estimated that between 1967 and 1989 approximately 210,000 contract workers were employed in East German factories. (For a statistical breakdown and explanation of these figures, see diagrams 1 and 2).

The presence of foreigners in the GDR was as old as the state itself. The most numerous group in the 1950s were the "stateless" citizens (in the majority displaced persons) who decided to remain in eastern Germany after the Second World War. In the aftermath of the Greek Civil War in 1949/50, the fledgling state took in 1,800 Greek child refugees.[1] In 1951, Leipzig University was the first college to enrol foreign students. The proposal to employ foreign labour was first mooted in July 1961, one month before the erection of the Berlin Wall. This plan, which never materialised, envisaged recruiting 50,000 Soviet, Bulgarian, and Polish workers for fixed periods of contract.[2] Commuting daily between Poland and East Germany, Polish women transit workers began employment in a number of factories along the eastern Oder-Neiße border in 1965/66. Contract workers, who lived and worked in the GDR for periods ranging from three to five years, first arrived in 1967 from Hungary. They were

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[1] See Stefan Troebst, "Evacuation to a cold country: child refugees from the Greek Civil War in the GDR, 1949-1989", in: *Nationalities Papers* 32:4 (2004), 675-691.

[2] See Dierk Hoffmann, *Aufbau und Krise der Planwirtschaft. Die Arbeitskräftelenkung in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1963*, München, 2002, 530-535.

followed by workers from Poland (from 1971), Algeria (from 1974 to 1984), Cuba (from 1978), Mozambique (from 1979), Vietnam (from 1980), Angola (from 1985), and North Korea and China (from 1986).

Post-*Wende* research has failed to capture the variety of foreigners' experience. An interpretative analysis which draws on the totalitarian tradition and which takes party, state, police, and Stasi orders and directives at face value will invariably portray foreigners as having endured a miserable, oppressed existence in the GDR. While the subjective experiences of some foreigners serve to confirm this depiction, other testimony challenges or contradicts this view. Life in the GDR could mean different things to different people. As research in other areas of GDR history demonstrates, neither the image of the GDR as a peace-loving, socialist state (as cultivated by its apologists) nor as a massive concentration camp (as painted by its most ardent detractors) corresponds to the subjective experiences of many of its citizens. The particular experience of foreigners, in many ways a microcosm of the larger situation, is also ill-suited to the straitjacket of totalitarian interpretative models. An examination of foreigners' experience using historical sources over the forty year history of the GDR reveals a more differentiated and contradictory picture than has been portrayed. While the state sought to limit the freedoms of foreigners, they proved capable of pursing their own interests.

Before the *Wende* little attention was paid in the West towards the situation of foreigners in the GDR. Articles of questionable accuracy appeared occasionally in *Deutschland Archiv* and other journals. By and large, these accounts were based on a mixture of official GDR news and Western conjecture,[3] but at times provided useful perspectives from labour delegating countries.[4] Articles on foreigners in the mainstream GDR media were by and large laudatory and self-congratulatory contributions.[5]

Neither did the situation of foreigners in the GDR attract the attention of East German writers. There are a few notable but largely forgotten exceptions, and as such, they deserve particular mention. In the 1970s, the novelist Hannelore Lauerwald addressed the problems faced by the women transit workers from Poland, who worked in East German factories along the Oder-Neiße border. The short story *Wanda* deals with the difficulties faced by a young Polish worker of the same name on account of her

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[3] See Konstantin Pritzel, "Gastarbeiter in der DDR", in: *DA* 3:1 (1970), 92-96, and Wolf Oschlies, "Polnische 'gastarbeiterzy' in der DDR. Rechtsgrundlagen und Alltag", in: *DA* 16:10 (1983), 1084-1091.
[4] Sandor Kiss, "Ungarische Gastarbeiter in der DDR", in: *Osteuropäische Rundschau* 16:1 (1970), 16f.
[5] For example: *DDR rufen die Trommeln. Kollegen aus Afrika und Asien über unsere Republik*, Bernau, 1964, or Siegfried Förster, "30 Jahre Ausländerstudium in der DDR", in: *Das Hochschulwesen* 29:12 (1981), 339-344.

engagement to Frank, an East German.[6] A news feature entitled "Polish Women", commissioned but later rejected by the DFD, looked at the everyday expectations, worries, and difficulties of the Polish women transit workers employed in a capacitor plant in Görlitz. Despite its veiled references to xenophobic sentiment among the majority GDR population, the article eventually found publication in the *Sächsische Zeitung* in 1975 or 1976 its author recalls.[7]

Another valuable source is Landolf Scherzer's *Die Fremden*, which is based on interviews carried out in 1982 and 2002 with a number of East Germans associated with the Fajas factory in the city of Suhl, which employed 175 Mozambican workers. The book was only published in 2002 as it had failed to receive a publication licence in the GDR. His interviewees come from a variety of backgrounds – workers and their neighbours, hostel wardens, party secretaries, factory officials and restaurant owners – and they provide a far more complex picture of East German attitudes towards foreigners than many commentators or even the book's blurb and author suggest. However, Scherzer's interviews must be treated with some caution as they are not verbatim transcripts but edited for the purposes of publication and the author provides no indication on his interview technique or on whether he chose to exclude any material. In addition, although Scherzer sought the views of a dozen East Germans in 1982, there is no evidence that he spoke to any Mozambicans then and the volume only contains six short accounts of interviews with Mozambicans living in Germany in 2002.[8]

Published memoirs composed by foreigners who studied in the GDR are rare and non-existent in the case of contract workers. This research has found only one significant account written by a former international student. A Cold War response to an East German publication which extolled the system of international studies in the GDR, *Studium bei Freunden?* (1962) by Indian student Vijoy Batra paints a bleak picture of international studies in the GDR by claiming it was characterised by political indoctrination, repression and poor living standards. Yet he suggested that the

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[6] Hannelore Lauerwald, "Wanda", in: *An einem Donnerstag oder Der Duft des Brotes. Erzählungen*, Berlin, 1975.

[7] The article mentions the rudeness of checkout staff in Görlitz, who criticised Polish women for purchasing goods, such as flour, in the GDR. My thanks to Esther v. Richthofen, who made me aware of Lauerwald's contributions, filed in: SAPMO-BArch, DY 31/1096, fos. 212-227. Interview with Hannelore Lauerwald, Oct. 2003.

[8] Landolf Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, Berlin, 2002. The author had intended the Suhl material to appear in his earlier book *Das Camp von Matundo. 132 Tage Afrika*, Berlin, 1986.

interaction with the East German public was extensive and commonplace.[9] In two books, the Indonesian-born Chinese Xing-Hu Kuo illustrates the systematic surveillance he was placed under by the MfS. Kuo studied journalism at the KMU from 1958 to 1961 before taking a job as a translator at the Chinese embassy in East Berlin. In 1965 he was arrested and sentenced to the Bautzen II jail for seven and a half years on a trumped-up espionage charge.[10]

Since 1989/90, a considerable amount of material (of varying quality) on foreigners has been published. In the immediate aftermath of the events of the *Wende* of 1989/90, publications tended to compensate for the information deficit caused by decades of silence and secrecy surrounding contract labour by publishing basic information on the labour exchange agreements and general conditions.[11] A repository of valuable insights into the everyday lives of foreigners is Runge's 1990 book *Ausland DDR. Fremdenhaß*.[12] The book's title is somewhat misleading, as racism does not feature predominantly in the testimony of the many foreigners interviewed by the book's researchers. Indeed, as the interviewees indicated, life in the GDR as a contract worker did not just entail misery but also had its benefits. Schmidt also provides extracts from interviews, conducted in early 1991, with eleven foreigners from five different countries who described their varying experiences of interaction with the German population.[13] A more comprehensive account by Krüger-Potratz appeared in the same year, which contrasted the official pronouncements of the SED on internationalism and solidarity with the unsavoury reality of 1989/90. The volume also contained a chapter on the history of foreign labour migration to the GDR.[14]

A post-communist, at times rather uncritical but nonetheless useful account of the GDR's involvement with foreigners is provided in the series of single and joint publications written by Lothar and Eva-Maria Elsner, who in GDR times were involved in the centre for migration studies at Rostock University, which it must be added

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[9] Vijoy Batra, *Studium bei Freunden? Das Ausländerstudium an den Universitäten der Sowjetzone*, Bonn/Berlin, 1962.
[10] Xing-Hu Kou, *Ein Chinese in Bautzen II* and *Wodka in Sektgläsern*, Böblingen, 1990 and 1993 respectively.
[11] Hanns Thomä-Venske, "Notizen zur Situation der Ausländer in der DDR", in: *Zeitschrift für Ausländerrecht und Ausländerpolitik* 10:3 (1990), 125-131. Also Andrzej Stach and Saleh Hussain, *Ausländer in der DDR. Ein Rückblick*, Berlin, 1991.
[12] Irene Runge, *Ausland DDR. Fremdenhaß*, Berlin, 1990.
[13] Schmidt, Ines, "Erlebnisse und Ansichten ausländischer Bürger in Ostdeutschland", in: *BISS public* 1:3 (1991), 76-100.
[14] Marianne Krüger-Potratz, *Anderssein gab es nicht: Ausländer und Minderheiten in der DDR*, Münster, 1991, and also the article in the same volume by Dirk Jasper entitled "Ausländerbeschäftigung in der DDR", 151-190.

focused exclusively on migration to the West.[15] They argued that the GDR could have created a real socialist alternative to the migration policies of the Federal Republic but that this opportunity was squandered by the SED elite and its commando-style application of socialism. While the couple made (at times critical) use of archival material, their line is essentially apologetic of GDR practice and largely dismissive of Western criticisms of GDR policy on foreigners. Indeed, they blamed the increase in right-wing extremism in the new Länder on the eastwards expansion of the "racist and nationalist" policies of the Bonn government along with the forced collapse of the state-run economy.

A detailed overview of how the terms of the bilateral labour contracts signed between the GDR and its foreign partners affected contract workers was attempted in 1995 by Andreas Müggenberg. He argued that 1985/86 marked the point when SED policy on foreign labour moved from an ideological basis, motivated by notions of solidarity, to an economic footing, which envisaged increasing productive output.[16] Sextro's work published the following year covered similar territory, used the same secondary sources but contained no original research.[17]

Many 1990 publications were teleological attempts to explain the rise in violent and open racism in the East. Taking state directives and labour agreements at face value and focusing on the situation in the late 1980s, they have produced an unrepresentative picture of the historical experience of foreigners in the GDR. In more recent years a number of monographs have explored in greater detail particular groups of foreigners within certain environments (such as children's' homes, universities, factories or regions), and have aided in the reconstruction of historical labour and social environments. Feige examines Vietnamese students and workers chiefly in the context of their surveillance at the hands of the Stasi.[18] Uta Rüchel has written two short but well-researched studies on the homes for Namibian and Mozambican children and teenagers in Bellin and Straßfurt,[19] while Freytag examines the life stories of Vietnamese children who worked and studied in the GDR in the 1950s.[20]

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[15] Eva-Maria and Lothar Elsner, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus: über Ausländer und Ausländerpolitik in der DDR, 1949-1990. Darstellung und Dokumente*, Rostock, 1994. This was the final book of many published by the couple on this topic.

[16] Andreas Müggenburg, *Die ausländischen Vertragsarbeitnehmer in der ehemaligen DDR*, Berlin, 1995.

[17] Uli Sextro, *Gestern gebraucht - heute abgeschoben: die innenpolitische Kontroverse um die Vertragsarbeiter der ehemaligen DDR*, Dresden, 1996.

[18] Michael Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR und ihre Beobachtung durch das MfS*, Magdeburg, 1999.

[19] Uta Rüchel, *'...auf deutsche sozialistisch zu denken...' – Mosambikaner in der Schule der Freundschaft*, Magdeburg, 2001, and *'Wir hatten noch nie einen Schwarzen gesehen'. Das Zusammenleben von Deutschen und Namibiern rund um das SWAPO-Kinderheim Bellin, 1979-1990*,

A considerable larger body of work exists on contract workers. In a book and a number of articles that have not attracted the attention they deserve, Riedel treats the experiences of the Algerian workers from a sociological perspective, which allows former workers narrate their own life stories. As she shows, many Algerians recall their East German past fondly.[21] Röhr examines the experience of Polish transit and contract workers in the regions west of the Oder-Neiße,[22] Gruner-Domić has looked mainly at Cuban workers,[23] while Schüle has focused on the experiences of workers from Angola, Mozambique and Vietnam in a Leipzig textile plant.[24] Budde has analysed in great detail the internal procedures drawn up by the Interior Ministry and the Deutsche Volkspolizei (DVP) which were explicitly designed to hinder binational marriages.[25]

While the first Bundestag Enquete Commission on the "appraisal" of GDR history heard no contributions on foreigners (an omission that reflected the general social marginalisation of foreigners in the East in the first few years after the *Wende*), three useful papers were submitted to the second Enquete hearings on "overcoming" the GDR past some years later. These covered the crude economic and political rationale that governed the labour exchanges and how this impacted on the workers, with Döring looking at the Mozambican example, Nguyen van Houng covering the Vietnamese case, while Lindemann deals briefly with the Cuban experience.[26]

Yet, despite these numerous detailed micro studies and monographs, the history of foreigners in the GDR awaits a detailed study. A number of overviews on contract

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Schwerin, 2001. See also: Constance Kenna (ed.), *Die 'DDR-Kinder' von Namibia. Heimkehr in ein fremdes Land*, Göttingen, 1999.

[20] Mirjam Freytag, *Die 'Moritzburger' in Vietnam: Lebenswege nach einem Schul- und Ausbildungsaufenthalt in der DDR. Vermitteln in interkulturellen Beziehungen*, Frankfurt/M, 1998.

[21] Almut Riedel, *Erfahrungen algerischer Arbeitsmigranten in der DDR: '...hatten ooch Chancen, ehrlich!'*, Opladen, 1994, and "Doppelter Sozialstatus, späte Adoleszenz und Protest. Algerische Vertragsarbeiter in der DDR", in: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 53:5 (2001), 76-95.

[22] Rita Röhr, *Hoffnung. Hilfe. Heuchelei. Geschichte des Einsatzes polnischer Arbeitskräfte in Betrieben des DDR-Grenzbezirks Frankfurt/Oder 1966-1991*, Berlin, 2001.

[23] Sandra Gruner-Domić, *Kubanische Arbeitsmigration in die DDR 1978-1989. Das Arbeitsabkommen Kuba-DDR und dessen Realisierung*, Berlin, 1997.

[24] Annegret Schüle, "'Proletarischer Internationalismus' oder 'ökonomischer Vorteil für die DDR'? Mosambikanische, angolanische und vietnamesische Arbeitskräfte im VEB Leipziger Baumwollspinnerei (1980-1989)", in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 42 (2002), 191-210. This volume of the *AfS* also contains articles by Röhr and Gruner-Domić on their respective areas of interest.

[25] Heidrun Budde, *Voyeure im Namen des Sozialismus. Ehe Ost-West nach 1972*, Berlin, 1999.

[26] Hans-Joachim Döring, "Zur Politik der DDR gegenüber der Dritten Welt am Beispiel von Äthiopien und Mosambik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Außenwirtschaftsbeziehungen", 997-1168, Nguyen van Houng, "Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Vietnam und den Vertragsarbeitern aus Vietnam sowie die Situation der Vietnamesen in Deutschland heute", 1301-1363, and Hans Lindemann, "Die Politik der DDR gegenüber der Dritten Welt am Beispiel von Kuba, Nicaragua und Angola sowie die Konsequenzen für das Verhältnis der Bundesrepublik zu diesen Ländern", 1840-1965. All in: Deutscher Bundestag (ed.), *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission 'Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozeß der deutschen Einheit'*, VIII/2, Baden-Baden, 1999.

workers exist but are now dated, or are marred by a deficit of original research.[27] The issue has yet to be incorporated into the broader social and economic history of the GDR and of the history of migration and foreigners' experience in Germany. For example, the GDR is dealt with in a mere page and a half in Ulrich Herbert's otherwise outstanding 442-page study of the history of foreigners in modern German society since 1871.[28]

The *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn* research group of the Potsdam Zentrum für zeithistorische Forschung (ZZF) has attempted to place the subject under more scholarly analysis. While dealing with a much broader range of outsiders (such as post-war communist resettlers from the Sudentenland and adolescent youth), and contexts (such as foreigners' policy in the early Soviet Union), the *Fremd und Fremd-Sein in der DDR* anthology is most disappointing in its coverage of foreigners in the GDR, with many of the contributions having already appeared elsewhere, often simultaneously.[29] Kuck's attempt at an historical overview of foreign contract labour contained no original research.[30]

The area has attracted little attention of English-speaking academics. A recent general study of ethnic minorities in 19th and 20th century Germany provides only a superficial overview, relying on post-*Wende* secondary material, as does an article dealing mainly with foreigners in the new *Länder*.[31] Recently, the article's author, Eva Kolinsky, and Mike Dennis have commenced a research project on the Vietnamese contract workers and a volume is planned.

While relying chiefly on original archival research, this thesis seeks to reappraise foreigners' testimony contained but underutilised in existing secondary literature by applying the methodological and interpretative devices that have been employed so fruitfully in other spheres of GDR research. The greatest, but yet most problematic,

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[27] In the former case, Sandra Gruner-Domić has published three such articles, most recently "Beschäftigung statt Ausbildung. Ausländische Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen in der DDR (1961-1989)", in: Jan Motte et al. (eds), *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik - 50 Jahre Einwanderung. Nachkriegsgeschichte als Migrationsgeschichte*, Frankfurt a.M., 1999, 215-40. Typifying the latter is Susanne Paul, "Inseldasein im fremden Land: der rechtliche und soziale Status der Arbeitsmigranten in der DDR", in: *Zeitschrift des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat*, 7 (1999), 59-67.

[28] Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland. Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge*, München, 2001.

[29] Jan C. Behrends et al. (eds), *Fremd und Fremd-Sein in der DDR. Zu historischen Ursachen der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Ostdeutschland*, Berlin, 2003. See contributions by Rüchel (see fn. 19), Röhr (fn. 22), and Schüle (fn. 24).

[30] Dennis Kuck, "'Für den sozialistischen Aufbau ihrer Heimat'? Ausländische Vertragsarbeiter in der DDR", in: ibid., 271-81.

[31] Panikos Panayi, *Ethnic Minorities in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany. Jews, Gypsies, Poles, Turks and Others*, Harlow, 2000. Also Eva Kolinsky, "Multiculturalism in the making? Non-Germans and civil society in the new Lander", in: *German Politics* 7:3 (1998), 192-214.

source for reconstructing the historical experiences of foreigners in the GDR are the files generated by the numerous organs of the state, party, and mass organisations. This thesis is based on extensive research in the holdings of the Berlin Bundesarchiv, which includes relevant files of the GDR Interior Ministry (in particular the DVP), the State Secretariat (later Ministry) of Higher Education (SHF/MHF), and the State Secretariat for Labour and Wages (SAL). The associated SAPMO holdings were extensively consulted, including the SED *Politbüro*, Central Committee and its departments (in particular the International Department, the Department of Planning and Finance, and the Science Department), the FDGB (including its academy, the *Hochschule der deutschen Gewerkschaften* or HSDG), and the FDJ. The holdings of the GDR Ministry of External Affairs (MfAA) were not consulted as these remain subject to the thirty year rule. This restriction is somewhat alleviated however by the copious copies of MfAA correspondence in the Bundesarchiv holdings.

Research was also undertaken in the Federal Commission for the Records of the State Security Service of the GDR (BStU) at Berlin of files emanating from the central Stasi archive as well as from the regional branches (*Außenstellen*). These consisted mainly of situation and yearly reports, operational files, as well as some reports submitted by East German and foreign unofficial informers on foreigners.[32] They also included the dissertations on foreigners written by MfS trainee officers which are instructive in reconstructing the internal state perceptions of foreigners in the GDR. From 1965 to 1989, fifteen such theses dealing with a broad range of foreigner-related issues were submitted to the Humboldt University Berlin and later the MfS High School of Jurisprudence in Potsdam mainly by MfS officers with operational experience in monitoring foreigners.[33]

Generally, as these archival sources were written by functionaries, they reflect the heterogeneous range of East German perceptions of foreigners. As with all sources, they are tinted with bias, prejudice, and ignorance, resulting from an unquestioned ethnocentricity on the one hand and by the typical blinkered vanguardism and self-righteousness of all political systems based on all-encompassing ideologies on the other. Yet, subjective tints are not objective taints, and despite the obvious problems associated with such material, which apply to its use in any context, it represents the best available source for the critical and historical reconstruction of foreigners' experience.

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[32] I am indebted to Prof. Mike Dennis for sharing some of the BStU material he has gathered with me.
[33] A complete list is included at the end of the bibliography.

No systematic oral research (either with East Germans or foreigners) was carried out for this thesis as the intention of the thesis is to recreate historical contexts rather than to examine contemporary attitudes towards the past. In her research on Algerian contract workers, Riedel has shown that their retrospective interpretation of the GDR can vary immensely and does not always concur with the portrayals contained in some secondary literature. By and large, those who returned to Algeria before 1989 view the GDR in positive terms and believe that it represented a biographical highpoint in terms of employment, earnings, and social interaction. On the other hand, the opinions of those who remained in Germany after the *Wende* are largely dismissive of the GDR, which is contrasted negatively with the united Germany, their current domicile. Thus, present circumstance determines the level of retrospective reworking and blurring of any historical context.[34] This also applies to the testimony of Mozambican workers interviewed by Scherzer in 2002 and their heterogeneous treatment of their GDR biographies reflects the broad diversity found among former East German citizens.[35]

The subject of foreigners in the GDR has been treated largely in isolation from broader historical, political, economic and social contexts. No sooner had the GDR collapsed a long debate on how to historicise East Germany began among historians, politicians and other commentators. This debate produced a number of theoretical and practical methodologies, which have been fruitfully applied in a wide variety of areas of historical writing on the GDR. As these have been documented elsewhere, this section will discuss those of particular relevance for the topic under consideration.[36]

Much of the existing literature subscribes (perhaps unwittingly) to the "de-differentiated" societal modal developed by Sigrid Meuschel. Her one-dimensional and uncritical "power-theoretical analysis" (Lindenberger) purports that the SED succeeded in its aim of taking total control not only of the political and economic spheres, but that of society, destroying its various social sub-systems in the process.[37] This analysis, which overdraws on official party commentaries and reports, sees the party as the sole historical protagonist, and suggests that the everyday social reality encapsulated the verbatim aims of its totalitarian architects. Preoccupied with and over reliant on official announcements and the terms of contract agreements and conditions in the workers'

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[34] Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus", 79.
[35] Scherzer, *Die Fremden.*
[36] See Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR*, London, 2002, esp. chaps. 2 and 3.
[37] Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft. Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR*, Frankfurt a.M., 1992. As critiqued by Thomas Lindenberger in his "Die Diktatur der Grenzen. Zur Einleitung" in his edited volume *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR*, Köln, 1999, 13-44, here 16.

hostels, one could challenge much of the existing literature on foreigners for overestimating the ability of the state to control foreigners' lives and to determine their everyday behaviour.

Jessen has challenged the claim that there was a "shut down" of society in the GDR, proposing that society retained "relative autonomy" from official rule. As he argues, the SED had to accommodate to existing conditions, traditions, and milieus, and in pursuing its political goals actually produced unintended social phenomena. He proposed that the democratisation of society in 1989/90 be matched by the decentralisation and desegregation of perspectives which should lead the historian into the relative autonomous zones of everyday life in factories, rural districts, and even the bureaucracy, and to the realm of "individual and collective biographies of everyday experience of working, shopping, living, and raising children".[38] His latter observation is certainly relevant in this context. The concept of a society "ruled through and through" (*durchherrschte Gesellschaft*), as advocated by Kocka, is more in line with Meuschel's arguments and claims that all social processes in the GDR were in effect moulded by the power of the party but stops short of claiming that this relationship between state and society was total.[39] With their "limits of dictatorship" model, Bessel and Jessen have conjured up an image of a border dispute between two clearly-defined territories.[40]

This thesis tries to avoid such clear-cut divisions between rulers and ruled, but for convenience uses labels such as state, East German public, and foreigners throughout, while recognising and providing ample evidence that all groups were far more heterogeneous than these labels suggest. The approach of *Alltagsgeschichte*, or "the history of everyday life" as advanced by Lüdtke, allows for a greater appreciation of the internal dynamics and social relations of foreigners.[41] Foreigners are in many respects the "ordinary people" referred to by Lüdtke, who have traditionally been excluded from mainstream historical writing owing to the fact that they left little behind in terms of traditional sources. They are similar to the dead generations, whose historical narratives exist only in "blurred or (numerous) encoded forms" such as reports written by the

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[38] Ralph Jessen, "Die Gesellschaft im Staatssozialismus. Problem einer Sozialgeschichte der DDR", in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 21:1 (1995), 96-110.
[39] Jürgen Kocka, "Eine durchherrschte Gesellschaft", in Hartmut Kaelbe et al. (eds), *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, Stuttgart, 1994, 188-213.
[40] Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen, *Die Grenzen der Diktatur: Staat und Gesellschaft in der SBZ/DDR*, Göttingen, 1996.
[41] See Alf Lüdtke's introduction "Was ist und wer treibt Alltagsgeschichte" in his edited volume *Alltagsgeschichte. Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen*, Frankfurt a.M., 1989, 9-47, here 17.

police, teachers and priests, as well as other external observers.[42] Applying Lüdtke's arguments, party and police reports on the problems with foreigners in the GDR can be utilised for information on migrants' experiences. Considering the dearth of accounts and narratives composed by foreigners as well as the fact that the vast majority of the GDR's foreign residents no longer live in Germany, such decoding is essential to retrace a variety of details and singular facets of foreigners' existence in the GDR.

A new methodological and theoretical approach developed by the ZZF project group *Herrschaft* and *Eigen-Sinn*, and outlined by the historian Thomas Lindenberger, advocates a move away from bipolar interpretative models focusing on the "unassailable mechanisms of control and repression" and grassroots autonomy, to an analysis of the reciprocal interdependence between rulers and the ruled.[43] This is possible he argues by modifying and combining the concepts of *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis* (authority as social praxis) and Lüdtke's idea of *Eigen-Sinn* or the "meaning and production of meaning in individual and collective behaviour in social relations". This approach allows for the treatment of a wide range of behaviour, interaction and rule in the GDR without de-legitimising any, stretching to encompass "the overzealousness of the red-hot idealist", opportunists, the outwardly loyal with inner reserve, through to "passive forms of refusal, dissidence, and resistance".[44] The approach recognises no clear division between historical subjects or objects, identifying the need to appreciate the agency of all historical protagonists, at both individual and collective levels, at all tiers of society.[45] Thus, it rejects the notion that society in the GDR was reduced to "just a lingering rump", pointing to the "persistence of vividness and bustle in social relations in the mundane social spheres".[46] Although the party had total claims, its authority was in effect the product of mutual interdependence and interaction between rulers and the ruled at all levels in society. Lindenberger's dual approach, which he argues explains "the subjective dimension of the continual limitation of SED rule",[47] has clear advantages for the topic under examination. His rejection of a clear state/society divide would certainly make sense to many of the foreigners who lived in the GDR, especially as they encountered hostility from the arms of the state and sections of the population. Another major advantage of the synergic use of the two approaches is that it helps us to examine the complex role of GDR and foreign functionaries – especially those at the

[42] Ibid., 19f.
[43] Lindenberger, "Die Diktatur der Grenzen", 23.
[44] Ibid., 23.
[45] Ibid., 14.
[46] Ibid., 36f.
[47] Ibid., 18.

lower organisational strata – in interpreting, translating, and applying the directives and orders of their superiors. Foreign officials such as the factory supervisors, embassy officials, and even security officials, were in regular if not daily contact with foreign workers and students, as were their GDR counterparts, such as the hostel wardens, brigade leaders, factory managers, party and trade union secretaries, and police and state security officers. As was the experience in society in general, local conditions and the personal characters of office holders were instrumental in how rigorously state policy was implemented.

As social protagonists in their own right, possessing a particular set of individual and collective identities, the subjective dimension of foreigners' experience deserves far more attention than it has been given. If it has been observed that the smallest units of society, such as family, personal relationships, rural communities and factory collectives, were capable of negotiating power and authority,[48] then it is not beyond the realm of possibility that foreigners too with their distinct languages, cultures, and networks were similarly empowered. To what extent did foreigners attempt to protect their social realms from unwanted intrusion, and more importantly, how successful were they in this endeavour? If the broader population was empowered by a repertoire "power and control competences" owing to their intrinsic knowledge of the run of the invisible borders of behaviour in the state,[49] it is relevant to ask how this applied to foreigners. While they may not have been at first au fait with the unwritten social and political rules and regulations of the GDR, foreigners may have relied on social skills and strategies acquired during their own particular socialisations and which they viewed as legitimate. At any rate, arriving in the GDR put foreigners on a learning curve. They could benefit from a transfer of experience from longer-serving contract workers or students, and like East Germans, they could model their "own living and working behaviour to compensate for the deficits of dictatorial social management" common in the GDR.[50] As early as 1994 Riedel demonstrated this latter aspect with Algerian contract workers, highlighting how they resorted to conspicuous or ostentatious consumption and benefited from the perception that they possessed Western attributes to compensate for their relative low workplace status in the GDR.[51] Indeed, Neubert's description of GDR society as a "hotchpotch of social devices which had to be acquired in order to live and survive" must have been apparent to foreigners too, especially when

[48] Ibid., 31.
[49] Ibid., 31.
[50] Ibid., 25.
[51] Almut Riedel, *Erfahrungen algerischer Arbeitsmigranten*, 14-16.

he argues that: "In his/her daily behavioural patterns and in the planning of one's biography, it was incumbent on everyone to plumb the limits and possibilities of the socialist standards on offer."[52]

The failure to feature foreigners as subjects in historical writing on the GDR is symptomatic of a much broader problem evident in traditional studies of migration and racism which, Bojadžijev argues, has failed to treat migrants "as protagonists of social struggle". She attributes this to a perception that views minorities and migration as being essentially a problem for the indigenous or "host" society and which thus examines migration in the context of right-wing extremism, racism and xenophobia. This, she criticises, serves only to draw the "presence of migrants, their daily ways of life, their numbers or their external appearance and looks into a causal relationship with racism".[53] Echoing Lüdtke, she attributes this to the paucity of conventional sources produced by the foreigners themselves (such as diaries, photos, newspapers and magazines), and she argues that greater flexibility is required in order to incorporate the subjective experiences of foreigners into the historical narrative. In the same journal, Schüle (who has published on the experiences of contract workers in a Leipzig cotton mill) suggests that future research must afford foreigners the status of "subjects of social action" and should take greater account of their forms of resistance (*Widerständigkeit*) in maintaining their own way of life, the circumvention of state-imposed guidelines, and open protest.[54] While Schüle's proposals are welcome, they subscribe to the outdated view that there was a neat dichotomy between rulers and the ruled. In addition, a focus on forms of protest excludes those foreigners, who may, for whatever reason, have conformed to political conditions in East Germany. Any discussion on the everyday experience of foreigners should not confine itself to the heroics of resistance and opposition but must examine conformity. As Lindenberger points out, tension and conflict in GDR society was not always viewed by social protagonists as political.[55]

The structure of the thesis is in part chronological, in part thematic. The following chapter examines the legal position of foreigners in East Germany and identifies some of the historical continuities in East German police practice towards them. Chapters

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[52] Quoted in Lindenberger, "Die Diktatur der Grenzen", 41.
[53] Manuela Bojadžijev, "Antirassistischer Widerstand von Migrantinnen und Migranten in der Bundesrepublik: Fragen der Geschichtsschreibung", in: *1999 Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 17:1 (2002), 125-52, here 130 and 125.
[54] The term was originally coined by Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk. See Annegret Schüle, "Vertragsarbeiterinnen und -arbeiter in der DDR: 'Gewährleistung des Prinzips der Gleichhaltung und Nichtdiskriminierung'?", in: *1999 Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 17:1 (2002), 80-100, here 97-100.
[55] Lindenberger, "Die Diktatur der Grenzen", 28.

three and four take a separate look at international students and contract workers and are thematic as they are chronological in approach. The former looks at students, focusing on the 1950s and 60s when they represented the main group of foreign residents living in the GDR on temporary residency permits. The latter, looks at contract workers in the final two decades of the GDR.

Chapter five looks at the general social and recreational experiences of international students and workers beyond the university and factory walls and addresses the types of recreational and avocational activity they engaged in. This is followed by chapter six which addresses the issue of contact and binational relationships between foreigners and East Germans, showing how these were confronted by official and public hostility. Chapter seven turns to the subject of racism in the GDR and how this affected the everyday lives of students and workers from the 1950s to the 1990s. Chapter eight, the conclusion, sums up the main arguments of the thesis, addressing these in some wider contexts.

Chapter 2. Socialist law and immigration

In the immediate post-war period in the SBZ (Soviet Zone of Occupation), a number of traditions relating to foreigners were adopted by the new political order. On the one hand were the socialist and communist traditions. After 1945, these were in no way identical, with clear differences in approach and opinion existing among the new KPD/SED elite that was consolidating its power within the SBZ. Western communist émigrés had spent their years in exile working closely with citizens of other countries, and this was especially the case with veterans of the Spanish Civil War. Emigrants to the Soviet Union, however, had experienced at first hand the bloody excesses of Stalinism where nationalist considerations overrode any ideological convictions. This resulted in the disbandment and liquidation of a number of communist parties. The Polish Communist Party serves as the most tragic example, but the KPD also fared terribly with many of its members falling victim to the terror. In addition, older German bureaucratic traditions in dealing with and perceiving foreigners seeped into the organs of the new state. What developed was an unusual mixing of Stalinist and traditional German values towards foreigners which was concealed behind the charade of proletarian internationalism proclaimed by the new state.

The change in attitudes of SED functionaries towards foreigners is easily discernible in the SED's treatment of a group of Spanish political exiles during 1947/48. This saw the ideals of internationalism, nurtured during the Spanish Civil War and later in Western emigration, overcome by the cynical and distrustful perspective engendered in the Soviet Union of the 1930s. The post-war Spanish community in the SBZ was relatively small. Numbering about thirty people in total, most had fallen into Nazi hands after the fall of France in 1940, ending up as forced labourers in Germany, while some had made their own way to the SBZ after the war. By all accounts, their financial situation was precarious and most found it impossible to find employment. As former forced labourers, their previous "employers" had disowned them after the war fearing that their continued employment even on a legal and fair basis would provide enough evidence to the new authorities to confiscate their factories as part of the denazification programme.

Initially, the Spanish could rely on the help provided by some of their former German international brigade comrades. For example, Fritz Johne, appealed to the

Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes (VVN) in Sachsen-Anhalt in late 1947 for a more generous stance towards two Spaniards he knew on the grounds that: "In countries all over the world tens of thousands of German anti-fascists were political emigrants. And it was in Republican Spain that they enjoyed full civil rights and support." Yet, alongside his desire to repay the Spanish for past favours, Johne wrote apprehensively that the Spanish could fall into the hands of the enemy if nothing was done to help them.[1]

Despite the best intentions of some former Spanish Civil War veterans, others were less sympathetic and far more suspicious. Within the SED an atmosphere of mistrust was developing which aimed to rid the party of perceived ideological opposition. The fact that Kurt Schwotzer, another KPD and Spanish Civil War veteran, was now the Central Committee functionary with responsibility for political immigrants did not auger well for foreign political refugees within the Zone.[2] In November 1947, Schwotzer ordered the regional SED leaderships to provide information on the Spaniards living in their areas, detailing their wartime activities and why they failed to move to France in 1945 as requested by the Spanish government in exile.[3] While the archival evidence is scant on the response to this directive, it is unlikely that the arrest of the members of the Leipzig-based *Republican Español Delegation* one month later (on the implausible charge of aiding the flight of German Nazis to fascist Spain by issuing forged passports) was mere coincidence.[4]

Both the deterioration of relations between the former Allies and Tito's break with Stalin exacerbated an already precarious situation. Attending a meeting of the Spanish in July 1948 in his role as liaison officer for the immigrants, Johne had grown extremely cynical of his charges. "Among the Spanish emigration, clarity has to be achieved as soon as possible on who is really a reliable anti-fascist", he argued, in order to separate them from "doubtful elements". Unless they were allowed to integrate and provided with meaningful employment, he believed they would continue to derive money from

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[1] SAPMO-BArch, SgY11/V237/12/196, fo. 188. Johne to LV VVN Sachsen-Anhalt, 1 Nov. 1947.
[2] Kurt Schwotzer (1897-19??). Under the nomme-de-guerre Karl Hess, he led the *Effektivbüro* of the International Brigades, attended officer school and later became cadre officer of the first battalion. In 1936/37, he served as KPD Comintern secretary and as a member of the party's 'Kleine Kommission', played a significant role in the cleansing of the KPD in the Soviet Union. Ironically, he was accused of having Trotskyist sympathies in the mid-1930s, when as manager of the Moscow 'Club of International Workers', he allowed the critical views of some Spanish workers go unchallenged during a meeting. See Schwotzer's handwritten autobiographical notes: in SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/11/v.2821. Also Herbst, Andreas et al. (eds), *Die SED. Geschichte, Organisation, Politik. Ein Handbuch*, Berlin, 1997, 1080.
[3] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/11/v.2821, fo. 179. Schwotzer to SED Länderorganisationen, 28 Oct. 1947.
[4] Ibid., fo. 103. n.d. [ca. Dec. 1947].

"uncontrollable sources" and would invariably degenerate into "adventurers" or "lumpen proletarians".[5]

In February 1949, the SED undertook the final measures to separate the ideological wheat from the chaff and ordered the dissolution of the existing representative body of the Spanish exile community, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Spanische Emigration of the VVN, and the incorporation of politically-reliable members into the party's own Spanish Aid Committee. The proponent of this plan (an unidentified member of the SED's western commission) added:

> Insofar as we are dealing with suspect or unclear elements, I would suggest that they be investigated by the Interior Authority. The list of screened Spanish emigrants in the SBZ is in our possession and could be provided to Comrade Fischer [of the Interior Authority] with some characteristics to aid him in his work.[6]

While the file on the Spanish ends there, the factors of SED policy on foreigners are discernible at this early stage. The political and ideological inheritance of the Soviet Union would play a major role in forming this policy. The police were entrusted with its traditional role of supervising and expelling unwanted foreigners. In terms of personnel, some of the individuals involved in dealing with the Spanish in 1947/48 remained in their posts for a considerable period. Schwotzer was responsible for foreign political immigrants, students and workers until his retirement in the early 1960s, while Fischer of the Interior Ministry (mentioned in the quotation above) remained the key figure within the Hauptabteilung Paß- und Meldewesen (HAPM), the immigration unit of the DVP, until the late 1980s.[7]

Yet, the fact that former refugees were now responsible for immigrants to the GDR did not mean there was unanimity of opinion. Tensions existed between the various state organs involved with foreigners. At times, the diplomatic interests of the MfAA and the political interests of the SED clashed with the security interests of the MfS, which did not always have the support of the DVP. These tensions can be found in the attitudes towards granting asylum to Algerian refugees (mainly from West Germany) in the late 1950s. On 14 November 1958, and with the authority of the GDR government, the MfAA (under former émigré Lothar Bolz) invited Algerians fleeing colonial oppression and to those suffering repression in West Germany to seek asylum in the GDR. The East Germans clearly wished to capitalise on the actions of the Bonn

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[5] Ibid., fo. 263. F. Johne, "Sonderbericht über die Tagung spanischer Emigranten ...", n.d. [ca. 18 July 1948].

[6] Ibid., fo. 301. Westdeutsche Kommission to Dahlem, 15 Feb. 1949.

[7] BArch, DO 1/11/1610, fos. 32, 72, 79, 88, 98. Günter Fischer, (1924-). Joined the DVP on 1 July 1945, SED 1 May 1949. Around 1951 he was made head of the Abt. Paß- und Meldewesen. In 1958 promoted to the rank of Oberst and head of the HAPM.

government, which in support of French policy, had launched a crackdown on the Algerian independence movement, arresting and deporting a number of Algerian student activists.

By the end of the year, 87 Algerians (including 52 students) had responded to the East German appeal. The students were sent directly to Leipzig by the SHF, incensing the HAPM. The latter felt they should have been "cleared", possibly meaning that they should have been processed at the MdI reception camp for refugees at Fürstenwalde, where the other Algerians had been taken. Both the HAPM and the Central Committee's International Department (under former émigré Grete Keilson)[8] were in favour of granting asylum to suitable Algerians applicants. However, another former émigré, Erich Mielke, then just over a year in his position as minister for state security, was of the firm opinion (which went unheeded) that all Algerians be deported back to West Germany.[9]

The legal basis for the GDR's laws on foreigners initially rested on the *Ausländerpolizeiverordnung* (1938), later the *Ausländerverordnung* (1956), and finally the *Ausländergesetz* (1979). However, the latter two were incredibly vague in their remit and ostentatiously gave the impression that GDR law resembled that of other European states. Yet, as was characteristic for the GDR, these pieces of legislation were supplemented by a raft of meticulously detailed classified ordinance issued by the police (DVP) and state security (MfS). Despite the importance of law in determining the legal position of foreigners in all states, the existing literature has failed to deal with this aspect in any great detail.[10] Heidemarie Beyer's article on the development of foreigners' law in the GDR is an exception and it stresses that many of the rights afforded to foreigners in legislation were all but contradicted by the terms of the contract labour agreements.[11] Her analysis requires re-evaluation for a number of reasons. Firstly, while she discusses the importance of Soviet legislation, she fails to mention the German traditions that shaped GDR theory and practice. Secondly, although she acknowledges that the vague public legislation was supported by internal,

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[8] A KPD member since 1925, Keilson was in exile in France and the Soviet Union during the Nazi dictatorship.

[9] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/20/355, fo. 11. Memo of the Abt. für Kaderfragen, 31 Dec. 1958.

[10] Shortly after the Wende, two articles appeared discussing the legal position of contract workers. See Hanns Thomä-Venske, "Notizen zur Situation der Ausländer in der DDR", in: *Zeitschrift für Ausländerrecht und Ausländerpolitik* 10:3 (1990), 125-31 and Eva-Maria Elsner's more apologetic, "Zur Rechtsstellung der ausländischen Arbeitskräfte in der DDR", in: *Zeitschrift für Ausländerrecht und Ausländerpolitik* 10:4 (1990), 157-62.

[11] Heidemarie Beyer, "Entwicklung des Ausländerrechts in der DDR", in: Heßler, Manfred (ed.), *Zwischen Nationalstaat und multikultureller Gesellschaft. Einwanderung und Fremdenfeindlichkeit in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Berlin, 1993, 211-29.

unpublished directives she offers no examination of their content. Thirdly, she tends to take the totalitarian aims of the party as verbatim. This and future chapters will show the practical impossibility of totally controlling all aspects of foreigners' existence completely, due to both the human weaknesses of the system and also the power of foreigners as social individuals.

1945 did not see either the abolition or suspension of the existing German legal system, which had been extensively Nazified under the twelve years of Hitler's rule. There was a desire among the Allies for continuity and a reluctance to nullify all post-1933 legislation and thereby return to the norms of the Weimar Republic. Laws of a clearly fascist nature were excised, while others not exclusively national-socialist in character were purged of Nazi terminology and were no longer applied in the spirit intended by their authors. In the SBZ/GDR, a number of laws enacted after 1933 were retained in a modified form as they were considered to contain "fascist ideas" only in part. As Hilde Benjamin ominously pointed out, this applied to "parts of criminal and civil law as well as certain regulations on the simplification of the legal process, which was the result of earlier liberal and progressive reforms", and to modified legislation that was required to "protect the democratic construction", if only provisionally.[12]

Foreigners' legislation was one such area. While Beyer argues that socialist systems were naturally mistrustful of legislation that distinguished foreigners from native citizens on the grounds that the concept of a special legal status for foreigners was ultimately a product of 19th century bourgeois conceptions,[13] the readiness of the GDR to retain Nazi legislation on foreigners discounts this view.

Until 1954, the DVP operated on the basis of the *Ausländerpolizeiverordnung* (APVO, or Aliens Police Regulation), which was one of several measures undertaken by the Nazis to centralise and standardise police control of foreigners within Germany.[14] The August 1938 legislation represented a further tightening of an already centralised and bureaucratic system responsible for all aspects of emigration, in particular economic migration, which was already in place when the Nazis came to power in 1933.[15]

The APVO stipulated that residency permits should only be issued to foreigners whose "personalities" guaranteed that the "hospitality" of the German state would be respected, and furthermore that the permits could be withdrawn at any time at the sole

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[12] Hilde Benjamin et al., *Zur Geschichte der Rechtspflege der DDR. 1945-1949*, Berlin, 1976, 190f.
[13] Beyer, "Entwicklung", 213.
[14] Ausländerpolizeiverordnung (APVO) of 22 Aug. 1938, *Reichsgesetzblatt* 1938/I, 1053-56.
[15] Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland. Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge*, München, 2001, 126.

discretion of the police.[16] It highlighted nine categories of foreigner whose presence in the Reich was to be prevented. It is important to list the categories here, as similar categories repeatedly surfaced in subsequent internal DVP and MfS documents, albeit minus the national socialist vocabulary. The APVO gave *Kreis* police authorities the power to exclude or deport persons:

- whose behaviour endangered the interests of the national community *[Volksgemeinschaft]*;
- involved in activities abroad which would result in criminal conviction in a German court;
- committed to detention in an institution of any kind either in Germany or abroad, and those ordered to be castrated;
- guilty of transgressions of customs, tax, monopoly or currency laws;
- guilty of breaking the terms of work contracts in Germany;
- guilty of transgressing any of the regulations of the aliens police or registration authorities;
- who make false declarations about his person, family, language, citizenship, racial categorisation, job or financial position to any state body;
- fitting the category of vagrants, tramps, Gypsies or other travellers, and prostitutes;
- unable to guarantee the adequate financial upkeep for themselves or their families.[17]

While the APVO was only formerly repealed in the GDR in 1954, its exclusionary spirit and wording lived on with remarkable consistency in subsequent internal DVP and MfS orders and regulations.[18] In the mid-1960s, a draft police regulation on the "admission, registration and surveillance of foreigners" contained many of the same categories as the APVO, referring to the physically and mentally ill, "asocial elements (vagrants, beggars, prostitutes etc)", and those unlikely to "pursue regular work".[19] Secret ordinance issued in 1977 and 1979 specified particular categories of foreigner who were to be prevented by police from taking up residence in the GDR, namely:

- those hostile to socialist society or unable to adapt to it;
- the mentally or seriously physically ill;
- those of advanced age, incapacitation and without family or friends prepared to provide care and assistance;
- or any other cases where societal or state interests are against permanent residence.[20]

The retention of the APVO on the East German statute books was not simply a formality but served as the basis for everyday dealings between the police and foreigners in the new state. Unlike other policy areas such as administration, political organisation, education and industrial planning, the operations of the HAPM did not

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[16] §§ 1 and 9 of the APVO.

[17] §5 of the 1938 APVO. §7 (5) allowed for 'deportation custody' which has remained a controversial element in German law to the present day.

[18] In the FRG, the APVO remained on the statute books until 1965. See Karin Schönwälder, "'Ist nur Liberalisierung Fortschritt?' Zur Entstehung des ersten Ausländergesetztes der Bundesrepublik", in: Jan Motte et al., *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik. 50 Jahre Einwanderung. Nachkriegsgeschichte als Migrationsgeschichte*, Frankfurt a.M., 1999, 127-44.

[19] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27730. Art. 3.13 of a draft Dienstvorschrift über die Aufnahme, die Erfassung und Kontrolle von Ausländern, n.d. [ca. 1962/3].

[20] Sec. 3.2.2 of DV 041/77 and DV 041/79 des Ministers des Innern und Chef der DVP. Cited in Patrice Poutrus, "Mit strengem Blick. Die sogenannten Polit. Emigranten in den Berichten des MfS", in: Jan. C. Behrends et al. (eds), *Fremd und Fremd-Sein in der DDR. Zu historischen Ursachen der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Ostdeutschland*, Berlin, 2003, 231-50, here 239f.

require Sovietisation – existing traditions were suited to the needs of the new socialist state. Indeed, the retention of NS police policy towards foreigners (albeit in a modified version) is an example of legislative and procedural continuity in a police force that in personal and organisational terms represented an almost unique break with the Nazi past.[21]

Indeed, the first head of the Interior Ministry department responsible for foreigners, Erich Lust, was a key figure in re-establishing old police practice towards foreigners in the SBZ and the GDR. Born in 1910, Lust had not been a member of a political party before 1933. A qualified lawyer, he was employed in this capacity at the DVI from 1946, joining the SED in 1947. On January 1, 1949 he was appointed head of the administrative police (*Verwaltungspolizei*), the forerunner of the *Hauptabteilung Paß- und Meldewesen* (HAPM) or Passport and Registration Branch of the DVP, the main task of which was the surveillance and registration of foreigners and stateless persons.[22] The cadre department of the MdI noted his professional competence, but also his shallow political knowledge, his suspicion of "new working methods", his inclination towards a "false humanism" and a lack of the "necessary toughness" required for his position.[23] Yet, this weakness or lack of resolve cannot be detected in the role he played in the campaigns against the Jehovah's Witnesses in the early 1950s.[24] Indeed, in June 1949 Lust forwarded proposals to the SMAD calling for the expulsion within three months of all foreigners and displaced persons residing in the SBZ without any formal authorisation. As mass deportations failed to materialise, it is likely that the Soviets ignored his plan.[25]

A training manual, published in September 1951, features as the first mission statement of the HAPM.[26] This document claimed that foreigners were not defenceless and without rights, but enjoyed the protection of the state as long as they obeyed the law, which was in effect an affirmation of the hospitality principle contained in the

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[21] As Thomas Lindenberger points out, the DVP represents one of the "rare experiments in history" to construct a police force with people "totally unfamiliar with its work". "Die Deutsche Volkspolizei (1945-1990)", in: Torsten Diedrich et al. (eds), *Im Dienste der Partei. Handbuch der bewaffneten Organe der DDR*, Berlin, 1998, 97-152, here 100f.

[22] Paß- und Meldewesen was originally a Referat in the Abt. Verwaltungspolizei. By January 1951, it had been elevated to the status of a main department or Hauptabteilung.

[23] BArch, DO 1/11/1610, fos. 61-64. Aufstellung der Chefinspekteure der HVDVP, 23 Jan. 1951. Quoted in Thomas Lindenberger, *Volkspolizei. Herrschaftspraxis und öffentliche Ordnung im SED-Staat 1952-1968*, Köln, 2003, 216. Lindenberger adds that Lust was "professionally competent yet unsatisfactorily qualified in political and social terms".

[24] See Hans-Hermann Dirksen, *"'Keine Gnade den Feinden unserer Republik'. Die Verfolgung der Zeugen Jehovas in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1990*, Berlin, 2001, esp. 193, 210, and 233f.

[25] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27870, bundle 1. Lust, Zur Lösung der Frage der Staatenlosen und Ausländer in der SBZ (Entwurf), 28 June 1949.

[26] Hauptverwaltung der DVP, *Das Ausländerwesen. Das Ausweiswesen*, Berlin, 1951, 3 and passim.

APVO. The manual confirmed many of the clauses of the APVO, such as the right of the police to prevent particular people from entering and taking up residence in the GDR, and to take any foreigner into unlimited custody pending deportation without a warrant. Deportation custody remained on the East German statute books until 1979, but continued in practice until 1989. In addition, the manual sought to clarify who the enemy was in the new Cold War order.[27] In the post-war scenario that was divided into the "peace camp" and the "warmongers", the HAPM manual sought to differentiate between foreigners from the East and West. It deemed Eastern European citizens reluctant to return to their homelands as a threat to the GDR, stressing that the "enemies of people's democratic regimes are simultaneously enemies of the antifascist-democratic order of the GDR". Just as dangerous for the security of the state were the citizens of Western states who could be used for espionage and sabotage efforts in the GDR. Evidence that aliens' policy was now going to be closely linked to the political demands of the state was the singling out of former Yugoslav citizens with relatives still living in Yugoslavia, whom the manual feared were being used by the "Tito gang" to pursue criminal acts.[28]

Interestingly, the manual sought to provide a new legal definition of a foreigner and included clear instructions on how to deal with particular types of foreigners, such as dual citizenship holders and stateless persons. Although it reminded police officers that the citizenship law or *Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* of 1913 (constructed on the blood principle of jus sanguinis) was still in force, it attempted to draw distinctions between nationality and citizenship, with Stalin's definition of nationhood accepted as the basis for GDR practice:

> A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.[29]

This definition notwithstanding, the manual stressed that flexibility was required in defining someone's nationality. It claimed for example that German nationality could be awarded to the children of Italian or French parents living in Germany for years and who had "lost all contact with their former nation".[30]

The surveillance and registration of foreigners was also covered by the manual. In the GDR, the bureaucratic apparatus laid down by the APVO was centralised and the police at *Kreis* level were stripped of much of their autonomy to rule on residency

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[27] *Ibid.*, 12-16.
[28] *Ibid.*, 3.
[29] "Marxismus und nationale Frage", in J.W. Stalin, *Werke*, vol. 2, Berlin, 1950, 266-333, here 272. Quoted in: Hauptverwaltung der DVP, *Das Ausländerwesen*, 8.
[30] *Ibid.*, 8.

issues.[31] This not only allowed for greater state control of the movements of foreigners, but also undoubtedly allowed for a more rigorous application of political and ideological agendas. Police at *Kreis* level were responsible for the initial processing of residency permit applications, which could only be granted with the authorisation of the HAPM in Berlin. Every *Kreis* police station was also required to maintain a detailed register of all foreigners and stateless persons living in their districts, as well as a more detailed *Ausländerakte* for each individual foreigner. As the HAPM training manual stressed: "In order to provide a comprehensive overview of the person, this file must serve as a dossier of all correspondence relating to him" as well as contain details on his "reputation, friends, and behaviour".[32] The police were expected to compile these character assessments by means of routine surveillance checks in the foreigner's neighbourhood and workplace.[33]

The enactment of the 1954 *Paß-Gesetz* (Passport Law) finally repealed the APVO in its entirety in the GDR.[34] This new law was primarily designed to restrict movement between the two German states by compelling travellers to present passports and visas at the German-German border. Significantly, it did not include any details on how foreigners were to apply for residency or on whether the police had a duty to register them or to keep them under surveillance. In fact, the law only stated that foreigners who entered or planned to leave the GDR illegally could be expelled. Indeed, the DVP was quick to complain that a legal vacuum had been created, with police chief and interior minister Karl Maron claiming that this represented a considerable threat to the GDR. Maron, himself a wartime emigrant to Denmark and the USSR, believed that the repeal of the APVO had left the police powerless in the face of the increasing numbers of foreigners entering the GDR, many of them taking up residency without any formal police approval. He demanded that the DVP be restored with the traditional police powers over foreigners, especially the authority to expel undesirables "whose personalities offer no guarantee that the principles of the constitution will be upheld".[35]

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[31] Verordnung über die Ausgabe einheitlicher Personalausweise an die Bevölkerung der SBZ of 18 Nov. 1948, *Zentralverordnungsblatt* 1948/I, 548-50, and the accompanying Durchführungsverordnung of 1 Dec. 1948, ibid., 554-56. The subsequent internal DVP Order 142/50 built on this and stated that the decision to grant residency permits for foreigners or stateless persons was the responsibility of the regional police authorities (Landesbehörden der DVP) but required the authorisation of the HAPM. Hauptverwaltung der DVP, *Das Ausländerwesen,* 10 and 16.

[32] Hauptverwaltung der DVP, *Das Ausländerwesen*, 13.

[33] *Ibid.*, 11.

[34] *Paß-Gesetz der DDR* of 15 Sept. 1954, *GBl.* 1954/I, 786. §11 (2) (e) stipulated that the 1937 APVO was being replaced.

[35] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27730. Karl Maron, Vorlage für den Ministerrat, 13 June 1956.

The result of Maron's efforts was the 1956 *Ausländerverordnung* (AusVO, or Aliens Order), which reequipped the police with the arbitrary powers it enjoyed under the APVO, including the authority to take foreign nationals into deportation custody without a court warrant.[36] Foreigners, now defined as those without German citizenship, were once again required to formally apply for permits if they wished to reside in the GDR. The order claimed foreigners could enjoy equality with German citizens if they respected the constitution and "socialist legality". Yet, it empowered police the right to cancel any residency permit, to impose restrictions on the freedom of movement of foreign residents, and to arbitrarily extend these measures to their family members. Under the terms of the order, foreigners could have their permits summarily revoked if they left the state permanently or illegally or if they were found guilty of any crime or offence in the GDR or abroad including, most importantly, transgressions of the GDR's currency, registration and identification regulations.

In 1979, the SED state revised its foreigner legislation for the last time, ostentatiously in order to bring its laws in line with international standards.[37] The background to this law illustrates the attitudes towards foreigners held by the party, police, and political elite. Clearly motivated to increase the authority of the state rather than to enhance the legal standing of foreign residents, the *Politbüro* ordered the state security organs and the MfAA to review existing legislation in late 1978. As a representative of the Central Committee's Department for State and Law remarked, the *Politbüro* wished to see a strengthening of "socialist law" regarding foreigners and "effective measures taken to combat the malevolence [and] hostile conduct of foreigners in the GDR and the negative behaviour of GDR citizens abroad".[38] During the spring of 1979, the interior, justice, foreign and state security ministries as well as the Central Committee's Department for State and Law and Security Department drafted the new law. That text was presented to the SED Secretariat in early June, but only after Honecker gave his prior approval. The wording of the document reflected the policy of the SED to remove all references to a German nationality. Where foreigners were once defined as non-Germans, they were now "non-holders of GDR citizenship",[39] which in effect advanced West Germans from *de facto* to *de jure* foreigners.

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[36] Verordnung über den Aufenthalt von Ausländern im Gebiet der DDR, 14 Dec. 1956, *GBl.* 1957/I, 1-2.
[37] Gesetz über die Gewährung des Aufenthaltes für Ausländer in der DDR and the accompanying Anordnung über den Aufenthalt von Ausländern in der DDR of 28 June 1979. *GBl.* 1979/I, 149f. & 154.
[38] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41611. Fischer, notes on a meeting in the Abt. Sicherheitsfragen des ZK der SED, 18 Apr. 1979.
[39] §1 of the 1956 Verordnung and §2 of the 1979 foreigners' law.

As was the intention, the new law resembled legislation in other Eastern and Western European states. The exclusive power of the police to deport foreigners was abolished and the police were now obliged to seek court orders before taking someone into deportation custody. The law granted foreigners awaiting deportation the right to appeal the decision to a higher court. However, in reality, little changed. Indeed, officials in the Justice Ministry were between two minds on whether foreigners destined for deportation were even entitled to legal representation. Some officials argued that because such cases were of a "special character" involving an "administrative measure" and not a criminal procedure, this made the presence of a solicitor at the deportation hearing unnecessary.[40] Thus, while the law was drafted to give the impression to the outside world that the GDR adhered to international conventions, it effectively strengthened the arbitrary powers of the state.

The Volkskammer approved the law unanimously with no debate on June 28, 1979. Only its constitutional and legal affairs committee was afforded the chance to discuss the document at a closed sitting three days previously which was also attended by the heads of the HAPM. Describing the new law as an "excellent and benevolent" piece of legislation and one in which the deportation procedure met the terms of international conventions, Prof. Dr. Poppe (KB and SED) expressed delight that the all-German "language of fantasy" (*Fabukular*) of the previous aliens' legislation had been eradicated. Indeed, his only criticism was that the law, which in paragraph four stated that non-nationals enjoyed the same rights as GDR citizens, was too generous when compared to international treaties. Dr. Giel of the HAPM responded that this was not the case, pointing out that the paragraph in question represented basic principles and would be made more precise in special legislation,[41] undoubtedly a reference to the internal DVP regulation (*Dienstvorschrift* 041/79) that was issued less than two weeks later to accompany the new law.

The legislation relating to foreigners in the GDR was vague in its remit and therefore offered the police extensive powers over non-nationals. Yet, police involvement with foreigners did not just end at the registration stage or the issuing of residence permits. Rather, the DVP, and increasingly the MfS, attempted to construct a comprehensive network of surveillance and supervision. While this apparatus never achieved the efficiency intended by its operators, it is important to describe both the

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[40] The official claimed this procedure was permitted under §4 (1) of the Gerichtsverfassungsgesetz of 27 Sept. 1974, *GBl.*1974/I, 457.

[41] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41611. Fischer, notes of meeting of Verfassungs- und Rechtsausschusses der Volkskammer on 25 June 1979.

attempts undertaken to monitor foreigners and the rationale used to justify these measures. This requires an analysis of the secret ordinance on *Ausländerkontrolle* issued by these organs, which were far more representative of official thinking on immigration than the laws discussed above. An internal directive brought in to accompany the 1956 *Ausländerverordnung* confirmed the key role of the HAPM in the "permanent control of foreigners residing in the GDR".[42] Foreigners were viewed in extreme terms: either as guests worthy of state protection or as essentially dissident elements, capable of undermining the efforts of the "working people of the GDR" to construct socialism. The text argued (and no doubt exaggerated) that in "hundreds of cases" they had participated in the "subversive activities" of the enemy. Thus, HAPM officers were instructed to "focus on operational work and to take preventative action in the struggle against crime by organising circumspect, well-organised investigative work to protect the GDR in the area of immigration".[43]

The bureaucratic device upon which the surveillance of foreigners rested was the foreigners' file or *Ausländerpersonalakte*, which was to be "opened for every foreigner in possession of a residency permit or registered stateless individual regardless of whether his period of stay is caused by professional or private reasons". If a foreigner moved to another district in the state, the local police forwarded his file to their counterparts at his new address. The file was to contain not only information on the individual concerned but also on his family and relations and was to be supplemented by regular reports or *Ermittlungsberichte* compiled by the ABVs (or local police plenipotentiaries) in the districts where foreigners resided.[44] While most information could be gathered from normal police work – such as applications to travel to the West or incident reports – the DVP realised that broader social support was needed to enhance the files. Thus, HAPM officers relied heavily on the eyes and ears of the ABVs who, from as early as 1954, were involved in compiling and filing "character assessments" on all foreigners residing in their precincts.[45] The frequency of reporting varied – half-yearly for foreigners from non-socialist countries, and yearly for citizens of the socialist bloc as well as stateless persons.[46] The ABVs usually obtained their

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[42] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27730. Instruktion Nr. 1 des Leiters der HAPM zum Befehl des Chefs der DVP Nr. /57, n.d. [ca. Apr. 1957].
[43] Ibid., 1f.
[44] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27730. Instruktion Nr. 1, n.d. [ca. Apr. 1957], 5.
[45] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27870. VPKA Bautzen to HAPM, 16 Feb. 1957.
[46] BArch, DO 1/8.0/32546. This procedure was set out in police *Dienstvorschrift* IX/2 of 1 Mar. 1965. In 1979 the requirement to file reports on citizens from socialist countries was dropped.

information from the neighbours and friends of foreigners, as well as factory managers, local government officials and party functionaries who knew them.

As the number of foreigners rose throughout the 1960s and 1970s the procedure of maintaining individual files on foreigners and compiling regular reports on them came under strain. A conference of police immigration officials from across the GDR held in May 1978 discussed some of the problems in maintaining such an extensive web of surveillance, indicating that executing regulations was always more difficult than formulating them. Clearly, the regulations were overambitious and not taken seriously by all police officers. As an officer from the BDVP Frankfurt/Oder explained in detail, the police were expected to gather a considerable amount of information on foreigners under the following headings:

> Personal details; details of jobs and workplace (when commenced, entrusted with which duties, whether carried out, level of access to confidential material, quality of the work); societal behaviour and political attitudes, members and functionaries of which organisations? Expression of political attitudes (involvement in factory, residential area), reactions to political events, discussions on local and societal problems or disinterest as the case may be; intelligence level; associates; schooling, qualifications, recreational interests; way of life, family situation, alcohol; relationship with spouse; raising of children; Are there family problems which can be traced back to these? Information on possessions and income (car, valuable industry products, bungalows or house owner), where are these located? Has the person possession of hard currency, information on purchases at Intershops? Does expenditure correspond to available income? Expertise such as foreign languages, wireless operator, flying license; existence of contacts with other foreigners or citizens of the GDR (befriended with whom, personal details); maintenance of socialist law and morals, work ethic, work discipline; details on travel, departures and arrivals as well as trips within the GDR; cause and reasons for regular absence from domicile; contacts with native embassy, evidence of visits to embassy; have diplomatic vehicles been observed in the residential area? Maintenance of validity and timely extension of long or short-term residency permit; behavioural attitudes during contact with state organs of the GDR, including the security organs; important findings beyond these targets, criminal offences and other legal infringements.

Yet, the same officer had to admit that successful implementation of this police duty floundered on the disinterest of his subordinates, arguing that only "permanent and precise ideological work" could guarantee against the widespread "underestimation of the monitoring of foreigners".[47] Other areas reported similar trends. Officers from the VPKA and BDVP Erfurt pointed out that many police officers produced routine reports that were of "minor significance". Another problem was the frequency at which foreigners changed address, as well the frequent turnover of ABV personnel, which prevented consistent surveillance.[48] In an effort to hammer home the importance of

[47] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41619. BDVP Frankfurt, Diskussionsbeitrag zum Erfahrungsaustausch über die Kontrolle von Ausländern am 4. Mai 1978, 5f.
[48] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41619. VPKA and BDVP Erfurt, Diskussionsbeiträge zum Erfahrungsaustausch über die Kontrolle von Ausländern am 4. Mai 1978.

maintaining the regulations, a senior HAPM officer reminded the meeting that: "Every file is an individual – a personality."[49]

In addition to the individual files on foreigners kept by local police, card indexes of all foreigners were maintained in the relevant central, regional and county police headquarters.[50] This index was mechanised in the 1960s by the introduction of a card punching system. By the 1980s, the central register of foreigners residing in the GDR (and maintained by the BPAA) contained over 100,000 entries, as well as 300,000 additional names in a secondary register. Each week, the security organs (including MfS, police and customs) made an average of 60 requests for information from this database.[51]

In the 1970s, the state's language towards foreigners sharpened, reflected not only in public laws but also in the internal ordinance issued by the minister of the interior and DVP chief. Regulation 041/79 aimed to guarantee the "uniform organisation of the regime governing aliens". A document of considerable length, it resembled the APVO in that it specified certain groups that were to be excluded from the GDR. Budde's assertion that the regulation granted foreigners a certain level of equality in that they were "with certainty placed under the same levels of surveillance if not more than GDR citizens" is somewhat misleading as the new regulation abolished the requirement for the police to maintain files and compile character reports on foreigners from socialist countries.[52] Yet, the order instructed the police to keep all other foreigners "under permanent supervision" at all times, exempting only the elderly, infirmed and those who were considered to be of a genuinely loyal disposition towards the state.

By the mid-1970s, the GDR was recognised by over 100 countries, had joined the UN, had by and large normalised its relations with the Federal Republic, and had signed up to the Helsinki Declaration on human rights. In its desire to develop its international profile, the GDR sought to attract more foreign visitors to the country. The numbers of foreign students and trainees increased, as did the numbers of tourists from the West and East. In addition, with labour exchange agreements in operation with Hungary, Poland and Algeria, foreign contract workers became a permanent feature in most industrial towns and cities during the 1970s. The MfS liked to praise the GDR as a

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[49] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41619. Grundsätzliche Bemerkungen zum Abschluß des Erfahrungsaustausches, n.d. [ca. 4 May 1978].
[50] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27730. Instruktion Nr. 1 des Leiters der HAPM zum Befehl des Chefs der DVP Nr. /57, n.d. [ca. Apr. 1957], 5-8.
[51] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41619. Führung der Zentralkartei über Ausländer im BPAA, 22 May 1984.
[52] Heidrun Budde, *Voyeure*, 36ff. Appendix five of *Dientsvorschrift* 041/79 defined the eleven socialist countries as: Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, North Korea, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, the USSR, Vietnam and Yugoslavia.

generous provider of hospitality, a host of international meetings, an esteemed foreign-trade partner, as well as being a "cosmopolitan cultural and sporting attraction" for ever-increasing numbers of visitors and students.[53]

It was not until the 1970s that the MfS took a major role in the surveillance of foreigners. Arguably, there was little need for it to do so earlier, given the existence and work of the HAPM. Apart from some hints of operational rivalry over the surveillance of Western military deserters in Bautzen in the mid-1950s,[54] cooperation between both agencies was always close knit. Indeed, from 1957 to 1960, a critical phase in the development of foreigner policy in the GDR owing to the increase in the numbers of foreign students, trainees and refugees, an MfS general was seconded as deputy head of the HAPM.[55] As an MfS officer gratefully acknowledged in 1984, the HAPM provided a constant supply of information that the MfS otherwise could only obtain "through considerable political-operational effort".[56]

As Gieseke demonstrates, the relative opening up of the GDR in the 1970s fuelled the perennial paranoia of an organisation which believed that the more open and accepted the GDR became the more perverse and clandestine the activities of the Western intelligence services would develop.[57] Political terror and open oppression, already in decline since the construction of the Berlin Wall, was dropped in favour of more covert forms of political control and surveillance. This tendency is clearly illustrated by the increased interest of the MfS in foreigners living in the GDR, typified in Mielke's introduction to Order 3/81 on the surveillance of foreigners:

> Imperialist secret services and other hostile centres as well as anti-détente powers attempt to abuse the increasing number of foreigners residing in the GDR to organise subversive activities which target the GDR and the other socialist states as well as the GDR's relations with non-socialist countries.[58]

The interest of the MfS in foreigners changed in emphasis over time, moving from the political, to the economic, to the comprehensive. In the 1950s and 1960s, its remit

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[53] See BStU, ZA, BdL, 5566. E. Mielke, Befehl 12/76 zur Bildung einer nichtstrukturellen Arbeitsgruppe Ausländer, 1 June 1976; BStU, ZA, BdL, 6694. Mielke, Befehl 3/81 zur weiteren Qualifizierung der politisch-operativen Sicherung der sich ständig oder zeitweilig in der DDR aufhaltenden Ausländer, 25 Feb. 1981.

[54] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27870. VPKA Bautzen to HAPM, 16 Feb. 1957. In 1954 in Bautzen, the MfS stopped the local ABV from compiling character reports on the NATO deserters living in the town on the grounds that it was intimidating the refugees. The HAPM later ordered the ABV to resume his duties.

[55] The officer was Willi Schläwicke (b. 1917). http://www.bstu.de/mfs/werwar/rst.htm (accessed 19 Apr. 2003).

[56] BStU, JHS, 20131, fo. 36. Steffen Rüdiger, *Die politisch-operative Bearbeitung von übersiedlungsersuchenden Ausländern/Staatenlosen*, 30 Mar. 1984.

[57] Jens Gieseke, *Mielke-Konzern. Die Geschichte der Stasi 1945-1990*, Stuttgart, 2001, 86ff.

[58] BStU, ZA, BdL, 6694. Mielke, Befehl 3/81 zur weiteren Qualifizierung der politisch-operativen Sicherung der sich ständig oder zeitweilig in der DDR aufhaltenden Ausländer, 25 Feb. 1981. His introduction is almost identical in wording to that of Order 12/76, which it replaced.

was confined to foreigners of political significance, such as deserters from NATO armies who sought asylum in the GDR,[59] as well as individual foreigners considered a threat to state security. The appearance of two MfS dissertations in the mid-1960s dealing with crime and the recruitment of "unofficial informers" among the foreigners living in the GDR signalled the growing interest of the Ministry in the area.[60] Yet, it was only in 1968 that the Stasi began to extend comprehensive surveillance over a particular group of non-military foreigners. The encroachment of the MfS into this new territory reflected the general trend taking place within the organisation, which from the early 1960s was developing into a "ramified, barely manageable security bureaucracy with multifaceted tasks, huge numbers of personnel and a network of informants, spies and agents".[61] With ever-increasing budgets and staff numbers, the MfS moved beyond dealing exclusively with NATO army deserters and asylum applicants, to taking greater interest in the role foreigners played within GDR society in general.

The arrival of the first major cohort of contract workers (from Hungary in November 1967), and possibly the events of Prague in early 1968, resulted in the expansion of MfS surveillance of foreigners. In May 1968, six months after the arrival of the first contingent of workers, Mielke ordered all units of the Stasi to ensure the "comprehensive political-operational safeguarding of the skilled personnel [...] against any hostile and negative influences". This was justified on the grounds that the workers represented a natural object in the "enemy's attempts" to undermine the state politically and economically. Overall responsibility for the "security" of the contract workers was placed in the hands of Main Department XVIII, which was ordered to maintain permanent contact with organisations such as the FDGB, SAL, as well as factory management. Even at this early stage, the MfS had its eye on social interaction, which it feared would undermine the economic goals of the labour-transfer agreements. Thus, order 18/68 demanded the "permanent" monitoring of social contact between Hungarians and GDR citizens using "official and unofficial" means and "operational" investigations in cases of contact between Hungarians and East Germans deemed

[59] BArch, DO 1/34.0/29099. The deserters were processed at the Heim der Internationalen Solidarität in Bautzen, established in 1953. By 26 Nov. 1957, 125 deserters from NATO armies had passed through it.
[60] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, *Einige Probleme der Verhütung von Staatsverbrechen, die durch in der DDR lebende Ausländer nichtsozialistischer Staaten begangen werden können*, 5 Dec. 1965; and BStU, JHS, MF, 540. Theo Dudek, *Einige Besonderheiten bei der Werbung von operativ geeigneten Ausländern mit ständigem Wohnsitz in der DDR für die Abwehrarbeit des MfS*, n.d. [ca. 1966/67].
[61] Gieseke, *Mielke-Konzern*, 69.

negative or provocative in character or between Hungarians and other foreigners from non-socialist countries.[62]

The desire to control the other groups of foreigners residing in the GDR was expressed in a subsequent order issued in August of the same year, in which Mielke instructed all units of his Ministry to assist all state ministries and mass organisations in the "safeguarding and monitoring" of all non-GDR citizens. The four aims of MfS policy towards foreigners were defined as firstly, to "protect" all groups and to take measures if enemy contact was evident; secondly, to register all trips to West Berlin and the Federal Republic; thirdly, to record all personal and employment details; and fourthly, to keep the party and state organs informed of all relevant developments.[63]

The MfS Working Group for Foreigners (AGA) was established in June 1976 to facilitate the "central coordination of political-ideological work in the prevention of abuse of residency by foreigners in the GDR".[64] Composed of representatives of up to fifteen main departments and sub-departments of the ministry, the new coordination body had a number of tasks, namely:

- the creation of a central overview of the foreigner problem [sic] and the development of suggestions for a unified MfS procedure on work on foreigners;
- combating enemy activities by focusing on the activities of the enemy with foreigners in the GDR and the FRG;
- monitoring developments abroad that might be of interest for the political-operative security of foreigners in the GDR;
- developing methods for the recruitment and deployment of unofficial operatives;
- developing guidelines on the cooperation with state, party and mass organisations;
- [and] developing guidelines on inter-state cooperation in the area of foreigners.[65]

In 1981, Order 3/81 reorganised MfS surveillance structures. The AGA was subsumed under Main Department II (counter-intelligence). At all regional MfS offices, the new *Referate* II/5 were responsible for maintaining an overview of foreigners residing in their areas. Operational cooperation with the DVP was formalised, with MfS agents now instructed to assist the police in the permanent control of foreigners outlined under regulation 041/79.[66] The operational scope of the MfS was extensive, encompassing on the one hand criminal activities such as the drugs trade, terrorist/radical activity, and spying carried out by foreigners. On the other hand, and of

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[62] BStU, ZA, BdL, 1313. Erich Mielke, Befehl 18/68 zum politisch-operativen Absicherung der in den verschiedensten Bereichen der Volkswirtschaft der DDR eingesetzten Fachkräfte aus dem sozialistischen Ausland, 30 May 1968. The order confirmed the contents of an earlier communication from Mielke to his regional subordinates, See BStU, ZA, BdL, 4133. Erich Mielke to BVfS, 6 Dec. 1967.

[63] BStU, ZA, BdL, 2479. E. Mielke, Dienstanweisung 4/68 zur Erhöhung der Effektivität der operativen Absicherung und Kontrolle der im Gebiet der DDR wohnhaften Ausländer und Staatenlosen, 30 Aug. 1968.

[64] BStU, ZA, BdL, 5566, fo. 2. E. Mielke, Befehl 12/76, see fn. 53.

[65] Ibid., fos. 3f.

[66] BStU, ZA, BdL, 6694. Mielke, Befehl 3/81, see fn. 53.

particular relevance to this thesis, the Stasi was also interested in keeping the social contacts of foreigners with East Germans under surveillance. Thus, the order instructed units to identify and monitor foreigners who on the grounds of their position or "attitudes or characteristics" had developed contacts with "hostile-negative" or "easily-led" GDR citizens. In such cases, the MfS was keen to establish who was the negative influence, the foreigner or the GDR citizen.

Covert monitoring of mail posted to foreigners from abroad was a service provided by the MfS department M. Just how effective this was is unclear. In 1982, the MfS in Magdeburg claimed that there was "permanent mail surveillance" in the student hostels, but a year later claimed these measures had either stopped or had become superficial.[67]

Behind the façade of proletarian internationalism and international solidarity, the GDR authorities continued and built upon some older German police traditions in the treatment of foreigners. The climate of paranoia and suspicion that had developed within the communist movement during the Stalin years was also influential. Foreigners were seen as a threat, capable of disrupting political and social life in the GDR. As such, the police and MfS sought to maintain permanent control (a largely unobtainable goal) over foreign residents and relied heavily on the language and procedures established by their forerunners. As such, *Ausländerkontrolle* represents an area of surprising historical continuity. Yet, the history of foreigners' experience in East Germany cannot be sufficiently understood by focussing on the systems of rule, surveillance, and coercion and it would be wrong to assume that the DVP and MfS determined all aspects of foreigners' lives. It is to the ability of foreigners to circumvent prescribed forms of activity and to configure their own lifestyles that we now turn.

[67] BStU, ASt Magdeburg, Abt. XX, 4143, fos. 142 and 90. Abt. XX, Stand und Ergebnisse der politisch-operativen Sicherung, 31 Aug. 1983 and 19 Sept. 1984.

Chapter 3. Studying in the GDR

Compared to the contract workers of the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviet troops, and political refugees, the history of international students in the GDR has been largely ignored in post-*Wende* research. The opposite was the case before 1989 when both German states were in competition in the area of providing third level education to international students.[1] From 1951 to 1989, between 64,000 and 78,400 foreign students from over 126 states graduated from third-level institutions in the GDR, which amounted to three percent of the total graduate output in the same period.[2] Diagram 2 provides an overview of the growth in the numbers of international students from 1951 to 1989. Naturally, their presence on the college campus was more apparent: by 1989, for example, Berlin's Humboldt University had 1,200 foreign students from 80 countries, representing ten percent of the total student population in the university.[3]

Presented invariably as an expression of socialist solidarity and proletarian internationalism by the GDR authorities, international studies also served more straightforward diplomatic, political, and foreign trade goals. This was increasingly reflected in the expanding heterogeneity of the international student body. Not all foreign students came from the socialist states, nor were all students from the non-socialist world necessarily communist sympathisers. In an effort to promote its image internationally, the GDR enabled students from almost every country in the world to study at its universities. In 1988, over 13,400 students from 126 countries were enrolled in GDR institutions (including four students from the Vatican and 103 from the USA).

Unlike previous accounts, this chapter focuses on the experiences of international students rather than on the development of international studies. It looks at four areas, namely acculturation, academic performance, diet and religion, and political opinions. The period under examination encompasses the first two decades of the GDR. The

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[1] The last pre-*Wende* overview of foreigners' studies in the GDR appeared in 1987. See: Roland Wiedmann, "Strukturen des Ausländerstudiums in der DDR", in: Hans F. Illy et al. (eds), *Studenten aus der Dritten Welt in beiden deutschen Staaten*, Berlin, 1987, 67-99. For a more recent overview for the 1970s and 1980s, see Andrea Schmelz, "Bildungsmigration und Interkulturalität. Ausländische Studierende aus afrikanischen und asiatischen Ländern in Ostdeutschland vor und nach 1989", in: *DA* 39:1 (2005), 84-91.

[2] The lower figure is based on fragmentary SHF/MHF statistics and assumes that 29.3 percent of the foreign student body graduated every year (from 1950 to 1965, the average was 22.3 percent; from 1977 to 1988, 29.3 percent). The figure is based on the claim that 71,400 graduated up to 1988. (Quoted without references in Andreas Herbst et al. (eds), *So funktionierte die DDR*, Reinbeck, 1994, 675.) On top of this comes the students who graduated in 1988 and 1989.

[3] Irene Runge, *Ausland DDR. Fremdenhaß*, Berlin, 1990, 107.

reasons for this focus are threefold. Firstly, before the arrival of foreign workers in the late 1960s, foreign students represented the largest group of foreigners admitted to the GDR on a temporary basis (as opposed to those with permanent residency or the Soviet troops). Secondly, many of the principles of GDR policy towards foreigners were formulated during these early years and largely in response to the state's experience with foreign students. Thirdly, many of the particular collective and individual experiences of foreign students with GDR state and society are instructive in understanding the experiences of contract workers in the following two decades. Despite their heterogeneity, foreign students shared many common experiences owing to their status, allowing for the development of a sense of solidarity that transcended cultural distinctions.

After 1945, foreign students were slow in returning to the universities of the SBZ. The earliest reference to a foreign student was a citizen from country "562" studying medicine at Leipzig University in 1946.[4] According to the most extensive GDR account of international studies, in March 1947, the regional government in Saxony issued an order declaring the equality of foreign with German students, "a ruling" which the article claimed was "inconceivable in bourgeois Germany".[5] However this apparent eagerness to open the doors of East German universities to international students was short lived and was effectively halted by the SED leadership in late December 1949, which ruled that "foreign students can only study here with us if a permit has been issued by the Central Committee of the relevant brother party and when this has been confirmed by the Secretariat of the [SED] *Politbüro*".[6]

A group of eleven Nigerians were the first foreign students admitted to a GDR university. Unable to return home after attending the 1951 World Festival of Youth in Berlin, they enrolled at the workers' and peasants' faculty (ABF) of Leipzig University.[7] Some Eastern European but predominantly North Korean students followed, and from the ABF emerged the Institute for International Studies (*Institut für Ausländerstudium*) in 1956, renamed the Herder Institute (HI) in June 1961. The HI

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[4] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/986. The author has been unable to establish the identity of country 562, but as country 563 was Vietnam, it is possible that the previous code referred to French Indochina.
[5] Erhard Hexelschneider, "Das Herder-Institut der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig", in: *Deutsche Außenpolitik*, 26:11 (1981), 101-109, here 104. He based this information on Akte C 2/22, Bd. 1 (1904-1912), fo. 55, of the KMU Archives. This author has been unable to find any reference to this Anordnung in the Landesregierungsblätter of the period.
[6] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/698, fos. 8ff. Beschluß der Kl. Sekretariat des ZK der SED, 28 Dec. 1949. Abt. Kultur und Erziehung of the SED PV to the Kulturabteilungen der Landesvorstände, 4 Jan. 1950 and also the Hauptabteilung Hochschulen und wiss. Einrichtungen of the Min. für Volksbildung to the Volksbildungsministern der Ländern, 9 Jan. 1950.
[7] Hexelschneider, "Das Herder-Institut", 102.

provided intensive language and academic preparation, which lasted from ten months to three years depending on an individual student's performance. Upon leaving the HI, students then began their chosen course of study at colleges. By the mid-1960s, international students were enrolled at 27 universities and 25 technical and engineering colleges across the GDR. In addition, non-academic institutions, such as the FDGB's academy (*Hochschule der deutschen Gewerkschaften*, HSDG) located at Bernau, enrolled foreign trade union activists.

From very early on it was clear that the purpose of international studies was not just ideological but was closely linked to economic and diplomatic interests. Initially, most students had come to study via the so-called "*Parteiweg*" or party channels. In 1956, officials in the Central Committee's International Department opposed a proposed increase in the numbers of North Korean students and apprentices on the grounds that it was a "great extra financial burden" as well as being of limited propaganda value to the GDR. As it stood, North Koreans made up 37 percent of the total number of international students. The report concluded that: "In admitting foreign students we have to find the right balance and work towards political goals."[8] Desperate for international recognition, the GDR used international studies to woo foreign governments into signing cultural exchange or trade agreements. In the late 1950s, diplomatic efforts were focused on Arab countries and India, before expanding to the so-called "young nation states" of Asia and Africa in the 1960s. This diplomatic focus was reflected in the increase of students from those countries (see diagram 3). The number of international students grew rapidly from approximately 1,800 in 1960 to 4,700 in 1970 and in 1968 alone, 1,200 new students were enrolled.[9] It is important to stress that the GDR generally did not accept individual applications for college places and prospective students were required to apply through their own governments. Another defining and unique feature of the system of international studies in the GDR was the fact that the state provided scholarships to almost all its international students, which in the 1960s was valued at 280 marks per month. In October 1962, the State Secretariat for Higher and Vocational Education estimated that international studies cost

[8] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/640, fos. 53f. Berufsausbildung der koreanischern Kinder, 29 Nov. 1956.
[9] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht über die Situation am Herder-Institut Leipzig, n.d. [5 Feb. 1969].

the GDR 22.4 million marks per annum, which represented a sum of 7,740 marks per student.[10]

There was also a hope that international studies would help increase East German exports. In 1956, Wolfgang Hartmann, a leading functionary in the State Secretariat for Higher Education, described international students as "the German economy's customers of tomorrow and the precursors of their nation's friendship with the German people".[11] Research carried out in 1963 at the SED's Institute of Social Sciences recommended that the GDR increase the "effectiveness" of international studies and of factory-based training programmes. More coordination was needed to ensure that foreigners took courses of study that would allow for the development of "future export markets in goods, licences and documentation which are in keeping with the export structure of the GDR national economy". In other words, the economic interests of the GDR were best served in the production of technical school rather than university graduates.[12]

Until the establishment of the Committee for International Student Affairs (*Komitee für Angelegenheiten ausländischer Studierender* or KAS) in 1967, there was no central coordination of international studies. Previously, a polycratic myriad of up to ten state ministries, party departments and mass organisations were all involved in foreign student affairs. This situation contributed in no small part to the rather chaotic conditions experienced by foreign students during the 1950s and 60s.

Apart from the rigours of academic life, international students faced particular challenges resulting from the specific political and social environment in the GDR. The problems encountered by foreign students in adjusting to the political climate in the GDR were more of a concern to functionaries than the challenges of cultural and social acculturation. Many reports dwelled on the difficulty of foreign students in reconciling their utopian preconceptions of socialism with the GDR variety. In 1963, the HI reported on the difficulties students had in dealing with the "new world" of the GDR and its inherent contradictions: "Almost all of them are confronted with an environment that to some degree forces them to change their existing opinions, expectations and

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[10] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1936/1. Aufstellung der Kosten für ein Jahr für das Studium der ausl. Studierenden, 8 Oct. 1962. However, in the 1980s the GDR began to charge certain countries for college places.

[11] Wolfgang Hartmann, "Die deutsche Wissenschaft und das Ausland", in: *Deutsche Außenpolitik* 1:6 (1956), 503-512.

[12] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/468/1. Information zu Fragen der Ausbildung afrikanischer Kader in der DDR, 27 Nov. 1963.

usual behaviour."[13] The Berlin Institute for Economics (IfÖ) viewed matters similarly, arguing that most students arrived with "utopian and idealised expectations of socialism", which were not to be found "in our reality". Yet, it felt that the particular political situation in Berlin helped in this "clarification process".[14]

Ironically, many of these utopian preconceptions were encouraged by the way the GDR marketed itself abroad, and in particular how international studies was advertised to prospective students. Promotional literature on international studies praised conditions in the GDR, and in particular student accommodation. Yet it was precisely in the area of student housing that the GDR failed so miserably, particularly in the 1960s. Since the early 1950s foreign students were housed in hostels, where conditions generally fell far short of the standards set by the authorities. This served to undermine the propagation of a positive GDR image abroad which was one of the major aims of international studies. As one prominent but critical HI functionary put it in 1967, it was possible "to cause a lot of diplomatic and trade difficulties with the kind of accommodation provided for foreign citizens [and] we are doing precisely that".[15]

The inherent inability of the planned socialist economy to achieve its own goals left many students, including Germans, living in less-than-satisfactory conditions. Hastily-conceived diplomatic initiatives exacerbated this problem and the GDR was perennially unable to house the ever-increasing numbers of new foreign students in conditions similar to those enjoyed by East German students. The situation often reached crisis point: in 1960, for example, the senate of the Karl Marx University (KMU) in Leipzig rejected government plans to take on an additional six to seven hundred international students, pointing out that it had secured only 120 of the 1,800 college places required for the forthcoming academic year's intake of new German students.[16] Five years later, a delegation of professors from the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena protested to Kurt Hager directly at the deplorable living conditions of foreign students which were set to deteriorate following the decision of the MfAA to enrol hundreds of new students from North Vietnam.[17] Indeed, by issuing a directive in 1966 calling for foreigners'

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[13] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/467. Über die Erziehungsarbeit am Herder-Institut der KMU, 5 Oct. 1963, 4.
[14] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/467. Inhalt, Formen und Methoden der Propagierung der marxistisch-leninistischen Theorie unter den ausländischen Studenten und ihre Heranführung an die sozialistische Wirklichkeit, n.d. [ca. Oct. 1963], 6.
[15] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht an die SED-KL Dresden-Land über Mängel in unserer Einrichtung, 10 July 1968, 3.
[16] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1936/1. Verwaltungsdirektors der KMU to the SHF, 15 July 1960.
[17] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/17. Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit Prof. Dr. F. Bolck, Prof. Dr. Märtin und Gen. Lindenlaub, 21 July 1965.

accommodation to meet GDR norms, the SHF implicitly accepted that international students were discriminated against when it came to accommodation.[18]

At the KMU, home to the largest population of foreign students and the HI, the situation was precarious. Much of the building stock dated from the previous century and lacked showers and functioning heating systems. In the main international students' hostel in 1962, corridors remained unlit for a half a year owing to the lack of light bulbs. As one group of students pointed out, that autumn while the heating system was out of order for two months, residents were expected to discuss the major political issues of the day such as the Cuban crisis and important SED documents. Indeed, it was necessary to complain directly to the SED Central Committee to get even the heating repaired.[19] Neither a 1964 recommendation by the Volkskammer foreign affairs committee that the existing HI building and hostel be demolished and rebuilt nor an instruction from the Council of Ministers to the mayor of Leipzig to provide the funds for renovation had any effect.[20] In 1968, a report pointed out that the college's 1,300 international students were housed in poorer conditions than East German students. Student hostels were overcrowded, exacerbated by the fact that many of the residents had married and were now sharing their rooms with their spouses and children. There were 32 children living in the international student hostels in the city, with one couple having five children. It was a situation undermining the whole purpose of international studies, as the HI argued:

> We have to admit that the foreign students of the KMU are in no way accommodated in conditions worthy of socialism. This applies to the capacity as well as the conditions of the dorms. Only when we can at least solve one of the many problems can we reach a new quality in the political-ideological and humanist-moral development of the foreign students at the university.[21]

Yet, in many cases, the poor conditions were clearly a result of a conscious policy of neglect and discrimination towards foreigners by low-level functionaries. African participants at the first course for international students at the HSDG (then located in Leipzig) endured terrible conditions in their decrepit hostel. Bathrooms were not cleaned for weeks, while students had to wash their own underwear and dry them in

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[18] BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/B868. §8.1 der Arbeitsrichtlinie [der SHF] für die Ausbildung ausl. Bürger an den Universitäten und Hochschulen sowie an den Ingenieur und Fachschulen der DDR vom 1 Nov. 1966. In a letter dated 9 Apr. 1968, Dr. Porz, Prorektor für Studienangelegenheiten der KMU, claimed this had not been achieved in Leipzig for many of the college's 1,300 foreign students.

[19] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/624, fos. 93-103, here 97. Bericht der Hochschulgruppe der zypriotischen Studenten, n.d. [ca. Feb. 1963].

[20] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Übersicht über Studierende aus den jungen Nationalstaaten in der DDR und die Möglichkeiten der Erweiterung dieses Studiums, n.d. [ca. Feb. 1965], 3; Also: DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht über die Situation am HI Leipzig, 5 Feb. 1969, 5.

[21] BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/B 868. Einige Probleme der materiellen Lage im Ausländerstudium, 9 Apr. 1968, 11f.

their rooms. When they complained, they were accused of being too demanding by the East German teaching and cleaning staff. Indeed, the economic director of the institute admitted to the director that "we'll be glad to see the back of them".[22] In 1968 after years of complaining about the abject living conditions his students were forced to endure, the director of the HI's Radebeul branch (which provided language training to prospective apprentices from Africa, the Arab world, and Asia) wrote two scathing reports on the failure of the relevant authorities to improve conditions. In one of the reports, he paraphrased what he believed to be the general line of some functionaries towards accommodating international students:

> Strict order, strict discipline: the more spartan the buildings, the less damage or destruction can occur. The people from the jungle should be happy that they even have a roof over their heads.

The director also pointed out that students themselves were becoming increasingly intolerant of conditions in the GDR. Whereas in the early 1960s the majority of students hailed from humble backgrounds with little schooling, by 1968, eighty percent were highly qualified specialists, scientists and high-ranking functionaries who in the main came from the "relatively well-off sections of the urban population of their countries" and for whom "large apartments, cars, many servants and privileges were only natural". Accustomed to a much higher standard of living than their East German counterparts, they were extremely critical of the decrepit state of GDR facilities. One student claimed that in his country soldiers lived in better conditions in barracks, while another believed that the student hostel was only fit for cattle. Even an otherwise loyal student claimed that had he not been raised a communist, he would have abandoned the ideology long ago as a result of the conditions in Radebeul.[23]

Accommodation statistics for the 1965/66 academic year (see table 1) provide an overview of the room occupancy of foreign students. On average, each student enjoyed nine square meters of personal space, with two thirds of foreign students sharing with one or more foreigners, while less than a fifth shared rooms with German students.

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[22] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/2123. Kurzer Bericht über eine Kontrolle der politisch-ideologischen Arbeit am Institut für Ausländerstudium der HSDG in Leipzig, 17 Nov. 1960, 2.

[23] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht an die SED-KL Dresden-Land über Mängel in unserer Einrichtung, 10 July 1968, 3, Rößler to Gießmann, 11 Dec. 1968; and also Bericht über die Situation am Herder-Institut Leipzig, n.d. [5 Feb. 1969], 3.

Table 1. *Room occupancy of international students in the academic year 1965/66*[24]

Rooms	*Number*	*Percentage*
1	212	7.3
2	739	25.6
3	653	21.6
4	553	19.1
In private accommodation	241	8.3
Sharing with German students	521	17.8
Total	2,919	

As the table indicates, overcrowding often forced students to seek private accommodation, much to the chagrin of college officials. In certain colleges, the number of foreign students living in private accommodation was much higher: in 1967/68 at the HI, 101 students (or 21 percent of the total) were living in private accommodation.[25] Officials, however, were unenthusiastic about foreign students taking rooms in private lodgings, fearing that it allowed for an exchange of unwanted ideological influences. On the other hand, some reports suggested that private landlords were not keen on taking in foreigners, particularly Africans.[26]

While the segregation of international from GDR students was not the stated policy of the authorities, it developed in many colleges nevertheless. Colleges reported on the reluctance of foreign students to share with Germans (whom they commonly perceived as spies) as well as the unwillingness of German students to move into the overcrowded and rundown hostels where the foreign students lived. Some foreign governments, however, explicitly called for segregation. Although GDR officials disagreed with segregation, they recognised the right of foreign governments to impose it. In 1961, the North Korean embassy requested segregated accommodation for its students.[27] The background to this move was the ideological rift between Beijing and Moscow, which also fuelled a growing suspicion among other Stalinist regimes of the threat posed to their students by contact with others. In October 1961, Albania withdrew all of its students from East Germany and in the following years, China radically scaled back its student presence. In 1966, the Vietnamese embassy ordered its students to cease all non-academic social contact with East German and international students, their East German

[24] BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/4067. Statistik Studienjahr 1965/66 (Studenten), n.d.
[25] BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/B 868. Einige Probleme der materiellen Lage im Ausländerstudium, 9 Apr. 1968, 10.
[26] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Bericht über die Situation im Ausländerstudium an der TH Dresden, 21 Apr. 1959. Also: DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/1. TU Dresden, Zur Lage unter den ausländischen Studenten, n.d. [Jan. 1964].
[27] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/3. Protokoll der 1. Sitzung der Kommission für Ausländerstudium der TH Magdeburg, 16 Jan. 1962. The SHF passed on this request to the colleges.

partner families, and to desist from attending the cinema.[28] Vietnamese students lived in the most abject conditions, which was most probably tolerated by the Vietnamese government, which was desperate for graduates. In 1964, a report from Dresden noted that eight Vietnamese students shared a room.[29] During the 1968/69 academic year, Vietnamese studying at a branch of the HI at Helbra (*Bezirk* Halle) were housed in overcrowded conditions in a disused, isolated, and dilapidated mining complex located in the countryside, which according to one official prevented the students from adapting to the "social reality" of the GDR and even raised complaints from the otherwise "modest Vietnamese" students.[30]

Apart from the control exerted by some foreign embassies, the GDR attempted to maintain control over international students, particular inside the hostels. The political and security thinking of officials saw hostels as the best guarantee for effective supervision and control of German as well as international students. As early as 1953, the State Secretariat for Higher Education issued an order that prescribed strict norms in discipline, order, and cleanliness in German student hostels. It instructed that all hostels were to draw up comprehensive rules and regulations to ensure participation at hostel meetings, the maintenance of lights-out, visiting hours, rigorous thrift, and the regulation of the use of electrical goods such as radios and typewriters.[31]

Just as accommodation standards in the hostels failed to meet expectations, so too did the security standards envisaged by the authorities. This was due in no small part to the unwillingness of the foreign students to subject themselves to the attempts to regulate their daily activities. At the HI, an elected hostel council was entrusted with the maintenance of "order and cleanliness". Yet, as a 1963 report suggests, residents showed little enthusiasm in upholding the norms set down by the authorities:

> However, the influence of the hostel councils in the maintenance of the rules (visits of girls, order and cleanliness in the rooms) is not always satisfactory. This is caused by the difficulty students have in getting used to criticising or being criticised by their fellow students within their first year.[32]

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[28] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Einschätzung der politisch-ideologischen Situation im Ausländerstudium, n.d. [Summer 1966], 11. See also the reminiscences of a former Vietnamese student in Mirjam Freytag, *Die 'Moritzburger' in Vietnam: Lebenswege nach einem Schul- und Ausbildungsaufenthalt in der DDR. Vermitteln in interkulturellen Beziehungen*, Frankfurt/M, 1998, 157f. This is the only study of the experiences of international students after their return home from the GDR.

[29] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/1. Zur Lage unter den ausländischen Studenten, n.d. [ca. Jan. 1964], 10.

[30] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht über die Situation am HI Leipzig, 5 Feb. 1969, 6 Also: DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Rößler to Helbing (MHF), 24 Sept. 1968. Similar conditions existed for Vietnamese students at another HI branch at Döllnitz, also in Bezirk Halle.

[31] Anweisung Nr. 39 des Staatsekretariats für Hochschulwesen über die Leitung und Betreuung der Studentenwohnheime an den Universitäten und Hochschulen vom 24. Dez. 1953, in: *Das Hochschulwesen (Beilage)* 2:1 (1954), 13f.

[32] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/467. Über die Erziehungsarbeit am Herder-Institut der KMU, 5 Oct. 1963, 10.

What was more likely was that the students were simply not interested in enforcing German norms, especially when they encroached on their personal freedoms.

Reports also frequently bemoaned the unreliability of the East German hostel wardens, who were directly responsible for day-to-day supervision. In 1969 almost all the wardens employed at the HI were described as old and prone to sickness, leaving the porter's desk unattended regularly.[33] Even when wardens were present, their authority was challenged by foreign students, as was the case with Algerians studying in Dresden in 1964. Although their public behaviour was deemed unproblematic, officials noted their "pronounced feeling for personal rights" and their "aversion towards everything bureaucratic and administrative". This was entirely understandable as wardens had attempted to prevent the students inviting German women (in some cases their wives) to their rooms.[34] College authorities were dismissive of such arguments, and believed paternalistically that it was the duty of wardens to guarantee the "residents' security". Just what they had to be protected against is illustrated by the deliberations of college authorities in Jena, who complained in 1968 that the three porters in one hostel had "not succeeded completely in eliminating the so-called 'wild' overnight stays and the visits of certain 'ladies', [which has left] the hostel with its bad name".[35]

In the lecture halls of the GDR universities and colleges, foreign students encountered many of the universal difficulties faced by international students everywhere. They had to battle with a new language and, in many cases, had to catch up with the subject matter also. What is interesting here is how the GDR maintained the balance between enforcing academic standards, advancing its own diplomatic agenda, as well as fulfilling its political-ideological commitments to educate members of its "brother" parties.

On average, non-European foreign students were less prepared academically for university courses than their GDR fellow students. This was due to the underdeveloped system of education in their native countries as well as to the fact that the selection of students by foreign governments, political parties, and trade unions often served political rather than academic concerns. The linguistic and preparatory training undertaken at the HI was not always sufficient and in 1963 some universities had to introduce additional foundation courses in maths and science subjects for African,

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[33] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht über die Situation am Herder-Institut Leipzig, n.d. [5 Feb. 1969], 4.
[34] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/1. Bericht des Referats Ausländerbetreuung an der TU Dresden, 13 Nov. 1964.
[35] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Vorlage für die UPL-Sitzung der FSU am 28 Feb. 1968, 6.

Asian and Latin American students before they could be admitted to regular courses.[36] In the 1965/66 academic year, 16.6 percent of the 2,889-strong cohort of undergraduate foreign students failed in one or two subjects and had to retake their exams. Of this number, eleven had to repeat a semester, while 95 had to repeat a whole year. In the same year, 112 students were expelled: 35 for academic and seven for disciplinary reasons. The remainder (70) were recorded as having been expelled at their own behest.[37] This high figure most likely refers to those students who left the GDR for the West. There, the social welfare office of the Federal Students' Group (*Bundesstudentenring*) assisted former foreign students of the Eastern bloc in finding college places, ability permitting. By early 1967, it had processed 1,252 applications. Between 60 and 70 percent of the students had left the Eastern bloc for academic reasons while ten percent claimed that they absconded owing to their disapproval of communism. Notably, the remaining 20 to 30 percent cited the experience of racial discrimination as the reason for leaving.[38]

Demonstrating the uncertainty among officials on whether the purpose of international studies was academic, political, diplomatic or developmental in character, in 1966 Paul Markowski of the Central Committee's International Department complained to his comrades in the Science Department that the high failure rate in the HI served to undermine the agreements made between the SED and its African "brother parties" to educate a pool of reliable "proletarian or peasant" cadres, which was necessary to aid the removal of "petty bourgeois" elements from their ranks. Criticising the recent expulsion of a politically-experienced but academically-weak functionary of the Democratic Union of Somalia, he argued that greater consideration would have to be given to the more poorly-educated students delegated by leftwing parties.[39] At the same time, Markowski called for resolute action to be taken against expelled students who were not members of communist parties, pointing out that over fifty such students were hanging around Leipzig, in some cases for up to two years, burdening student accommodation and impacting negatively on political life. Deprived of their

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[36] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Bericht über die politisch-ideologische Situation unter den ausländischen Studenten der TU Dresden, 30 June 1967, 2. The course consisted of sixteen hours a week (German (six hours), maths (six hours), physics (two) and technical drawing (two) as well as professional experience similar to the polytechnical training given to secondary school pupils.

[37] BArch, DR3/2. Schicht/4067. Statistik für das Studienjahr 1965/66 (Studenten), n.d.

[38] Harry B. Ellis, "African students vault Iron Curtain", in: *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 Feb. 1967, 9. The MfS claimed that the social office of the Federal Students' Group (*Bundesstudentenring*) set up a reception centre for foreign students in Wickrath near Köln on 1 June 1963 with the support of the Arbeits- und Sozialministerium of Nordrhein-Westfalen. See BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, 5 Dec. 1965, k.

[39] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/467. Schreiben der Abt. IV an die Abt. Wissenschaften, 3 Oct. 1966.

scholarships, expelled students could rely on the material support of their compatriots, friends and, in some cases, families. With little regard for any possible diplomatic fallout, the International Department requested a meeting with the Security Department to ensure that measures were undertaken to deport the students and that the "certain insecurity on how to act towards foreign students" apparent in "the state apparatus and particularly in the DVP" be overcome.[40] These measures may have led to an increased exodus of foreign students to West Germany: indeed the Federal Students' Group recorded its highest yearly intake of African students – 300 from the Eastern bloc in total – that year.[41]

The reluctance of the police to move against expelled students suggests that the authorities were wary of disgruntled former students using the Western media or indeed the media at home to criticise the workers' and peasants' state. They had good reason to be concerned. Over the years, students who had been expelled or who had left in protest on their own accord had turned to the Western media to publicise their impressions. Newspapers and radio (especially RIAS) also gave them considerable coverage.[42]

The example of Vijoy Batra from India demonstrates how students could take advantage of the GDR's diplomatic weakness. Batra had arrived in the GDR in August 1957, spending a year at the HI before enrolling at the TH Dresden. By all accounts he was an outspoken character and college officials later purported that he had "conned" his way his way into the GDR by falsely claiming he was a member of the Communist Party of India. A 1958 report claimed that Batra was a "political fraud, a political grasshopper of the worst kind who must be motivated by something", adding that "certain measures should therefore be introduced to make it impossible for him to abscond to the West".[43] Despite his outspoken opinions – or precisely because of them – Batra was able to remain in the GDR to complete his studies. In 1961, he left for the West and soon afterwards he was on the airwaves lambasting the GDR. His booklet *Studium bei Freunden?*, published by the Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs,

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[40] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Schreiben der Abt. IV an die Abt. Wissenschaften, 6 May 1966.

[41] Ellis, "African students vault Iron Curtain".

[42] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/2168 contains a number of press clippings, incl. "Ibrahim in der Mühle der Bürokratie", *Der Abend*, and "...aber ich muß doch leben", *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 June and 22 July 1962.

[43] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Bericht über den Besuch an der THD am 25 and 26 Nov. 1958.

attacked the GDR as the "only Nazi state on German soil" and as the "Soviet Zone penitentiary", which oversaw the "brainwashing" of foreign students.[44]

Living in the GDR also meant international students (and later contract workers) had to adapt to a new diet and cuisine. The East German economy proved unable to satisfy the dietary needs of its foreign students, although the 1959 prospectus *Studium bei Freunden* claimed that the "management of the [Herder] Institute has successfully appreciated the need to attune the nutritional sector to the nationally-conditioned peculiarities of the students". It described the head chef as a "conjuror at the cooker", who was competent in providing for the "religiously-conditioned dietary problems" of Indian and Arab students.[45]

The files however suggest that matters were far from satisfactory. Attempts to provide for the culinary tastes of foreign students generally failed owing to material shortages, unenthusiastic cooks and the intolerance on the part of officials. As there were no general guidelines for colleges on dietary issues and the attitudes of local officials generally determined what type of food was served and for how long. In 1953, the university canteen in Leipzig provided customary cuisine to North Korean students for a daily surcharge of 2.50 marks but after six months they had to adapt fully to German fare.[46] At the first Day of International Students in 1956, some foreign students dismissed German food as tasteless, claiming it was always served with the same sauce and lacking in rice.[47] Similarly, three years later the International Students' Committee (ISK) in Dresden called for more variety in the types of hot drinks served at breakfast (mentioning tea, coffee and cocoa), less butter in the mornings but more in the evenings, and the rotation of catering staff from hostel to hostel.[48]

As students came from a wide variety of countries, some colleges argued it was impossible to cater for all tastes. Officials at the TH Magdeburg claimed they did what they could to help students settle in gradually but felt that equality with German students meant that the international students "should adapt to our menu".[49] In some

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[44] Vijoy Batra, *Studium bei Freunden? Das Ausländerstudium an den Universitäten der Sowjetzone*, Bonn/Berlin, 1962. 4, 6 and 16. Batra lived the rest of his life in the FRG, joined the SPD and was elected a local councillor in Hamburg-Altona.

[45] Hans von Oettingen, *Studium bei Freunden*, n.p., n.d. [Berlin (SHF), 1959], 14f.

[46] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/146, fo. 260. Protokoll der 8/53 Sitzung des Kollegiums im Staatssekretariat für Hochschulwesen am 4. Mär. 1953. This was also the practice in TH Dresden, where Koreans were served rice three times a week for an extra charge. See BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Bericht über die 1. Anleitung der Hochschule für Verkehrswesen in Dresden am 19 Sept. 1957.

[47] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/639, fo. 92. Der Tag der Auslandsstudenten vom 20. bis 21. Jan. 1956 in Leipzig.

[48] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. An allen ausländischen Freunde, 30 Oct. 1959.

[49] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/3. Ausländische Studenten, 12 Feb. 1962; Protokoll der Sitzung der Kommission für Ausländerstudium der TH Magdeburg am 7 Apr. 1962.

colleges, foreign dishes were only served on special occasions, such as on Mayday at the FDGB's academy at Bernau, when prominent East German and foreign dignitaries were in attendance. Once the latter and the specialist chefs brought in for the day had left, the menu and service reverted to its regular monotony, leading one African student to comment: "Ah well, we're just the blacks."[50]

The rapid adjustment to the content and volume of a German diet could lead to sickness and even scurvy among students, as noted by the TU Dresden in early 1962.[51] An Indian student, who fled to the West shortly after beginning his studies in the GDR, found the German diet unbearable. Accustomed to a vegetarian diet in India, he was sick from eating so much meat in the GDR. (He also found his room bitterly cold, although his German roommates had no problem with it). A prominent scientist at Zeiss in Jena, who had arranged for him come to Dresden, wrote that if the GDR intended on increasing international student numbers, more consideration would have to be given towards the "inevitable" problems which "always arise when members of different nationalities and habits come together".[52]

If the authorities had little to say about the "religiously-conditioned" diets of foreign students, they had even less to say about the religions that informed these. As was the case with contract workers in the 1980s, religious practice performed a cultural and social function for many foreign students in the GDR. Yet, in early reports, reference to religion is more noticeable by its absence. This is not surprising considering that most students in the 1950s were from socialist states and were unlikely to be openly religious. Matters changed from the late 1950s as more students arrived from non-socialist Asian, Arab and African countries. Thus in late 1956 four of the eighteen Syrian students enrolled in Leipzig were described as "mostly strict Mohammedans with petty-bourgeois backgrounds".[53] There was nothing the authorities could do in this case as the students had been sent under the terms of the agreement on cultural cooperation signed between the GDR and Syria the previous July. Towards the end of the decade, the TU Dresden was aware of one Indonesian student who had attended a seminar organised by the Junge Gemeinde. In addition, one of the East German students entrusted with the *Betreuung* or supervision of the North Korean students had links to the church but made no attempt to influence the Koreans accordingly. Indeed, unlike most of his fellow

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[50] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/3373. Einschätzung der Arbeit des Org.-Büros zur Mai-Arbeit 1964, n.d.
[51] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Studenten aus Schwarz-Afrika (außer Ghana), n.d. [1962] 3.
[52] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1520. Indischer Student Bose, 2 Jan. 1958, This student subsequently returned to the GDR to visit an Indian friend but was arrested and jailed for "Republikflucht", See Batra, *Studium*, 13f.
[53] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/640. Rummler, SHF. Aktenvermerk, n.d. [ca. Nov. 1956].

minders or *Betreuer*, he seemed to take his job seriously and was very popular with the Koreans on account of his academic performance and his "preparedness to listen".[54]

Religious practice among international students was certainly more widespread, but what functionaries did not know or care about, they failed to notice, especially when it came to non-Christian religions. Officials were on a learning curve in this regard. In 1964, an official at the Weimar School of Administration, which held courses for African local politicians, warned that any underestimation of the "religious-defined lifestyles" of "Mohammedans" led to "considerable problems", pointing out that alternatives to pork in meals as well as the daily provision of warm water were essential.[55] Fourteen years later, the same institute reported on the difficulties caused by a group of Libyan local politicians who were "so strongly bound to religion that they generally refused dishes containing meat that was not slaughtered according to Islamic methods". As the institute had been confronted with similar problems in the past, this ensured that it was possible to lay on "good country-specific catering" for the Libyans.[56]

As international studies was a form of investment capital designed to bolster GDR diplomacy and trade, the authorities shied away from challenging the religious expression of foreign students from non-socialist countries. As the KAS instructed colleges in 1967, "philosophical problems are to be imparted with great empathy as religion constitutes a state religion in many countries". According to the "Principles on improving the political-ideological work with foreigners studying in the GDR", foreign students attending the voluntary course on "theoretical and practical principles in the societal development of our age" (in effect a watered-down version of the standard curriculum in Marxism-Leninism) were not to be challenged on the issue of religion. The principles stated:

> Discussions on religion should not be provoked. Whenever they are raised by the students they should be discussed in an atmosphere of principled frankness and tactful respect for other views.[57]

Naturally, Christian denominations were more easily catered for by the GDR churches, which made attempts to reach out to foreign students. In 1970, prominent Catholic and Protestant churchmen in Leipzig hosted a meeting in the Protestant Student Religious Society (*Evangelische Studentengemeinde*) on the topic of "socialism

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[54] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Ausländerstudium, n.d. [ca 1960], 6.
[55] SAPMO-BArch, DY 13/3326. Auswertung des Seminarkurses für afrikanischen Kommunalpolitiker, 20 Oct. 1964, 14.
[56] SAPMO-BArch, DY 13/3331. Bericht über das Seminar mit Kommunalpolitikern aus der Sozialistischen Libyschen Arabischen Volksjamahiriya vom 28. März bis 24. April 1978, 4.
[57] Endorsed by SED on 22 Feb. and the Ministerrat on 4 July 1967 and adopted at the first meeting of the KAS on 31 Aug. 1967. BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/B 1247a/2. Problem- und Beschlußprotokoll der konstituierenden Sitzung des KAS, 2. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Grundsätzen, 7.

in Africa" which was attended by fifty people, including a dozen Africans. The basic tenor of the meeting was that scientific socialism was ill-suited to African conditions and that all countries had the right to choose their own developmental path free from outside interference, a message well received by most of the African students present.[58]

Contrary to a widespread and persistent misconception, the SED did not view the programme of international studies as a means of political indoctrination. As GDR diplomacy was dictated by real-political rather than ideological principles, its policy of using international studies to generate diplomatic capital invariably meant that many of the delegated students were not always sympathetic towards communism, or the version of it supported by the SED. Indeed, many of the GDR's partners in international studies, such as Nassar's Egypt, were involved in the suppression of indigenous communist movements. Thus it was not unusual to find students taking a strong position against communism and in 1968, for example, communist students at the HI in Radebeul reported that many of their classmates were negatively disposed towards the GDR and eager to badmouth it.[59]

Among the foreign student community there was a constituency of orthodox communists who strongly supported the SED and its policies. A 1961 report on reactions to the erection of the Berlin Wall claimed that the vast majority of foreign students supported the measure and contributed positively to the "ideological debate" with apathetic GDR students, with some Vietnamese and Koreans even offering to defend the GDR "by force".[60] Six years later, party officials at the TU Dresden reported that some foreign students, who were critical of the "political apathy and consumerism" of the FDJ and East German students, sought to whip up support for the SED's agricultural and border policy and even approached the university's institute of Marxism-Leninism for suitable argumentation.[61] Similarly, foreign students at the Institute for Economics in Berlin reportedly supported the GDR "in such an enthusiastic way unknown for GDR students, and consider the GDR to be a model".[62] Obviously, seasoned party bureaucrats were enticed by the revolutionary enthusiasm if not élan of

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[58] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Information über die Einflußnahme kirchlicher Kreise auf ausländische Studierende, 9 Dec. 1970. The invitations to the meeting were undersigned by Dr. Werner Becher, a prominent Catholic theologian, and Reinhardt Meißner.

[59] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht an die SED-KL Dresden-Land über Mängel in unserer Einrichtung, 10 July 1968, 5.

[60] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/638, fos. 118-128, here 119. Informationsbericht, 28 Oct. 1961.

[61] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Bericht über die politisch-ideologische Situation unter den ausländischen Studenten der TU Dresden, 30 June 1967, 3 and 6.

[62] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Analyse der Arbeit im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen der DDR im Studienjahr 1968/69, 15 Oct. 1969, 7.

some foreign students which contrasted with their disaffected East German counterparts of the "normalised" 1960s.

Yet, the image of international students as communist zealots is exaggerated. The attitudes of foreign students were far more diverse and critical. Even students from socialist countries were seen as propagators of Western cultural ideas and they rejected attempts made by officials to curtail their cultural activities. In the late 1950s, the TH Dresden claimed that Poles were well known for their "political wavering, taking trips to West Berlin and the reading and circulation of Western literature".[63] Some years later at the same institution, the head Polish student claimed that no one had the right to stop him listening to Western radio because he was a "free man".[64] Similarly, the Hungarian students at the IS *Werkzeugmaschinenbau* in Karl-Marx-Stadt were fond of the "bourgeois and Western authors (Kafka, Dürrenmatt)" and rejected calls for more ideological discipline as an affront to their personal freedom.[65] Two years later, Hungarian students in Dresden argued that freedom meant the "right to all-round possibilities in orientation" which encompassed tuning into Western radio.[66] Even Soviet students were problematic. The KMU claimed in 1973 that the majority were politically apathetic, were reluctant to express opinions, ignored the press, and in some cases were embarrassed when GDR lecturers extolled the leading role of the Soviet Union. They made unconventional comments on the issue of German unity, watched Western television in the city's Gaudeamus Soviet club (but blamed Arab students), while a minority maintained "bourgeois or petty-bourgeois lifestyles".[67]

Officials were more circumspect when it came to similar behaviour on the part of students from non-socialist countries. At the College for Domestic Trade at Blankenburg, authorities made no attempts to prevent the college's 25 English-speaking students from tuning into Kennedy's West Berlin speech on the grounds that as they had just arrived in the GDR there would be little understanding for such a move. Less indulgent was the local DVP which passed the matter on to the MfS.[68] At the KMU, in 1972, the MfS noted that owing to the fact that "students from the non-socialist world without exception tune into West German as well as their own radio stations, GDR

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[63] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Ausländerstudium, n.d. [ca. 1959/60], 3.
[64] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/1. Berichte zur polnischen Studenten, 11 Nov. 1964.
[65] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Gruppeneinschätzung Ungarn, 21 July 1965.
[66] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Bericht über die politisch-ideologische Situation unter den ausländischen Studenten der TU Dresden, 30 June 1967, 4.
[67] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV B 2/9.04/136. Zur Arbeit mit den sowjetischen Studenten an der Karl-Marx-Universität, 14 Apr. 1973.
[68] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41383. Einschätzung der im Bezirk Magdeburg nach §4 der Meldeordnung gemeldeten Ausländer und Staatenlosen, 28 Jan. 1964, 4.

students and academics were inevitably confronted with arguments that have objective repercussions from the political-ideological aspect". Yet, the MfS accepted at the same time that it was natural for foreign students to listen to Western stations, noting that they rarely attempted to "consciously and deliberately" influence GDR citizens with negative or hostile attitudes.[69]

Of greatest concern to the authorities was support for alternative versions of socialism. In the late 1960s, voices on the left ranged from those who opposed the suppression of the Prague Spring to those who called for war with the West. In its report on the 1968/69 academic year, the KAS admitted that many of the South-East Asian, African, Latin American and Western students espoused ideas taken "from the arsenal of the Mao ideology, the petty-bourgeois western European student movements and to a lesser extent the theories of Ché Guevara".[70] In 1969, two leftist students from Luxemburg and Senegal were deported by the authorities. Allegedly they headed a group that had links with the "left sectarian" West Berlin *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (SDS) and Maoist groups and which had distributed leaflets adorned with the "images of Lenin, Stalin, Mao and Ho Chi Minh" calling for Western-style student protests against the SED and Ulbricht.[71]

A 1970 report on reactions to the Stoph/Brandt talks of the same year illustrate the wide variety of political opinions among international students as well as their perceptions of the GDR. Students from Ceylon and Kenya believed the talks were a possible solution to the common interests of all Germans, while the Bulgarians claimed that as Germany was one nation, the likelihood of war between the two German states was slim. Students from Chile and Venezuela rubbished the talks by claiming that "imperialists" only understood the power of the gun. While Malian students believed the GDR delegation was under orders from Moscow, Tanzanians felt there was little difference between East and West. In their opinion, the recent rent increases for student accommodation proved that "capital and exploitation" still existed in the GDR while the coercion of youth to undergo the Jugendweihe belied the democratic nature of the state.[72]

Foreign students were not subjected to the same levels of ideological indoctrination as GDR students. They were not members of the FDJ, which it must be stressed, never

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[69] BStU, ASt Leipzig, Abt XX, 145/05, fo. 76. Bericht des Hpt. Leopold, n.d. [ca Autumn 1972].
[70] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Analyse der Arbeit im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen der DDR im Studienjahr 1968/69, 15 Oct. 1969, 2 and 9.
[71] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Störende und gegnerische Aktivitäten im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums der DDR, 2 June 1969, 1.
[72] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Auszug aus einem Bericht der BL Leipzig, 3 June 1970.

took much interest in foreign students either at leadership or college level, which was symbolised by the rare attendance of the FDJ Central Council delegate to the meetings of the KAS.[73] While students from socialist countries were obliged to attend lectures in Marxism-Leninism, they frequently stayed away as a result of the tensions in the international communist movement and at various points in the 1960s, students from China, Albania, Poland, North Korea, Bulgaria, Cuba and North Vietnam refused to attend compulsory Marxism-Leninism courses at the behest of their governments. A number of reports from the TU Dresden from the mid-1960s illustrate the critical positions taken by these students. In late 1964, a Hungarian student claimed that the repeated reference to Ulbricht in the *Grundriß der Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* constituted the cult of personality, while Bulgarian students refused to attend compulsory lectures in Marxism-Leninism claiming that they had already covered the subject matter at secondary school. In addition, they argued that the SED was not a true communist party on the basis of its name (a compromise in their opinion) and criticised the high levels of intelligentsia and the persistence of private business in the GDR, as well as the bloc party system and church policy. The reporting functionary clearly held the students in contempt, dismissing them as "notorious wasters". Hungarian and Polish students were supportive of Ceausescu's "Romanian way", critical of GDR cultural policy, and opposed to socialist realism. These and other differences of opinion meant that even conversations between students from socialist countries and the GDR deserved the "utmost attention" of officials, one report concluded.[74]

Students from non-socialist countries, however, were exempted from compulsory lectures in Marxism-Leninism and in the 1964/65 academic year, only 30 percent of these students attended on a voluntary basis.[75] Only from 1969 onwards were these international students expected to attend the compulsory three-year exam course entitled "theoretical and practical principles in the societal development of our age".

Yet, the political situation in the GDR was only of secondary importance for most foreign students. Not only did foreigners have to "adjust to our climate (especially in winter), our diet, our habits, [and] our daily rhythm", as a report from the Radebeul

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[73] BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/B 1247a/2. As evident from the attendance lists of numerous KAS meetings.
[74] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/1. Berichte zur polnischen und ungarischen Studenten, 11 and 12 Nov. 1964. Also SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Bericht über das Ausländerstudium an der TU Dresden, 27 Jan. 1966, 6.
[75] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Einschätzung der politisch-ideologischen Situation im Ausländerstudium, n.d. [Summer 1966], 15.

branch of the HI pointed out in 1968, but they were burdened by the often precarious troubled political environments in their native countries:

> One may not forget that a considerable share of course participants has left large families behind, although it's not always clear how they are to be provided for. Without the protection provided by the head of the family, families can be exposed to repression in the political tense political climate (Ghana, Indonesia, Yemen, Israeli aggression, Nigeria etc).[76]

Much of the political, cultural and social activities of foreign students took place under the aegis of the national students' unions or *Nationale Studentenvereinigungen* (NSVs). Initially known as *Landsmannschaften* (a description subsequently dropped to avoid confusion with organisations of eastern territory expellees in West Germany), they were first established in 1953 with official support for students from socialist countries.[77] In the following years, students from other countries set up their own organisations independently. By 1961, there were fifteen NSVs, mostly wings of African political parties and youth organisations, operating beyond any official control.[78] As the SHF noted the previous year, attempts to compile "sound assessments of the ideological situation" in the associations had largely failed. The NSVs of communist Asian states too were considered beyond the political influence of GDR authorities. Equally worrying was the trend within African unions towards the formation of a "unity association of all black African students" which the SHF opposed as an expression of "a form of pan-Africanism with a progressive coating, which in essence is opposed to the development of sovereign national states".[79] The concern of the SHF was shared by the SED which noted that: "The unofficial existence of the organisations is a hindrance for the political work with foreign students and skilled workers. They are operating beyond our control and illegally." Yet, in 1961, the SED Secretariat moved to legalise them, rejecting proposals to ban them fearing possible retaliatory moves against the FDJ in the International Students' Federation (ISF).[80] The

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[76] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht an die SED-KL Dresden-Land über Mängel in unserer Einrichtung, 10 July 1968, 2.

[77] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/146, fo. 259. Protokoll der 8/53 Sitzung des Kollegiums im Staatssekretariat für Hochschulwesen am 4. Mär. 1953.

[78] These organisations were: the Union der afrikanischen Studenten in der DDR, a branch of the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (UPC), a branch of the African Independence Party of Guinea-Bissau (PAI), Ugandan Students' Association, UDEAN (Union of Students from Territories under Portuguese Control), JRDA (youth organisation of the Democratic Party of Guinea), All African Union, UGEMA (Algerian General Student Federation), Organisation of Sudanese in the GDR, branch of the Iraqi Student Federation, Union of Indonesian Students in the GDR, Indian Graduates Association, African Women's Union (president Dr. Bankole), Nucleus (a leftwing grouping dominated by Nigerians), and branches of Syrian, Jordanian, and Lebanese students' organisations.

[79] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/638, fo. 104. Die weitere Entwicklung des Ausländerstudiums in der DDR bis 1965, n.d. [1960].

[80] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/J IV 2/3 A/779. Zulassung von Organisationen afrikanischer, asiatischer und lateinamerikanischer Studenten und Facharbeiter in der DDR (Beschluß 21/61 v. 17 Mai 1961), 28 Apr. 1961.

number of NSVs fluctuated over the years. In the summer of 1966 there were 105 such unions, while in 1984 there were 63.[81] In some cases, unions formed continental umbrella organisations such as the CLARDA (Union of Latin American Students) and the UASA (Union of African Workers and Students). In the larger colleges, the International Students' Committees (ISK) also provided some representation.

The NSVs ranged in character: some were chiefly political while others were primarily cultural. Activity levels were just as diverse, ranging from the very active – usually those representing students from politically-volatile countries – to the moribund, paper organisations. Importantly, the NSVs mostly operated according to democratic principles, with annual general meetings held to elect committees. As such, they were used by students from different political and social backgrounds to fight out external battles in the GDR. Communists, nationalists and Ba'athists fought in the Arab unions for example, while African unions were the scenes for political, social and ethnic rivalry (for example during the Nigeria/Biafra conflict in 1967). It is important to note that the GDR authorities were generally opposed to the NSVs of students from non-socialist countries being run by communists as it complicated its diplomatic efforts with the states concerned. Thus in 1960 the SHF attacked the "sectarian tendencies" of the communist-dominated leadership of the Algerian union for excluding all non-communists from the organisation.[82]

Separatist groups were also active in the GDR and set up their own NSVs. In the 1960s, Iraqi Kurds established a branch of the Organisation of Kurdish Students in Europe and participated in Kurdish events in the West. At the 1969 May Day parade in Berlin they marched under a "Kurdistan" banner which appeared on GDR television. Incensed KAS officials later established that college authorities took little interest in the banners the foreigners marched under and were totally unaware of the diplomatic explosiveness of the banner in question.[83] Kurdish activity enraged the Baghdad government and in 1974, the Iraqi embassy sought the assistance of the MfAA in deporting alleged Iraqi dissidents, especially Kurdish students. While the MfS seemed enthusiastic to cooperate, the MdI ruled out any assistance on the grounds that the 1971

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[81] BArch, DR3/2. Schicht/4067. Statistik für das Studienjahr 1965/66 (Studenten), n.d. , SAPMO-BArch, DY 13/3058. Beratungen mit Leitungen von ausl. Studentenverbänden vom 10. bis 15 Dez. 1984 in Bad Kleinen.

[82] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/20/355, fos. 85-90. Niederschrift über eine Besprechung in der Abt. Außenpolitik beim ZK am 30 Nov. 1960.

[83] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Störende und gegnerische Aktivitäten im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums der DDR, 2 June 1969, 7.

agreement on legal relations signed the two countries provided the only legal basis for extradition between the two countries.[84]

The NSVs were also affected by the many coup d'états, revolutions, and regime changes that occurred abroad. Following the coup in Indonesia in 1966, supporters of the new rightwing Suharto regime expelled 19 supporters of the deposed left-wing Sukarno government from the Indonesian NSV and later collaborated with the attempts of the Indonesian embassy in Prague to have them deported home. While some of the left-wing students were allowed to remain, the GDR was also interested in maintaining relations with the new Indonesian government. This strategy satisfied neither side. The pro-Suharto students publicly attacked the GDR for interfering in internal political matters in a West Berlin magazine published by Indonesian students. On the other hand, pro-Sukarno supporters participated in the May Day parades in Dresden in 1967 carrying anti-Suharto slogans. As they enjoyed the support of the majority of foreign students in the city, college authorities were unable to confiscate the offending banners. Two months later, the MfAA presented the Indonesian authorities with an aidé-memoir protesting in the strongest terms about the behaviour of the pro-Suharto group.[85] Tensions continued between the two factions, and later, among the Soviet and Maoist wings of the Indonesian Communist Party.[86]

Yet, the willingness of the GDR to help leftwing opponents of military dictatorships was increasingly restricted by its diplomatic interests. In 1968, for example, the GDR was not prepared to afford protection to some Burmese leftist students who had formed the Burmese Students' Union in the GDR in opposition to the idiosyncratic Ne Win military regime in Rangoon. When the Burmese government demanded their repatriation, the GDR authorities intervened, arrested and forcibly deported the four students, despite considerable German and foreign student opposition in the GDR, Prague and West Berlin.[87]

The NSVs of students from communist states also proved troublesome for the authorities. In the mid-1960s, Cuban students actively challenged SED policy, attacking the theory of peaceful coexistence and the introduction of material incentives designed

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[84] BArch, DO 1/8.0/51098. Note Nr. 461 der Botschaft der Republik Irak an das MfAA, 30 Aug. 1974, and subsequent documents.

[85] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/469. Zusammenfassende Kurzinformation über die Situation unter den indonesischen Studierenden in der DDR, 1 July 1967. Similar banners were carried two years later in Leipzig, see SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Störende und gegnerische Aktivitäten im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums der DDR, 2 June 1969, 7.

[86] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/13001. Bericht über den Praktikant E., 25 Aug. 1971.

[87] BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/B 1247a/2. Ländergruppen-Einschätzung, 10 Apr. 1969, 11-15. The four were Ko Thein Win (chairman), Ko Khin Maung Htwe (vice chairman), Ko Min Zaw (treasurer), and Ko Kyaw Win.

to boost production and performance. GDR authorities in turn attempted to suppress the "intensive political-ideological subversion" carried out by the Cuban students in support of the "petty-bourgeois-nationalist, left-wing radical and anti-Soviet ideas developed on the basis of the Ché Guevara theory".[88]

The situation was more serious in the much larger NSVs of the Chinese, North Vietnamese, and North Korean students. With the escalation of Sino-Soviet tensions in the 1960s, the GDR placed restrictions on the importation and distribution of Chinese publications and increased the surveillance of Chinese students and Maoist sympathisers from other countries. In the colleges, relations between the authorities and the Chinese students descended into outright hostility. As Chinese students attacked Soviet revisionism, GDR lecturers in return lambasted the Chinese and Mao as dogmatists. Even at the sixth SED party congress in 1963, the customary stage-managed uniformity was channelled into creating a chorus of hecklers to jeer the Chinese Communist Party delegate during his address.[89] Colleges tried to limit the contact of Chinese students by prohibiting them from spending their summer holidays with other foreign students. In 1966, for example, the Chinese worked on a summer camp in Freiberg with GDR students and one functionary reported that they were

> totally isolated and made fools of themselves with their behaviour in the eyes of the GDR students. (The students rose at 6am and read Mao over breakfast, did their work on the collective farm, held a meeting in the afternoon and went to bed reading Mao).[90]

This ideological squabble had catastrophic implications for some students, such as the Chinese-Indonesian Xing-Hu Kuo, who first came under systematic MfS surveillance from mid-1961 onwards. In 1965, he was sentenced to seven and a half years imprisonment on a trumped-up espionage charge.[91] Yet, Kou maintains that he was treated no differently to other victims of the Stasi in that he was labelled with unfounded negative moral characteristics, such as being a chain smoker and drinker, sexually promiscuous, cunning, arrogant and cynical. Apart from the occasional insult

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[88] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht über das Nationaltreffen der kubanischen Studierenden in der DDR vom 12. bis 14 Apr. 1968 in Merseburg, 24 Apr. 1968, 6-8.

[89] *Protokoll des VI. Parteitages der SED, 15. bis 21. Jan.1963*, Berlin, 1963, 19-30. The SED Politbüro had banned the importation of the *Pekinger Rundschau* in Aug. 1960, while *Radio Peking* was equated to Western radio stations. Nevertheless, and to the anger of the authorities, Mao's *Es lebe den Leninismus* continued to circulate. In early 1963, the SHF instructed university rectors to crack down on Chinese publications under the Ordnung für die Verbreitung von Publikationen, Dokumentationen und sonstigen Materialien ausländischer Herkunft. See. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/469. Darlegung einiger Probleme unserer Arbeit mit den in der DDR befindlichen chinesischen Studenten, Aspiranten und Gastlektoren, 10 Jan. 1963, 5.

[90] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Einschätzung der politisch-ideologischen Situation im Ausländerstudium, n.d. [ca. summer 1966], 10.

[91] Xing-Hu Kou, *Ein Chinese in Bautzen II* and *Wodka in Sektgläsern*, Böblingen, 1990 and 1993 respectively.

of "yellow monkey", he claims not to have been systematically subjected to racist abuse.

Many students also suffered at the hands of their own governments during the period. As Vietnamese communism veered towards Maoism, the country's students in the GDR were instructed on the fallacy of peaceful coexistence. In talks with other students, the Vietnamese condemned the fact that there had never been a revolution in Germany and called for partisan warfare with West Germany.[92] A number of Vietnamese students who openly opposed this ideological repositioning were denigrated and ostracised by their compatriots as a result. One such student described the precariousness of his situation in a letter to a lecturer: "My friends are not as persecuted as I am [...] I'm vulnerable [...] They want to attack me more and more. In particular, our party secretary is like a criminal investigator. He uses police methods."[93]

In an effort to stamp out this dissent, in early 1964 the North Vietnamese government ordered all its students to return to Vietnam for the purposes of political education. Although the embassy claimed this was a temporary measure, the dissident students feared it would entail their "physical liquidation". They successfully appealed to the East German authorities for help. In March 1964, the MfS helped two Vietnamese students (including the author of the letter quoted above) to go underground: they were provided with new identities as Thai citizens and jobs in a factory in Karl-Marx-Stadt. When the Vietnamese embassy attempted to forcibly repatriate the remaining dissidents in June, a special commission set up by the *Politbüro* and chaired by Erich Honecker decided to grant political asylum to a further twelve students.[94]

In their attempts to regulate all aspects of foreigner's recreational time, functionaries invested considerable effort in attempting to control the interaction between foreign and GDR students. Bringing foreign students in contact with "progressive" GDR students and members of the public proved a difficult task, despite (or indeed precisely because of) the attempts undertaken by functionaries to systematise it. In the early 1950s, the SAL instructed colleges to establish a system of *Betreuung* or peer supervision, which involved pairing up a foreign and an East German student *Betreuer* or minder. The system was never effective, mainly due to the unwillingness of

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[92] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/1. Zur Lage unter den ausländischen Studenten, n.d. [ca. Jan. 1964], 7.
[93] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/469. Schreiben des vietnamesischen Studenten TT, 28 Dec. 1963.
[94] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/469. Beschluß 20/64 des Politbüros v. 16 June 1964. For MfS documents on the case, see: Michael Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR und ihre Beobachtung durch das MfS*, Magdeburg, 1999, 23-28. The 14 were granted DDR-Staatsbürgerschaft in 1976, see: BArch, DO 1/8.0/51100. Verleihung der DDR-Staatsbürgerschaft an vietnamesische Bürger, 8 Sept. 1976.

one or both partners to go along with this charade of friendship. Indeed, as the HI pointed out, it was common for foreign students to reject minders as spies, intent on regulating and supervising their free time, a "misconception" encouraged by "hostile and Western" elements.[95] It was anything but a misconception. In Magdeburg, college authorities encouraged minders to confiscate any unlicensed foreign publications circulating among foreign students and to do so "in the interests of the foreigners themselves".[96]

The development of normal and healthy contact between international and GDR students was greatly hampered by the attempts of functionaries to organise friendship. Reports were uncharacteristically candid about relations between international and GDR students. Some reports acknowledged the inevitable tendency of international students from particular countries to associate amongst themselves, as was reportedly the case with Soviet students at the KMU in 1973. In an effort to overcome difficulties "in the establishment of personal friendly relationships", the university decided to house Soviet and GDR students together in the same students' hostel. Yet, this brought with it a series of new problems, an official noted, resulting from the "different habits" the two groups of students, as well at their "incomplete familiarisation" with each other.[97]

Only occasionally were the opinions of foreign students on the issue reported verbatim, such as in a 1965 report from the TH Magdeburg. Guinean students claimed that they got on well with all Germans in the college except German students. Others pointed to the superficiality of contact with GDR students and their insensitivity towards cultural differences. Iraqi students maintained that:

> There are some students who don't want to understand us. But one has to consider that we are accustomed to completely different climatic conditions (we sleep in the afternoons) and have to adjust to things slowly. The German students are envious of our opportunities to take holidays in the West, our better canteen food etc. At a superficial level, the relations are good. But examined more closely, there are really no friendly relationships.

Their Bulgarians colleagues saw matters similarly:

> The German students only see us from their perspective and don't put themselves in our position. They make no attempt to understand us. There are no fights between us but real friendly relationships are lacking.[98]

According to another report, some international students were more disparaging in their views of their German classmates. It recorded that Cubans and Algerians saw their

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[95] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/467. Form der Arbeit mit ausländischen Studenten in der außerunterrichtlichten Zeit, n.d. [ca. 1963], 10.
[96] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/3. Protokoll der Betreuerbesprechung am 3 Apr. 1963.
[97] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV B 2/9.04/136. Zur Arbeit mit den sowjetischen Studenten an der Karl-Marx-Universität, 14 Apr. 1973, 7.
[98] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Berichte der TH Chemie, Magdeburg, 5 May 1965.

GDR fellow students as "gentrified" and furthermore that "a large part of the Latin American students, generalising excessively, tends to view all East German citizens as *Spießer*, as people totally lacking in revolutionary élan".[99] Alternatively, many East German citizens only encountered international students in the most superficial political contexts. This was particularly the case with the Vietnamese, who were subjected to strict controls on social contact from the mid-1960s by their embassy. Vietnamese students at the IS in Wismar only encountered locals at meetings of the National Front, *Jugendweihe* preparations or at FDJ meetings in schools. Similarly, Vietnamese studying at the IS in Glauchau were paired up with "suitable families" to mark the GDR's twentieth birthday in 1969.[100]

Foreign students in 1950s and 1960s East Germany faced a number of challenges in adapting to East German society. While the greatest problems, such as language and academic performance, were (and are) universal difficulties facing all international students, other problems were due to the particular political and economic situation pertaining to the GDR. The SED saw the provision of third-level education as a contribution to its diplomatic efforts and international standing and as such it was not attuned or receptive to the individual needs of students, who although in receipt of grants paid by the GDR, were nevertheless exposed to the many contradictions of socialist society. These, along with the determination of the authorities to limit the scope of interaction between international students and East Germans and the failure to deal with the existence of racism, discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, served to undermine the GDR's credibility among students on the left and right of the political spectrum. In many ways, the experience of international students and the state's ways of dealing with them were a precursor to the experiences and treatment of contract workers in the 1970s and 80s. It is to this period that we know turn.

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[99] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Einschätzung der politisch-ideologischen Situation im Ausländerstudium, n.d. [ca. Summer 1966], 7f.

[100] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Analyse der Arbeit im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen der DDR im Studienjahr 1968/69, 15 Oct. 1969, 22.

Chapter 4. Working in the GDR

This thesis estimates that at least 210,000 foreign contract workers were employed in East German factories from 1967 to 1989. For the SED, the issue of foreign labour was a problematic one and, like so many of its policies, was never subjected to open debate in the GDR. Nervous that the system of foreign labour could attract comparisons with the West or even the Nazi and imperial regimes, the SED was at pains to stress the unique "socialist" nature of the labour exchanges, maintaining persistently that they helped other socialist countries develop an industrial workforce essential for the building of socialism.

Yet, even as the titles of the bilateral labour agreements demonstrate, the training aspect was of secondary importance to the issue of work. All referred to either "temporary employment" or "employment", which was to be accompanied under the terms of the Hungarian agreement (1967) by the "acquisition of practical training experience" but nothing according to the titles of both Polish agreements (1971 and 1988). The Algerian and Cuban agreements (1974 and 1978 respectively) were more specific, referring to the "simultaneous imparting of professional experience as well as qualifications during the process of productive work" in the first case and "simultaneous qualification during the process of productive work" in the second. The title of the Mozambican agreement (1979), which referred to the "simultaneous imparting of practical professional experience during the process of productive work and professional training and advanced training *within the framework of adult education*" (emphasis added), spelled out the primacy of work over training, which was clearly not to take place during regular working hours. The three final agreements, signed with Vietnam (1980), Angola (1985) and China (1986), were headed in very vague terms, and referred simply to the "qualification" of workers.

The inclusion of a reference to training was a semantic ploy to disguise the real economic nature of the agreements. This was spelled out in a letter written in July 1973 by Horst Sindermann and sent to Erich Honecker. It reveals that the SED saw the agreements as primarily economic in character. Sindermann, then deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers, pointed out that the title of forthcoming GDR-Algerian agreement would have to be worded carefully for political reasons. He warned Honecker that: "We must not appear as a 'guest worker country' to the UNESCO.

Hence we can only conclude an agreement on the 'training and qualification' of Algerian workers". As Sindermann pointed out, the agreement would supply the GDR with unskilled Algerian workers, who he anticipated could be employed in jobs that required no practical or theoretical skills, specifically mentioning brown coal mining and rail track repairs, which caught the particular attention of Honecker according to his marginalia.[1] Ironically, the Algerian side was hoping that its dealings with the GDR would represent a fundamental change from the types of labour agreements it had signed with "imperialist" France and Belgium in the past.[2] It took the training aspect seriously and over the years had to remind the GDR of its commitment to train the workers.

This chapter seeks to explore how contract workers viewed their jobs, workplaces, and workmates and questions whether the working environment represented the central focus of social activity as envisaged by the authorities. Was the workplace the key forum for interaction between foreigners and the East German population? It also addresses the accommodation of workers in hostels, a topic afforded extensive but nevertheless superficial attention in the secondary literature, as well as the issues of wages and training opportunities.

Although there are some similarities in the treatment of international students and contract workers by the authorities – the most obvious being the fact that both lived in collective accommodation – some clear differences are also distinguishable. As the programme of international studies formed an instrument of foreign policy, this granted foreign students a certain level of immunity from the rigours of state sanction. As mere producers, contract workers were not seen as future propagators of a positive image of the GDR abroad and as such never enjoyed the same levels of immunity as international students. Yet, as this and subsequent chapters will show, contract workers were not completely vulnerable and could rely on individual and collective strategies to defend their interests against challenges emanating from a number of quarters.

Adjusting to their new surroundings was not without its problems for the majority of contract workers. Arriving in the GDR was a difficult experience for many and specific groups had specific problems. Some arrived as teenagers, having left the close-knit familiarity of extended families for the first time. Among the Vietnamese and Cuban workers were many mothers, who had to leave their children in the care of other

[1] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7030. Sindermann to Honecker, 24 July 1973.
[2] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7030. Information über eine Beratung von Vertretern der DDR und DVRA zur Vorbereitung eines Arbeitskräfteabkommens, 4 July 1973. This document claims that Algeria had first proposed a labour deal in a diplomatic note issued on 1 Feb. 1973.

family members.[3] The majority of the Polish *Pendler* or transit workers too were mothers and the double burden of factory and house work was exacerbated by the time involved commuting to and from the workplace. Many Algerian men were married with children and as such were often the sole breadwinners for their immediate and extended families. An insight into how one particular group of workers experienced the GDR in the first few weeks after arrival is provided by Rainer Plesse's 1988 diploma dissertation on Vietnamese workers employed at the Ludwigsfelde car factory. Indicating that contract workers faced many of the problems typically encountered by migrants elsewhere, he noted the "permanent stress" of the newly-arrived Vietnamese. 87 percent saw the language barrier as a major problem, while 81 percent had problems with the climate. Just over half had difficulty with the food, while eleven percent complained of the early rises and homesickness.[4] While all migrants faced such problems, GDR procedures exacerbated what was already a difficult situation for many. In an effort to keep costs down, for example, foreign workers were flown in during the low season winter months, which Helga Marburger has suggested was a particular shock for workers from warmer climates, who often arrived with no winter clothing. She also referred to the experience made by an East German pastor who learned that many of the workers came from cultures which identified darkness with evil spirits, serving as an additional burden.[5]

Compounding these difficulties was the fact that the factory officials who had daily contact with the workers received little in the way of training or preparation for this task, as a number of former "minders" (*Betreuer*) have pointed out.[6] The system was not designed to learn from past mistakes which ensured that many errors were repeated. In many cases, the behaviour of foreigners failed to correspond to the idealised preconceptions of East Germans. This can be seen in the reactions of factories to the first cohort of Algerian workers who came in 1974. A SAL report noted satisfactorily that: "All factories report unanimously that the Algerian citizens are mannerly and unassuming in public and are striving to conform to GDR habits", adding that "the inclusion of the Algerian workers in social life occurs through the work brigades and the mass organisations in the factory". The Algerians were encouraged to join the

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[3] Halina Hackert-Lemke & Heidrun Unterbeck, "'...das war in der DDR so festgelegt...' Betreuerinnen erinnern sich an ausländische Vertragsarbeiter", in: Harry Adler et al. (eds), *Zwischen Räumen. Studien zur sozialen Taxonomie des Fremden*, Berlin, 1999, 87-104, here 90. Also: Irene Runge, *Ausland DDR. Fremdenhaß*, Berlin, 77.

[4] Quoted in Hackert-Lemke & Unterbeck, "Betreuerinnen", 90.

[5] Quoted in ibid.

[6] Ibid., 90.

FDGB and 170 did so within a few weeks after arriving.[7] Within a short period, however, attitudes changed and at a meeting in February 1975 to arrange the second deployment of workers, the SAL demanded that the Algerian side refrain from delegating any more workers with criminal convictions or those who had worked in the West.[8] Yet, there is little concrete evidence to suggest that Algeria was sending such workers. The only problem with the first group of Algerian workers was the excessive drinking of some, hardly evidence of criminality or an expression of Western decadence, but which had resulted in the deportation of 15 workers.

Clearly, not only did the contract workers have some problems in accommodating to GDR society, but GDR officials also had difficulty accepting that they had particular needs and weaknesses. Some officials proved themselves less capable than others. After a violent row broke out in March 1981 between Mongolian apprentices who were being trained in a Cottbus textile factory, police noted that factory officials had failed to recognise or consider a number of "specific problems [...] such as their instable personalities owing to their youth, the transplantation to totally new living conditions, which involves massive geographical and lengthy separation from familial structures, mentalities [and] traditions".[9]

As in the case of students, the authorities favoured housing contract workers collectively in hostels. Up to 1980, the official stated policy was that foreign workers' accommodation was to meet East German norms. Yet lack of investment and planning ensured that the GDR was never in a position to provide sufficient or adequate accommodation for its foreign workers.

One of the earliest training agreements, signed with Iraq in April 1959, stipulated that apprentices' accommodation was to be communal and to match "local standards".[10] Similarly, the planned foreign labour programme of 1961/62 envisaged that the foreign workers would live in "closed collectives" in existing dormitories, housing blocks, and holiday homes. Only in the construction industry was their accommodation to be in "wooden or solid-structure huts" of the *Aufbaustufe III* type, which were customary for

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[7] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Bericht [des SAL] über Ergebnisse des probeweisen Einsatzes von 500 algerischen Werktätigen, 13 Dec. 1974, 4f.
[8] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7030. Information über den Abschluß einer Regierungs-Abkommen zum Einsatz algerischen Werktätigen im Jahr 1975, 7 Mar. 1975.
[9] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46778. BDVP Cottbus, Bericht zu eingeleiteten EVs gegen Bürger anderer Staaten und Einwohner, 6 Jan. 1982, 3.
[10] BArch, DE 1/21882, fos. 8-12. § 7 of the Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der DDR und der Regierung der Republik Irak über die berufliche Aus- und Weiterbildung von Bürgern der Republik Irak in Betrieben und Einrichtungen der DDR, 1 Apr. 1959.

East German construction workers. Foreign specialists on the other hand were to be provided with single rooms or apartments.[11]

Although the 1961/62 labour programme failed to materialise, the agreement with Hungary, signed in 1967, incorporated many of its conditions. It stipulated that the collective accommodation was to meet the "normal customs" of Hungary and the GDR. This was open to interpretation, as a classified directive authorised by the Council of Ministers and issued by the SAL some months later made clear. It ruled that four to six workers were to share a room with each worker having a minimum of 4.5 square meters of personal space.[12] Problems in the recreational sphere led to a modification of hostel regulations in July 1974. The maximum number of workers per room was now reduced to four, while the minimum amount of personal space per worker was increased to five square meters. In addition, "educators" or *Heimerzieher* were to be appointed to hostels with more than 150 residents to provide for the "general human and moral education" as well as for the "purposeful leisure-time activities" of the workers.[13]

Subsequent labour agreements contained the general standards set out in the revised Hungarian agreement. Significantly, however, new guidelines issued by the SAL in 1980 dropped the clause that the accommodation had to meet German norms. It was uncharacteristically vague on accommodation conditions, merely suggesting that contract workers were to be afforded "living space appropriate for communal accommodation". In response to the growing numbers of women contract workers – a characteristic of the post-1978 labour agreements – the guidelines also called for gender segregation.[14] Again, standards were open to interpretation, suggested by the fact that two years later the SAL felt it necessary to state in a revised set of guidelines that foreigners' hostels were to be of a solid construction and not "huts" or prefabs.[15] These new guidelines added that factories were to practise the "most stringent thrift" in furnishing and fitting the hostels and to this end it provided at itemised list of what

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[11] BArch, DE 1/9408. fo. 95. Beschluß des Präsidiums des Ministerrats über die Verbreitung der Aufnahme von Werktätigen aus sozialistischen Ländern, n.d. [ca. Sept. 1961].

[12] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. § 9 des Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der DDR und der Regierung der UVR über die zeitweilige Beschäftigung junger ungarischer Werktätiger zur Erwerbung praktischer Berufserfahrung im sozialistischen Betrieben der DDR, 26 May 1967. See also the SAL Direktive zur Durchführung des Abkommens, 18 Jan. 1968.

[13] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Vereinbarung DDR-Ungarn zur Durchführung des Abkommens, 12 July 1974.

[14] Rahmenrichtlinie [der SAL] zur Durchführung von Regierungsabkommen zwischen der DDR und anderen Staaten über die zeitweilige Beschäftigung ausländischer Werktätiger in Betrieben der DDR, 1 July 1980. Reproduced in: Eva-Maria & Lothar Elsner, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus*, Rostock, 1994, 140-65.

[15] Richtlinie [der SAL] für die Unterbringung ausländischer Werktätiger in Gemeinschaftsunterkünften vom 8 Feb. 1982. Reproduced in Andreas Müggenberg, *Die ausländischen Vertragsarbeitnehmer in der ehemaligen DDR*, Berlin, 1995, 99-102.

every worker was entitled to (from beds and blankets down to the individual pieces of cutlery). This was an indication that the SAL was attempting to force thrifty factories into providing a minimum of standards and to rein in the more generous ones. As it was the duty of factories to decorate and furnish the hostels, living conditions could vary from hostel to hostel or even within the same hostel, which gave rise to complaints from the workers. A hostel in Bad Langensalza, for example, housed Vietnamese and Cuban workers. The former, employed by the local VEB Schuh- und Lederwaren, enjoyed better furnishings than the latter, who worked at the VEB Westthüringer Kammgarnspinnerei in nearby Mühlhausen.[16]

Other sources point to the fact that many workers enjoyed far more than the minimum standards outlined in official agreements and directives. As an Algerian newspaper reported in 1979, Algerian workers in Schönebeck lived in a purpose-built hostel close to the factory and each room was furnished with beds, tables, closets and fridges. Tulips and Algerian postcards adorned the rooms, where the contract workers relaxed listening to their radios and, in some cases, hi-fis. Communal facilities consisted of a kitchen, television room, laundry, and showers. In Hoyerswerda, conditions were even better. Algerians had an apartment block to themselves with six workers sharing three-bed roomed flats, each equipped with a kitchen and a bathroom.[17] It is possible that SAL state secretary Horst Rademacher had such conditions in mind when, at a meeting of the central task force on contract workers in 1979, he called for an end to what he saw as the overgenerous treatment of contract workers by some factories which he claimed misused state funds in presenting workers with gifts. In doing so the factories helped

> impede the integration of these citizens in their native countries because the drop in living standards appears all the more extreme. Such difficulties are apparent in the Algerian workforce and the first indications are also appearing among the Cuban workers.[18]

The Mozambican workers employed at the Fajas factory in Suhl from 1980 lived in their hostel two to a room. Previously the same rooms had slept six German apprentices. Views on the hostel varied among the Mozambican workers as well as Germans. A visual insight into conditions and life in this particular hostel is provided by the award-

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[16] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 17. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung zum Stand der politisch-operativen Sicherung ausländischer Werktätigen im Bezirk Erfurt, 9 Mar. 1988.
[17] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. SAL translation of Algerian newspaper article by Abdelaziz Sebaâ in *Algérie actualité*, 14-20 June 1979, 10 [of translation].
[18] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41613. Protokoll über die Beratung der zentralen Arbeitsgruppe zur Leitung des Einsatzes [...] ausländischen Werktätigen am 16. Mai 1979, 23 May 1979, 2.

winning photo series entitled "Solidarity" produced by the Suhl camera club Kontrast.[19] Some of the photos display tidy rooms adorned with posters of women or the hunting weapons produced by the factory, trophies, and in one case a radio. However, the countenances of most of the workers betray a sense of tiredness, if not boredom and resignation. Perhaps they had just come back from work. On the other hand, some workers are fashionably dressed and seem ready to go out.[20] In 1982, an East German girlfriend of a Mozambican worker described the atmosphere in the hostel as bare and lifeless, devoid of any privacy. Twenty years later, a former resident, who remained in Suhl after the *Wende*, recalled the overheating in the hostel which he felt contrasted with the utter lack of emotional care provided for its residents. In a damning comparison, he likened the building to those provided in South Africa for Mozambican workers during the Apartheid era. Yet another former resident, who returned to Mozambique after his contract expired, expressed a totally different retrospective view. On a brief return visit to Germany in 2002, he was amazed and saddened to see that the building had been demolished and exclaimed that: "We'd have been happy to have had such homes in Mozambique."[21] The hostel clearly represented a marked improvement to what its residents had previously been accustomed. These differing opinions show that perceptions are always subjective, involve a comparison with a particular norm, and are strongly influenced by retrospective influences.

Official regulations envisaged "continuous" and "strict" supervision of contract workers in the hostels and the workplace. This was the responsibility of a number of East German and foreign personnel. Wardens (*Heimleiter*) were responsible for supervision in the hostels. In ensuring that the terms of the labour agreements were implemented in the factories, foreign supervisors (*Beauftragten*), who were usually appointed by the embassy of the country providing the labour, liaised with East German supervisors (*Betreuer*), who were selected by the employing factory.

However, just as the ability to provide suitable accommodation often failed owing to a lack of preparation and resources, so too did the system of control in the hostels and the workplace. Wardens were not always up to the task of implementing stringent rules and regulations on everything from the registration of visitors, to implementing lights out, to the maintenance of order and cleanliness. Contract workers were able to take

[19] Consisting of 32 black and white prints of varying size arranged into four thematic sequences (living, working, politics, and learning), it was a gold medal winner at the 19th Arbeiterfestspiele in 1982.
[20] See *Fotografie*, 37:4 (1983), 128f. My thanks to Dr. Josie McLellan for alerting me to this source.
[21] Landolf Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, Berlin, 2002, 21, 55, 63, and 11.

advantage of these shortcomings. Vietnamese workers, for example, consciously took advantage of the inability of wardens to distinguish them from one another.[22]

An analysis of police situation reports from a number of *Bezirke* over a two year period (from 1977 to 1979) indicate that official regulations were not being enforced thoroughly in many Algerian, Hungarian and Polish hostels. An Algerian hostel in the small village of Lippendorf (*Bezirk* Leipzig) was representative of many. Wardens were only on duty on weekdays from 7am to 10pm. In addition, the influence of the Algerian supervisor was minimal as he had moved out of the hostel some time previously and rarely visited the place to carry out his responsibilities. This, the police complained, left "the Algerian citizens to themselves not only after work but on Sundays and public holidays", adding that trips to drinking establishments in the village and in nearby towns kept the workers occupied, as did the "increasing visits of females to the hostel". The situation in Lippendorf had been developing since the previous year when workers began developing contacts with "very impressionable criminal women who, officially and unofficially, often spend days in the hostels, indeed travelling from all parts of the GDR to do so".[23] Similarly, the lax standards of supervision in a Hungarian hostel in Freital (*Bezirk* Dresden) enabled "asocial" women to stay overnight.[24] Little progress was made by local police in rectifying the situation and a report four years later bemoaned the impossibility of imposing "order and security" in the Hungarian and the Yugoslav hostels.[25]

The supervisors appointed by the labour-delegating countries were also expected to perform controlling and disciplinary functions. According to a SAL directive issued in 1975, Algerian supervisors were to assist the factory director in "political-pedagogical work" in order to "encourage the development of collectives" and to "influence the strengthening of workplace discipline" among Algerian workers.[26] Foreign supervisors were also expected to assist the hostel wardens in maintaining discipline. However, the quality of this work varied considerably. In Halle in 1977 the GDR and foreign supervisors were not numerically strong enough "to present the norms of socialist society adequately to the workers during their relatively short stay and to get them

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[22] Michael Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR und ihre Beobachtung durch das MfS*, Magdeburg, 1999, 44.
[23] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattung zu eingeleiteten Ermittlungsverfahren, 18 Jan. 1979, 10.
[24] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 5 July 1979.
[25] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46778. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 10 Feb. 1982.
[26] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Ordnung über die Aufgaben, Rechte und Verantwortung der staatlichen Beauftragten der DVRA in Betrieben der DDR, n.d. [30 Apr. 1976].

involved in it".[27] Another common problem was the reluctance of many supervisors to live in the same hostels as their workers. Paid higher wages than the workers and often enjoying good contacts in their respective embassies, some supervisors were less than enthusiastic about spending their time in the workers' hostels and sought out better accommodation elsewhere, in some cases moving in with East German women they had befriended. This left hostel residents with just a German warden to contend with, as was the case in the Cuban and Algerian hostels in Schwerin in 1982. The result, police claimed, was excessive drinking in the hostels and in surrounding public houses and workplace absenteeism.[28]

In the factories, "minders" or *Betreuer* (sometimes also referred to as *Beauftragten)* were responsible for the workers on a day to day basis. The number of minders in a factory depended on the total numbers of contract workers. In larger factories where there was more than one minder, a head minder was appointed to coordinate their work. The minders were often a key figure for workers, and served not only as a disciplinary instance. Minders listened to the needs of their workers, as noted by an MfS officer in 1977:

> The minders have great influence on the Algerian workers with whom they are in permanent contact. They are acknowledged as advisors on legal problems and are the first people to hear about the difficulties and annoyances of the Algerian workers. Therefore it is necessary to ensure that there is a close working relationship with the head minder in order to contribute to state security.[29]

Minders were vital to helping the workers adjust to their new surroundings, although their popularity depended on whether they perceived themselves as representatives of the state or of the workers. Strict implementation of official rules and directives meant for poor relations between the minder and the workers. Blatant advocacy, on the other hand, resulted in the minders being reprimanded by their own superiors. As some former women minders recalled, the most difficult issue for them were the regulations on pregnancy (see chapter six). Naturally they sympathised with the workers concerned and wanted to help them but they faced disciplinary action if they failed to report cases to factory management.[30]

Georg Mantel, the minder for the Mozambican workers at Fajas in Suhl, was not overtly sympathetic to his charges. His levels of cultural understanding were minimal,

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[27] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Halle, Periodische Information, 1 June 1977.
[28] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46778. BDVP Schwerin, Informationen zu eingeleiteten Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Bürger anderer Staaten, 10 Feb. 1982, 3.
[29] BStU, JHS, MF, VVS 001-339/77. Bernd Thiemann, *Die Aufgaben der Kreisdienststelle bei der politisch-operativen Kontrolle der zeitweilig in der DDR tätigen Ausländer aus nichtsozialistischen Staaten und Gebieten, und die sich daraus ergebenen Erfordernisse für das operative Zusammenwirken mit anderen Organen*, 15 Aug. 1977, 18. See the bibliography for a list of all MfS theses on foreigners.
[30] Hackert-Lemke & Unterbeck, "Betreuerinnen", 97.

criticising the workers for their loudness, dress code, cuisine, punctuality and growing materialism. He had no special training for the job, and as he noted himself, the factory provided nothing in terms of care for the workers in times of emotional crisis, such as a relative's death.[31] The minder for Cuban workers employed at the Elektro-Apparate-Werke in Berlin, Ludwig, was more progressive and drew up his own induction programme for new workers, which involved shopping, using public transport, and a visit to a restaurant. In addition, he organised regular tours, but more importantly, he arranged sex education classes for his Cuban women workers.[32] Similarly, Ana, a Mozambican supervisor at Fajas, earned the nickname "the pill mother" for her efforts in encouraging her compatriots to take contraception.[33] As discussed in chapter six, such assistance was of vital importance as the Cuban, Mozambican and Vietnamese governments summarily ordered the repatriation of any worker who became pregnant during their contracts.

As a number of officials at the Fajas factory in Suhl argued, the rules and regulations outlined in central directives were impractical and even counterproductive in an everyday context. The prohibition of alcohol in the hostels, for example, led only to more public drinking, which the personnel manager (a former military officer) had also experienced in the NVA. Thus, he refrained from applying the ban. Likewise, the rules on cleanliness in the kitchens were just as unenforceable in hostels occupied by contract workers as by Germans.[34] Other accounts suggest that pressure from the workers resulted in a relaxation in the ban on cohabitation. The Cuban workers O. and R. were partners, who like other couples in the same building, had won the concession to share a room soon after arriving even though this was officially forbidden. Although they shared the room with another Cuban woman, they created a private sphere of sorts for themselves by means of a curtain partition which they erected.[35]

Hostels were not always purpose-built and workers were frequently housed in apartments designed for East German families. As the police in Halle noted with concern in 1977, the "objective conditions" of hostels largely determined the level of enforcement of "order and security" in them. A workers' hostel in Buna had six entrances but only one porter's desk which enabled Cuban contract workers to avoid visitor controls. In addition, the fact that they shared the building with German women

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[31] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 89-95.
[32] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 71f.
[33] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 125.
[34] Ibid., 40f.
[35] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 40.

workers only served to complicate matters further, police claimed.[36] Indeed, in some areas suitable buildings were not available to accommodate foreign workers collectively. In Leipzig, for example, Algerian workers employed by the VEB GISAG foundry were dispersed throughout the city in a number of hostels.[37]

The assertiveness of contract workers served to limit the authority of their compatriot supervisors, who had to thread a careful line between fulfilling official requirements and representing the aspirations, expectations and demands of the workers. Algerian supervisors were often elected by their fellow workers, and depending on the strength of the workforce, continued to work alongside them.[38] As such, Algerian workers expected their supervisors to represent their interests and resorted to a variety of traditional methods such as social ostracism or even physical violence in dealing with unpopular supervisors. In some cases, such pressure led to the sacking of the supervisor and the appointment of a new one.[39]

At the Fajas factory in Suhl, the authority of the supervisors and wardens declined gradually owing to the assertiveness of the Mozambican workers. In the weeks subsequent to their arrival in the hostel, Fabian, the supervisor (who was a functionary in the FRELIMO youth wing) was in control, maintaining discipline by means of regular drills, parades and political meetings. Yet, these manifestations were quickly abandoned according to a disappointed but observant East German neighbour and replaced by loud music, late nights, and the unwelcome whiff of garlic chicken, a Mozambican speciality. The will of the workers also impaired the authority of the East German warden, who had to issue any formal requests to the workers via Fabian, whose own authority and writ was increasingly limited. Indeed, workers even refused to present identity cards to the warden when entering the building, claiming that their "black skin" was their badge of identity.[40] Greatly outnumbered, the supervisor and warden undoubtedly had little choice but to seek an accommodation with the workers. At this level, administrative authority did not equate with social authority and officials had to adopt a pragmatic approach in order to avoid generating dissent and conflict. In

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[36] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Bericht zum Einsatz kubanischer Werktätiger, 24 Sept. 1979.
[37] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattung zu Straftaten und Vorkommnisse mit Bürgern anderen Staaten, 15 July 1977, 5.
[38] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. §3 of the Protokoll zur Ergänzung und Änderung des Abkommens v. 11. Apr. 1974, 21 Mar. 1976.
[39] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Bericht über der außerordentlichen Kontrollbetratung im WBK Erfurt, 28 Feb. 1983.
[40] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 12, 90, 129.

the late 1980s, some Mozambican supervisors were not much older than the workers which served to greatly limit their authority.[41]

As the numbers of workers trebled between 1986 and 1989, the authority of the East German wardens, supervisors, minders and foreign supervisors suffered accordingly. In one Berlin factory in late 1989, twenty minders had to cater for the needs of 650 contract workers from four different countries.[42] In cases like this, management were simply unable to provide an adequate number of supervisory staff owing to labour shortages and demands to increase production. Authority in the hostels also decreased. According to the Erfurt MfS in 1988, hostels were run in a manner far removed from the targets set by central government:

> Largely due to the unsatisfactory application of visitor and overnight stay regulations in the hostels the accommodation issue creates problems for the DVP. In the vast majority of [hostels] there is no effective control of people's movements, enabling foreigners and GDR citizens to stay overnight illegally as well allowing the resident foreign workers take long-term absences unchecked.[43]

The following year, wardens in Erfurt were complaining that residents confronted them with the "threat and use of force" if they tried to prevent them inviting friends and "dubious female GDR citizens, well known to the police" to the hostel. Only in the Mozambican hostels in Erfurt was there some semblance of "order and security" owing to "permanent and targeted" control.[44] The same month, MfS Main Department XVIII reported that the authority of wardens in Vietnamese hostels had effectively collapsed, necessitating frequent raids by police, customs and factory officials to combat what they saw as illegal activities and customs infringements.[45] Yet, such raids were often frustrated by the actions of contract workers. In Erfurt, for example, they installed in locks and other security devices to prevent the police from confiscating their possessions.[46] These were not the first cases of contract workers frustrating police activity and protecting their hostels. In 1979, police officers investigating a violent attack by Polish on Cuban workers in Guben were unable to interview the main suspects after the Polish "stewards group" (*Ordnungsgruppe*) "requested" them not to enter the hostel, claiming it would sort out the matter.[47] Similarly, in 1982 Libyan apprentices

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[41] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 5. Generalmajor Schwarz, Information über aktuelle Probleme beim Einsatz ausländischer Arbeitskräfte, 11 Sept. 1989.
[42] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 74.
[43] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 16. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988.
[44] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 4. Schwarz, Information, 11 Sept. 1989.
[45] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 28. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung zur politisch-operativen Lage unter den ausländischen Werktätigen, 7 Sept. 1989.
[46] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 17. Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988.
[47] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47851. Sachstandsbericht zum Vorkommnis, 13 June 1979. Ordnungsgruppen, composed of handpicked contract workers, had been set up in a number of towns in an effort to reduce the number of incidents with East German youths.

employed in the railway engineering works at Halberstadt disputed the right of the DVP to search their rooms (as part of an investigation into a rape allegation) on the grounds that the hostel represented Libyan "national territory".[48]

The MfS too had difficulty in penetrating the hostels. As the Erfurt MfS admitted in 1988, its infiltration of contract worker communities was anything but elaborate and failed completely to meet "present and future requirements". None of the 5,100 contract workers in the *Bezirk* had been recruited as unofficial informers, leaving the MfS dependent on the secondary information provided by German informers. Although the workers' supervisors and minders were in the best position to provide information, the Stasi had only begun to tap these channels in the same year and only in the *Kreise* of Eisenach, Nordhausen, and Arnstadt. Yet, only a total of four unofficial informers had been recruited from the wardens and technical staff in the eighty hostels in same three areas. In only one *Kreis*, Langensalza, did the Stasi feel it was well informed on the activities of the Vietnamese workers. This information was provided by a GDR worker who had spent time in Vietnam which equipped him with the linguistic and social skills necessary to engage with and win the confidence of the workers.[49]

The workplace was not the "most important area for contact" between contract workers and GDR citizens, as has been suggested.[50] Rather, as chapter six argues, contact was far more extensive beyond the workplace environment and was not dependent on or a consequence of successful social integration in the factory. As Riedel has convincingly argued, recreational interaction between Algerians and East Germans was more intensive in non-workplace contexts.[51] This assertion is supported by the findings of a survey carried out in 1990 by the Cologne Institute for Social Research and Social Policy and commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs. Although two-thirds of the foreigners surveyed found their German workmates "cooperative" (compared to fifteen percent who described them as negative), only a third claimed that these contacts extended beyond the factory and after working hours. Contact with non-work related friends was much higher. 77 percent of the foreigners questioned claimed to have had such contact, two-thirds of this number on a regular

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[48] BStU, ASt Magdeburg, KD Halberstadt, 739, fo. 47. Mundliche Information IMS Bernd Schulze, 16 Apr. 1982.
[49] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fos. 10-12, 34. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988.
[50] Dennis Kuck, "'Für den sozialistischen Aufbau ihrer Heimat'? Ausländische Vertragsarbeiter in der DDR", in: Jan Behrends et al. (eds), *Fremd und Fremd-Sein in der DDR*, Berlin, 2003, 271-281, here 276.
[51] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus, späte Adoleszenz und Protest. Algerische Vertragsarbeiter in der DDR", in: *KZSS*, 53:5 (2001), 76-95, here 92.

basis. In addition, a quarter of foreigners claimed they spent their free time almost exclusively with East Germans.[52]

The discrepancy between workplace and non-workplace social contact was always apparent, as illustrated by the experience of some Algerian workers in the early 1960s. Although the FGDB bemoaned that the Algerians were "barely" involved in "internal factory life", what it effectively meant was that they were not being exposed to the correct type of "political education and development". The same report contained implicit proof that contact was taking place, but as it had developed outside of the realm prescribed by the authorities, it was portrayed in the worst possible terms. It referred to the alleged womanising and drinking of foreign workers, adding that some Algerians living in Bitterfeld refused to work and had no income but could rely on the financial support of some East German women they had befriended in the locality.[53] This type of behaviour contrasted with the kind encouraged by the authorities, who wished to regulate binational contact and use it for political purposes. As one critical Indian student remarked in 1956, this led to foreigners being paraded "like show horses" at factory meetings and at political events.[54] Foreigners became a regular component at stage-managed party and trade union political manifestations, as captured in one report from late 1953: "Our Korean friends have been invited with great enthusiasm to many societal events. Everywhere they are greeted as the daughters and sons of the heroic Korean people."[55]

It was the existence of uncontrolled social interaction rather than the social isolation of foreigners that forced the FDGB to draw up its first "guidance programme" in May 1961, which incidentally coincided with the SED's move to legalise the international students' associations (see the previous chapter). The directive called for the appointment of a *Betreuer* or minder for every worker, instructed factory trade union branches to organise social and recreational activities, and encouraged the signing of "friendship contracts" between German brigades and foreign workers.[56] Friendships were not to develop autonomously and freely but were to be pre-arranged and managed.

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[52] The results were published by Wilhelm Breuer (ed.), *Ausländerfeindlichkeit in der ehemaligen DDR. Studie zur Ursachen, Umfang und Auswirkungen von Ausländerfeindlichkeit im Gebiet der ehemaligen DDR und zur Möglichkeiten ihrer Überwindung*, Köln, 1990. Quoted in: Elsner, Eva-Maria & Lothar, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus*, Rostock, 1994, 61.

[53] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/20/354, fos. 134-37. Deubner (FDGB) to Röhner (Abt. Int. Verbindungen, SED), 21 Mar. 1961.

[54] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/639, fos. 89-95, here 91. Report on Tag der Auslandsstudenten, 20-21 Jan. 1956.

[55] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/640, fo. 52. Bericht [der SHF] über das Studium der koreanischen Studenten in der DDR, 24 Nov. 1953.

[56] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8297. Beschluß (S 329a/61) des Sekretariats zur Betreuung der ausländischen Arbeiter in der DDR, 29 May 1961.

Guidelines of this type were not a recipe for success and could not prevent foreigners interacting as they pleased with East Germans. From 1968 to 1970, the Sudanese trainee Ibrahim Omar Ahmed was the only foreign worker in the Makarenko factory in Weida. Although his factory-appointed "sponsor" and the factory director were keen to invite him to their homes, he chose to make his own friends in the town and also had extensive contacts with compatriots studying in Magdeburg.[57] Neither did the guidelines do much for foreign workers who had difficulty in making friends and who felt isolated in the GDR. In a letter written in early 1962 a Laotian worker living and working in Frankfurt/Oder described his predicament to a Belgian friend and fellow refugee thus:

> I no longer have a father, and I have no friends. No one cares for me. Sometimes I wander totally alone through the streets, in the cold or go rambling in the countryside. Then there are moments when I'm led astray by my emotions: why continue living? But then I think and say, do nothing foolish, I have to live, every worker is my friend and the entire working class is my fatherland and then my loneliness is over. You and I are struggling for the same thing. [...] For the dispossessed like me, it will take a long time to build a new life for myself in this new society where there is no exploitation or injustice.[58]

Needless to say, the levels of interaction between foreigners and East Germans depended on local conditions, the inclinations of the communities in the factories and towns where the foreigners lived, and ultimately on the foreigners themselves. The presence of foreign workers or apprentices offered East Germans the chance to progress beyond the anonymity of collective proletarian internationalism and solidarity to more individual and personal forms of friendship. But as two examples demonstrate, the FDGB hierarchy was often suspicious of grass-roots initiatives to help foreigners. This was the experience of Nguyen van Lam, who came to the GDR as a "sick child" and who returned to Vietnam as a qualified glass blower in 1964. He seems to have been received well by his East German colleagues in Döbern and Weißwasser where he worked, studied and qualified. One colleague recalled "our little friend Lam" as a "hard working, ambitious and intelligent young man" who frequently volunteered to keep the glass ovens going at nights and during the weekends. After his return to Vietnam, he kept up correspondence with some of his former colleagues. In one letter, dated October 1966, he described graphically the effects of the US aerial bombardment of his native city Haiphong, adding that he was forced out of need to sell the moped he had taken back with him from the GDR. Moved by his appeal, his former workmates organised a collection to buy him a new moped. Although the workers requested the assistance of the FDGB in Berlin in sending the bike to Vietnam, it took just under a year for this to

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[57] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8337. Leistungseinschätzung, 22 Jan. 1970, 2f.
[58] BArch, DO 1/34.0/32179. Notes of conversation with Alfons Rondeu about Sopha Sissane, 17 Apr. 1962.

take place.[59] In another case, a group of five Congolese trade unionists and supporters of the murdered prime minister Patrice Lumumba, who had come to the GDR to study at the HSDG at Bernau but who feared repression at the hands of the new regime in Kinshasa if they returned home, spent two years working in factories while the FDGB deliberated on whether or not to deport them. According to the scant archival material available, the workers seem to have settled in well in the towns where they were sent. Two got work in a detergent factory in Genthin and were involved in a local dance group. Another was given a job as a crane operator in a steelworks in Gröditz, attended night school in the hope that he could study economics at university and even won the support of his factory for his plans. Yet, the FDGB's International Department instructed the factory to refrain from doing anything that would prolong his stay in the GDR.[60]

Some foreigners' testimony shows that relations in the factories were in no way homogeneous and indicates that the attitudes of East Germans towards foreigners were generally determined by a number of factors, such as their position in the factory hierarchy (management, foreman, skilled or unskilled worker), gender, and age. Equally important was the fact that contract workers were generally employed in the lower-tier jobs in production, worked unconventional shifts, and with time came to form the majority in particular work collectives in many factories. Increasingly, foreigners found themselves working alongside the less-skilled, less-successful and less-educated East German workers. Many of these East German workers found an easy target in contract workers for their pent-up frustrations.

The Vietnamese worker H., employed in a Brandenburg factory, enjoyed the rare opportunities he had to work with Germans as it enabled him to improve his German language skills. He was on good terms with his forewoman and had received a few invitations from East German colleagues to visit their homes. In general, he claims he got on better with the older workers as he found his younger, East German women colleagues particularly irritable and unfriendly. The opposite was the case for O., a Cuban employed in a Berlin textile factory, who hated the loud and contemptuous way older workers addressed their younger colleagues, regardless of nationality. On the other hand, she described her younger East German colleagues as "passive". Although most Cubans had been invited to a German home at least once for a visit or for a

[59] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/13/130/2043. Lam to Frau Kubaschk, 7 Oct. 1966 and other documents.
[60] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8355. This file contains correspondence on case, dating from 25 Apr. 1965 to 11 Nov. 1968. Although the five left in April 1966, they returned to the GDR that December but were deported a second time four months later.

birthday party, there was little interaction at the weekends and Cubans and East Germans rarely went out to discos together. Her boyfriend on the other hand got on very well with a colleague's son and they trained in boxing and karate together. Overall, O. claimed, she got on best with the Polish workers, who had invited her and many more Cubans to visit their homes in Poland.[61]

As Scherzer's interviews carried out in 1982 in the Fajas factory in Suhl show, foreigners encountered a wide spectrum of the East German public in the workplace. Some workers were hostile, while others were sympathetic. 19-year-old Carmen Dietz typified the latter. She worked in the "Kacomba" brigade and although she knew the term had something to do with Mozambique, was unsure of what it meant. She spoke out in favour of allowing her Mozambican colleagues attend the brigade party, had no problem sitting beside them in the factory canteen, and felt like punching those who argued that they were responsible for the filthy state of the factory. She claimed that her attitudes, although shared and supported by some of her friends, were rejected by many of her colleagues, men in particular.[62]

Other sources portray a more miserable climate in the factories. In a glass factory in Oschatz in 1979, an Algerian worker was punched on the ear by his foreman for taking a long break, while another, who was poorly educated, was taunted by his foreman for not taking skills training.[63] In late September 1989 after a strike by Cuban workers in a synthetics factory in Wittenberge (*Bezirk* Schwerin), an investigation into conditions uncovered the widespread abuse of contract workers. Not only had management transgressed a number of labour regulations regarding working hours, sick pay and holiday leave, but East German workers had made Cubans clean up after them and referred to them as "*Neger*".[64]

The attitudes of contract workers towards work and the workplace varied widely just as they did among the East German workforce. Attitudes were often influenced by the specific terms and conditions set out in the different labour agreements, their implementation by the employing factory, as well as the personal, social and economic needs of individual workers. Crucial in this regard were the opportunities made

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[61] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 45. Röhr also notes the hospitality of Polish transit workers employed along the Oder-Neiße border, who invited German colleagues to their homes. However, such visits were not possible during the political disturbances in the early 1980s. *Hoffnung. Hilfe. Heuchelei. Geschichte des Einsatzes polnischer Arbeitskräfte in Betrieben des DDR-Grenzbezirks Frankfurt/Oder 1966-1991*, Berlin, 2001, 182, n. 194.

[62] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 112 and 115.

[63] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Info der SAL über Anzeichen eines Arbeitskonflikts, 19 Jan. 1979.

[64] Sandra Gruner-Domić, *Kubanische Arbeitsmigration in die DDR 1978-1989. Das Arbeitsabkommen Kuba-DDR und dessen Realisierung*, Berlin, 1997, 32-37.

available to the workers to purchase consumer goods and to send these or cash remittances home. There were considerable differences in this regard. Polish contract workers could take home 80 percent of their wages in goods. Vietnamese workers on the other hand could bring home goods valued at 50 percent of their total net income earned over five years. Remittance rates also varied. While Algerians could send home 40 percent of their net wages,[65] Cuban, Mozambican and Vietnamese workers could only transfer 60 percent of their net earnings exceeding 350 or 360 marks in remittances. In the Mozambican case, this money was misappropriated to help repay Mozambique's debt with the GDR without the consent or knowledge of the workers.[66]

Not surprisingly, early reports on the norm fulfilment of Algerian refugees in the early 1960s demonstrate that there was no standard work pattern among foreign workers. At the Sachsenring car factory in Zwickau, officials noted that "when it comes to work, the Algerians are in no way inferior to their German colleagues". Similarly, Algerians working in a garage in Werdau were held in high esteem by their German colleagues, many of whom had contact with them outside of working hours. Only a paper mill in Flöha was unhappy with its seven Algerian employees, who only managed 50 to 60 percent of the norm. Yet, as a visiting functionary implied, the German workforce was less than exemplary according to East German standards, consisting mainly of returnees from West Germany and former convicts.[67] Foreigners who failed to fulfil work norms faced expulsion from the country. Of the 202 Algerians granted asylum by 1960, for example, an eighth were subsequently expelled after proving themselves to be "work-shy and asocial elements, unable to take their place in society" according to police.[68]

Unfamiliar with the reality of an industrial society, foreigners sought to maintain their customary daily habits for which officials had little understanding. In 1960, for example, Egyptian workers in Halle were unwilling to work more than four hours a day during the summer,[69] which made total sense in the warmer Egyptian climate. Similarly, thirty years later, Vietnamese workers in a Berlin factory returned to their hostels for

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[65] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Bericht [des SAL] über Ergebnisse des probeweisen Einsatzes von 500 algerischen Werktätigen im Jahre 1974, 13 Dec. 1974, 3.

[66] Hans-Joachim Döring, *'Es geht um unsere Existenz'. Die Politik der DDR gegenüber der Dritten Welt am Beispiel Mosambik und Äthiopien*, Berlin, 1999, 230-239. The *majermanes*, as the Mozambicans who worked in the GDR are known, are currently involved in a campaign in Mozambique to have this money repaid to them.

[67] BArch, DO 1/34.0/29099. Aufnahme von Ausländern in der DDR, 23 Nov. 1959 and subsequent Bericht über eine Dienstreise im Bezirk Karl-Marx-Stadt, 24-27 Nov. 1959.

[68] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41383. Einschätzung, 10 Jan. 1960.

[69] Ibid. Festlegungen von Maßnahmen zur Verbesserung der Arbeit mit den Ausländern, n.d. [ca. June 1960].

naps after their midday meal only to return to work later. Although she tried for years, their East German supervisor claimed she could not get them to drop the habit.[70] Clearly, East German officials and workers suffered from propaganda which tended to glorify particular nations and nationalities as heroic, disciplined and self-sacrificing. Shortly after the arrival of Cuban workers in Halle, for example, the BDVP reported:

> The Cuban workers are not used to the life of an industrial worker. This gives rise to problems regarding work discipline, attitudes to learning, and recreational behaviour. This is expressed in unpunctuality, leaving the workplace during working hours, disregard for the workplace smoking ban, and inattentiveness during class. GDR citizens, especially in the factory collectives, had reckoned with exemplary, military-disciplined Cuban workers. Although their expectations have failed to materialise, no negative attitudes towards the Cuban workers can be ascertained.[71]

Clearly, the Cubans did not see the factory solely as a place of production. Neither did many East Germans for that matter but this was of lesser concern to officials. When contract workers attempted to express themselves in the factories, they overtaxed the cultural limits of their German supervisors and colleagues, as captured in the disquiet of Ludwig, a minder for Cuban workers at the Berlin Elektro-Apparate-Werke in the late 1980s:

> The Cubans tend to conduct themselves in a loud manner, which the [German] colleagues find annoying. They are carefree. They used to sing and even drum during breaks. Of course, they've the feeling for rhythm and when the punching machine is pounding away, they beat along with the time, which the Germans don't like. We had many talks about this, which inhibited them and got them to stop.[72]

Foreign employees were often the best workers in particular plants. In some Erfurt factories in 1988, Vietnamese workers were reportedly using every available opportunity to maximise their income. Especially in light industry, Vietnamese productivity was above-average, while Cuban and Mozambican workers averaged at fifty percent of the norm.[73] Indeed, it was the hard work, diligence, and self-discipline of the Vietnamese – rather than their alleged laziness – that aggravated German workers. As the same report noted, "the readiness of the [Vietnamese] to carry out special shifts, to work on Sundays and public holidays, as well as shift work, is the cause of the growing problems in the cooperation with GDR workers".[74] The presence of hard-working foreign workers served at times to expose the low productivity levels of GDR workers. Indeed, a report the following year noted that Vietnamese workers who were fulfilling the norm by 130 percent in the Erfurt textile factories Modetreff in

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[70] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 77.
[71] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Bericht zum Einsatz kubanischer Werktätiger, 24 Sept. 1979.
[72] Quoted in Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 70.
[73] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 6. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988.
[74] Ibid.

Arnstadt, Cottana in Mühlhausen, and Nadelwerk in Ichtershausen were condemned as "norm breakers" by their GDR colleagues.[75]

At the Fajas factory in Suhl, the performance of the Mozambicans on the assembly lines stood in stark contrast to that of many of their East German colleagues. Accommodating the desire of the contract workers to maximise their wages and to overcome the effects of low productivity on the part of East German workers, foreman Rudi Gradtke (b. 1921) allowed them to work up to 160 hours overtime a month, although this was illegal under the labour laws. The East German assembly line workers were an undisciplined and uneducated "pack of hoodlums" (*Sautruppe*) he believed, pointing out that they spent their shifts drinking in a nearby bar. Gradtke, who proudly defined himself as a proletarian, admired the ability of the Mozambicans to identify the contradictions of socialist society, questioning the levels of waste on the part of GDR workers, for example.[76] They reconfirmed his belief that socialism could work, something he claimed to have believed in passionately since entering Fajas shortly after the war.

In Erfurt in 1988, Mozambican workers only averaged fifty percent of the norm but a year later the MfS noted a marked improvement in their "attitude towards work and willingness to work special shifts". In addition, none had been involved in workplace accidents and they were less likely than East Germans to be sick or involved in disciplinary transgressions. The factories only complained about the poor quality of the products produced by the Mozambicans.[77] As most Mozambicans had never worked in an industrial environment before coming to the GDR, their improved performance can undoubtedly be attributed to their gradual adjustment to factory life. In addition, the decision to reduce the compulsory wage transfer from sixty to forty percent in May 1989, which saw an increase in the actual wages of Mozambican contract workers, may also have helped boost performance. While personal motivation ultimately determined the willingness of workers to fulfil the norms, some factories resorted to disciplinary measures to compel contract workers into producing more. In an effort to cut down on absenteeism, for example, officials at the VEB Elektro-Apparate-Werke in Berlin threatened to withhold the separation allowance from Cuban workers or to prohibit them from taking motorbikes purchased in the GDR back to Cuba.[78]

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[75] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 9. Schwarz, Information, 11 Sept. 1989.
[76] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 78-82.
[77] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 1. Schwarz, Information, 11 Sept. 1989.
[78] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 44.

Contract workers were thus in a precarious position. They harvested the resentment of the East German workforce if they worked too hard and the condemnation of officials if they produced too little. By never spelling out publicly the contribution made by the contract workers to the economy or their work rates, East German officials left the issue open to rumour and confusion. Only in March 1989 did some newspapers publish norm rates in what was undeniably part of an SED media offensive, kicked off some days previously by Egon Krenz's claim to the Volkskammer that contract workers were "creative partners for the common good".[79]

The attitudes of contract workers towards training were also complex. If foreigners wished to acquire training and take on an apprenticeship, they faced considerable difficulties and burdens. The most prominent obstacle was language: contract workers first had to acquire an adequate standard of German before they could attend training classes. The short language course provided to incoming workers after their arrival in the GDR, which lasted only a few weeks, was often not enough to allow them take up training.[80] There was also a crucial difference between the pre- and post-1978 agreements. In the former, training was provided by the factories on site, albeit outside of working hours. In the latter, however, training was mainly on offer though the regular adult education system. The low levels of language proficiency and education as well as the fact that the workers were employed in a three-shift system frustrated their attendance at such courses. Workers did want to learn, however, but demanded that classes not encroach on their free time. Indeed, one of the demands of an Algerian strike in Neustadt in December 1975 was for German and maths classes to be held during working hours.[81] As one German teacher reported to the Algerian newspaper *El Moudjahid* in the same month, some workers argued that they learned more German from their East German girlfriends than in his two-hour a week evening class.[82] Social activity took priority over training for some workers. Four years later, another Algerian newspaper reported how a minority of Algerian workers were too exhausted to attend

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[79] Cubans fulfilled 105.3 percent of the norm, Vietnamese 101.9, and Mozambicans 101.5 percent. *Sächsische Zeitung*, 10 Mar. 1989. A similar article entitled "Valuable strength in the factories" appeared in the CDU paper *Neue Zeit* two days previously. There is no need to dispute the figures and in 1989 the Berlin Elektro-Apparate-Werke factory noted no real discrepancies, with Cubans working 99.5 percent of the norm, Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 72. For Krenz' comments, *ND*, 4-5 Mar. 1989.

[80] Edith Broszinsky-Schwabe, "Die DDR-Bürger im Umgang mit 'Fremden' - Versuch einer Bilanz der Veraussetzungen für ein Leben in einer multikulterellen Gesellschaft", in: Sanem Kleff et al. (eds), *BRD-DDR. Alte und Neue Rassismen im Zuge der deutsch-deutschen Einigung*, Frankfurt a.M., 1990, 18-46, here 25.

[81] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6453. Information über die Arbeitsniederlegung algerischer Werktätigen im VEB Fortschritt Neustadt, 15 Dec. 1975.

[82] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7030. Translation of Algerian newspaper article entitled "Im Einsatz in der DDR: Gastarbeiter nicht wie möglich", *El Moudjahid*, 27 Dec. 1975, 9 [of translation].

evening class owing to their propensity to stay out at "dance bars until four in the morning".[83]

The frequent reference in police reports to the "misunderstandings" between foreigners and East Germans suggests that the language proficiency of contract workers was not always optimal. Surprisingly, or perhaps tellingly, the files contain few references to workers' proficiency levels. Undoubtedly, as the numbers of foreign workers grew, as was the case with Vietnamese workers in the late 1980s, this added a further disincentive to learn German.

Another impediment towards skills acquisition was the low educational standard of a minority of workers, particularly among the Algerian, Mozambican, and Angolan cohorts. Algerians came from the most varied social milieus, ranging the urban to the rural, encompassing near illiterates to qualified personnel. Of the first Algerian cohort, 8.5 and 9.5 percent had only three or four years schooling respectively, while 82 percent had five or more years of schooling.[84] Thus, close on 20 percent would have found learning German and taking on an apprenticeship a difficult task. Interestingly, in 1979 Algerian participation in language and theoretical classes in a factory in Schönebeck reflected a similar statistical breakdown: a fifth of the Algerian workforce stayed away from class, while the attendance rate of the remainder vacillated between 30 to 120 percent.[85] In 1979, Rademacher of the SAL claimed that experience had shown that contract workers found it extremely difficult initially to adapt to life in the GDR, anticipating that factories would have to delay the deployment of new Mozambican workers to the production lines in order to allow them catch up on their "elementary education".[86]

On the other hand, workers were often disinterested in training as they already had qualifications. Up to 60 percent of Hungarian workers, for example, were already qualified before coming to the GDR. As they were generally not employed in positions analogous to their skills, many chose to return to Hungary.[87] Similarly, many Vietnamese contract workers employed under the terms of the 1980 labour agreement,

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[83] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. SAL translation of Algerian newspaper article by Abdelaziz Sebaâ in *Algérie actualité*, 14-20 June 1979, 4f. [of translation]. For the recollections of Algerian workers of East German nightlife see, Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus", 84.

[84] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Bericht [des SAL] über Ergebnisse des probeweisen Einsatzes von 500 algerischen Werktätigen im Jahre 1974, 13 Dec. 1974, 2. See also: *Algérie actualité*, 14-20 June 1979, 6.

[85] *Algérie actualité*, 14-20 June 1979, 4f.

[86] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41613. Protokoll über die Beratung der zentralen Arbeitsgruppe zur Leitung des Einsatzes [...] ausländischen Werktätigen am 16. Mai 1979, 23 May 1979.

[87] This was recorded in *Nepszabadsag*, the central Hungarian Communist Party paper, on 18 & 21 Jan. 1968, see Sandor Kiss, "Ungarische Gastarbeiter in der DDR", in: *Osteuropäische Rundschau* 16:1 (1970), 16f., here 17.

had already received training in the GDR under previous training and education agreements. In addition, under the 1987 agreement revision, the Vietnamese government agreed that half of all future cohorts would consist of workers already equipped with a GDR craft certificate.[88] This explains why the proportion of skilled workers among the Vietnamese workforce was relatively high, even though the labour exchange agreement did not envisage the provision of training as a priority. In the Ludwigsfelde car factory in the late 1980s for example, a small number of Vietnamese workers were master craftsmen while 60 to 65 percent were skilled workers.[89] The fact that so many Vietnamese workers were already qualified may explain why one East German minder felt that her Vietnamese workers had little regard for training, lacked foresight and were preoccupied with day-to-day culture.[90] As the following chapter examines in more detail, economic collapse and mass unemployment in Vietnam pushed contract workers from there to focus on wage maximisation and material acquisition rather than on apprenticeships that were of little benefit in Vietnam.

Irrespective of their nationality, contract workers tended to prefer particular skills and trades over others, sensing that these would stand in their favour upon their return from the GDR. Thus, almost all the Algerian workers in Schönebeck in 1979 wanted to become mechanics, welders or electricians in the belief that only these trades guaranteed a job and a good income in Algeria.[91] This led to tensions with the authorities, who generally showed little understanding for the individual training needs of workers. In the early 1960s, five Nigerian engineering apprentices employed at the semiconductor plant in Frankfurt/Oder complained that the training on offer was unsuited to their needs, while factory officials retorted that they had "muddled views" on the nature of the job and were ignorant of the need for "systematic" training methods.[92] The difficulties were clear: the Nigerians, who had no previous work experience, had to learn German, attend theoretical and practical classes, and were expected to frequent themselves with Marxism-Leninism, and all this within a few years. Similarly, in the late 1980s, the MfS in Erfurt noted that Mozambican workers were unaware of the "political-ideological" necessity of acquiring skills in order to help in the development of their country upon return. Only the *Wohnungsbaukombinat*

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[88] Gruner-Domić, "Beschäftigung statt Ausbildung. Ausländische Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen in der DDR (1961-1989)", in: Jan Motte et al. (eds), *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik - 50 Jahre Einwanderung. Nachkriegsgeschichte als Migrationsgeschichte*, Frankfurt a.M., 1999, 215-40, here 221.
[89] Edith Broszinsky-Schwabe, "Die DDR-Bürger im Umgang mit 'Fremden'", 26.
[90] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 76.
[91] *Algérie actualité*, 14-20 June 1979, 3f.
[92] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/1647. Einsatz ausl. Genossen und Kollegen im Halbleiterwerk Franfurt/Oder, 10 Dec. 1962.

(WBK), a state-run construction company, was relatively successful in encouraging its Mozambican workers to take up a trade.[93] Clearly workers were reluctant to waste time on acquiring apprenticeships for which there was no immediate need in Mozambique. Construction skills were an exception and were always a valuable asset, particularly in neighbouring South Africa, the traditional destination for Mozambican migrant labour. Neither did the labour ministries of the delegating countries pay much attention to the personal wishes of workers. As a 1979 Algerian press article emphasised "workers have to accept the job assigned to them because on the one hand both [governments] have already agreed to this and on the other they were informed of the facts before their departure to the GDR".[94] This effectively left workers with little choice but to withdraw from the labour exchange programme and return home if they disagreed with conditions in the GDR. The most common way to do this was to remain in Algeria while on holiday leave from East Germany. Hungarian workers did the same and the statistics suggest that up to a quarter of the Hungarian workforce in the GDR left their contracts prematurely as they were dissatisfied with pay and conditions.[95]

Despite all the obstacles, many workers were serious about obtaining a trade in the GDR, some even going on strike to force the authorities into fulfilling the training aspect of the labour agreements. At the Fajas plant in Suhl in 1977, for example, half of the sixty-strong Algerian workforce staged a walk out in a disagreement over training. The SAL believed they had a case and instructed management to facilitate their demands.[96] It is perhaps due to the insistence of the Algerian workers and their government that the qualification rate among them was relatively high, as the following table demonstrates:

Table 2. *Total percentage of Algerian workers trained under 1974 agreement (1974-1984) as well as specific data for the second cohort (1975-1979)*[97]

	Total contingent 1974-81 (in percentages)	*2nd cohort 1975-79 (in percentages)*
Total number of workers	7,720	3,257
Craft certificate	51.8	43.8
Master craftsman's certificate	5.2	7.4
No qualifications/semi-skilled	16.8	21.9
Deported/voluntary return to Algeria	26.2	26.9

[93] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 2. Schwarz, Information, 11 Sept. 1989.
[94] *Algérie actualité*, 14-20 June 1979, 5.
[95] Dirk Jasper, "Ausländerbeschäftigung in der DDR", in: Marianne Krüger-Potratz, *Anderssein gab es nicht: Ausländer und Minderheiten in der DDR*, Münster, 1991,151-190, here 158.
[96] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6459. SAL, Information über eine Arbeitsniederlegung algerischer Werktätigen im VEB Fajas, 24 Oct. 1977.
[97] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Information [des MR] über die Durchführung des Regierungsabkommens mit der DVRA, 17 May 1979, and Sieber und Ehrensperger [Abt. Internationale Verbindungen bzw. Planung u. Finanzen des ZK] to Mittag, 29 Aug. 1981.

Despite the relatively low social status of contract workers in the workplace, they were not entirely helpless and could employ a number of strategies to protect their interests, and in some cases, win concessions from the authorities. Some protests were barely noticeable. Rather unobtrusively, Cuban workers, particularly women, employed at the Elektro-Apparate-Werke factory in Berlin feigned sickness out of protest at being shouted at by German tool setters.[98] Protest also included the more ostentatious and traditional forms such as strikes, go slows, and absenteeism.

The first strike uncovered by this research was in January 1959 and involved three Syrian trainees embarking on a short hunger strike in protest over poor accommodation and training conditions in Magdeburg, where they were employed at the VEB Schwermaschinenbau Karl Liebknecht.[99] Apart from this early example, this research has found evidence of 23 labour strikes, which took place between 1968 and 1989, involving more than a thousand workers from seven different countries (Yugoslavia, Poland, Algeria, Cuba, Vietnam, Mozambique and Angola). The strike demands reflected the issues of concern to the workers. The main bone of contention was the issue of wages (raised in 17 disputes), followed by the issue of training and qualification (raised in three). The poor quality of accommodation was only raised once: in early 1989 by Mozambican workers in a number of areas. While the vast majority of strikes did not always end with the demands of the workers being met, they alerted the SAL officials at central level to particular problems within factories which could lead to improvements. Involvement in a strike did not necessarily result in the expulsion of the workers involved. Although alleged "ringleaders" were expelled in a number of cases, these appear to have been workers who wished to return home in any case or those with a poor disciplinary record.

A successful protest was the strike in 1968 by 84 Yugoslav builders, employed in the construction on the prestigious Oberhof hotel in Thüringen, who staged a three-hour protest for higher wages and a reduction in work norms. Taking advantage of the absence of most of the GDR site management, who were in Berlin for a meeting, they forced the Yugoslav site officials to agree to their demands. Later the Yugoslav officials told their incensed East German colleagues when they returned from Berlin that that was how workplace conflicts were dealt with in Yugoslavia.[100] Less successful was the strike carried out by 23 Poles at a factory in Karl-Marx-Stadt in 1973. They demanded a

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[98] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 72.

[99] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8349. FDGB, Bericht, 12 Jan. 1959. The following month, all 60-odd Syrian trainees were withdrawn for "schooling" purposes to the Baltic resort of Kühlungsborn and returned to their factories and colleges two months later.

[100] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41383. BDVP Suhl, Sofortmeldung, 11 Sept. 1968 and subsequent documents.

minimum monthly wage of 720 marks, two more additional paid holidays to Poland, and free transport between their hostel and workplace. Factory officials refused to meet these demands, pointing out to the strikers that the desired minimum wage was within their reach if they worked hard and long enough. The previous month, few had made this amount however. Eleven had been out on sick pay, while five had been reported for absenteeism and thus were docked the monthly separation allowance of 120 marks. In addition, norm fulfilment was low owing to a lack of qualifications. Interestingly, the strike ended after the German workforce "made an appearance" but whether this involved the German workers encouraging or threatening the Poles to return to work is not clear.[101]

Algerian contract workers were most prepared to strike in pursuit of their demands. Between 1974 and 1984 there was a minimum of 15 Algerian strikes, involving more than 800 workers. In what could be described as an autumn of discontent, six of these strikes took place between October and December 1975, involving close on 17 percent of all Algerian workers employed in the GDR at that time. Wages dominated Algerian concerns, reflected by the fact that the strikes took place in the more labour-intensive but low-wage industrial sectors. In some cases it was the different remuneration of the various contract worker groups that led to the protests. In the mid-1970s, some Algerians were annoyed that Polish "specialists" made considerably more than them. Indeed, as an SED report subsequently pointed out, the labour agreements were to blame for much of the unrest among contract workers as they contained different specifications on remittance levels, social security payments and child benefits.[102] The cause of the first Algerian strike, involving 23 workers at the cement works in Karsdorf (*Bezirk* Halle) in November 1974, was not directly related to working conditions but was a consequence of a French bank strike. As this delayed the transfer of remittances to Algeria, tensions flared as wives wrote complaining to their husbands that they were unable to feed themselves and their families. In the case of one worker, his wife claimed she had to work as a prostitute in order to feed her children.[103]

The most significant strike in terms of the numbers involved, the demands made, and the duration and outcome was staged in the key Gaskombinat Schwarze Pumpe (GSP) plant which lasted for six days in October 1975.[104] It involved 185 workers, who had arrived in the GDR some months previously as part of the second cohort of workers

[101] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6422. Info. zur Arbeitsniederlegung polnischer Werktätiger, 11 May 1973.
[102] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6453. Ehrensperger to Krolokowski, 28 Jan. 1976.
[103] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6422. Information über erste Erfahrungen beim Einsatz algerischer Werktätigen, 27 Nov. 1974, 3.
[104] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7030. The strike wave is covered in detail by this file, passim.

from Algeria. They demanded changes in wages, training, accommodation and recreational conditions, as well as the removal of the existing Algerian trade union secretary in the factory. Significantly, the GSP strikers were still in the training-in period and as such were guaranteed a minimum monthly wage of 482 marks. While the SAL claimed that 90 percent of the 1974 cohort of Algerian workers found these wages sufficient to provide for them and their families, the 1975 cohort argued that they were earning less than they had been promised in Algeria.[105] The GSP workers may have been aggravated in the knowledge that many of their compatriots employed in other factories were earning higher wages, as the following table demonstrates. It shows that the average gross monthly wage earned by Algerians in October 1975 was 620 marks, or 530 marks in net terms.

Table 3. *Average gross earnings of Algerian workers in the GDR in October 1975*[106]

Gross monthly wage	*Number of workers*
901 marks and over	174
701 to 900 marks	632
501 to 700 marks	957
351 to 500 marks	153
Up to 350 marks	58

At the GSP, there was no evidence to suggest that the Algerians were earning less than GDR workers. Rather, the minimum wage afforded to the Algerians – amounting to 482 marks – left them slightly better off than many of their East German co-workers. For example, the 900 East Germans in wage bracket or *Lohngruppe* four earned 456.14 marks working at 155 percent of the norm. Germans in wage bracket five made 494.58 marks working the same norm. Importantly, Algerian wages were supplemented by a monthly food and children's allowances valued at 42 marks and 20 marks per child respectively.

Led by an elected fifteen-member strike committee and supported by the head of the ONAMO in the GDR, Zamoun, the united resolve of the workers resulted in victory. In a move that later enraged the East German factory management and workforce and crucially Erich Mielke, Horst Sindermann (as chairman of the Council of Ministers) granted Horst Rademacher of the SAL full powers to reach a settlement.[107] Rademacher decided to grant the workers an additional separation allowance worth 120 marks per

[105] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Bericht [des SAL] über Ergebnisse des probeweisen Einsatzes von 500 algerischen Werktätigen im Jahre 1974, 13 Dec. 1974, 3.
[106] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6453. Ergebnisse (der Planung u. Finanzen des ZK) und Entscheidungsvorschläge aus dem Lohnvergleich zwischen algerischen Werktätigen und Werktätigen unserer Republik, n.d., [ca. Jan. 1976].
[107] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Sindermann to Dickel, 21 Oct. 1975.

month (which was in line with the entitlements of Hungarian and Polish workers) as well as allowing them more opportunities to work overtime and weekend shifts. The SAL was even prepared to allow all Algerians to move up to wage bracket five, but factory management flatly refused to support this. Another significant concession granted to the Algerians was the right to leave the free onsite "accommodation huts" or *Wohnbaraken*, which also housed 900 German workers, for normal apartments outside the factory grounds. Significantly, the strikers suffered no immediate repercussions. Although the SAL later tried to deport five workers for their involvement in the strike, this was opposed by the ONAMO which correctly pointed out that they had been singled out owing to their previous involvement in petty crime and disciplinary transgressions.[108]

The Algerians were delighted, returning to work in a victorious mood, and according to a report that was clearly sympathetic to the German workers, they boasted: "We went on strike and won, now you see what you've to do to get a wage increase", "If we're not on a 1,000 marks by December, then we'll strike again", and "Now we've more money for drink and the pub".[109] German workers were incensed, arguing that the Algerians had been effectively granted a pay rise without any obligation to increase productivity. In telegraphed petitions to Sindermann and Stoph, they pointed out that the compromise left Algerian workers with a monthly wage of 642 marks, which was more than what German workers in wage bracket six earned (572 marks). In protest, 106 Germans (four of them SED members) resigned from the FDGB. Functionaries who tried to calm the situation among the East German workers reported that this was impossible owing to their "nationalist views and arrogant behaviour" as well as their lack of "class perspective [and] fidelity to party policy".

Undoubtedly spurred on by the success of the GSP workers, Algerians in other factories followed suit despite threats made by the SAL and ONAMO to deport any further strikers without hesitation. The strikes that took place in Oschatz, Rüdersdorf, Bleicherode, Erfurt, Neustadt, Waltershausen, and Boxberg were dominated by wage concerns. This wave of Algerian industrial unrest was largely pacified by the decision of the GDR authorities to grant all Algerian workers the monthly separation allowance of 120 marks from May 1976. Hungarian and Polish workers had always received this payment, which in effect was a disciplinary instrument as the sum was halved if a

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[108] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6453. Information über die Rückführung algerischer Werktätiger, 3 Dec. 1975.

[109] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7030. Information über die Lage im VEB Kombinat Schwarze Pumpe, 27 Oct. 1975, 3f.

worker missed one shift without legitimate reason and cancelled altogether for any additional absences. A year later, the children's allowance paid to Algerian workers was increased from 20 to 25 marks. Algerian wage strikes became less frequent and subsequent protests resulted mainly from disagreements over qualifications and training.

Shaken by the wave of Algerian strikes, the authorities deferred the planned intake of new Algerian workers for 1976 until the following year, arguing the situation required stabilisation. The state initiated a number of measures to reassert its authority and to increase the surveillance of foreigners. The Algerian government was requested to delegate so-called "state supervisors" to factories employing Algerian labour.[110] In addition, in June 1976, the MfS established the interdepartmental "Working Group for Foreigners" (AGA), whose goal was the "central coordination of political-ideological work to prevent foreigners abusing residency in the GDR".[111]

The late 1980s also saw some contract workers go on strike over wages and working and living conditions. While some were successful, most were not. In 1987, 54 newly-employed Cuban construction workers in Leipzig staged a walkout over low wages. The authorities reacted by deporting two "ringleaders", cancelling the separation allowance as well as the bonus paid for carrying out work in atomic power stations.[112] Dissatisfaction among Mozambican workers over wages and accommodation gave rise to a small wave of strikes in early 1989. This was not surprising considering that 60 percent of their earnings over 350 marks were compulsorily deducted from their pay packets to pay off Mozambique's debt to the GDR. The workers' actions may have resulted in encouraging the GDR to finally agree to the appeal of the Mozambican government to reduce the compulsory transfer sum from 60 to 40 percent from May 1989.[113] A series of strikes, this time carried out by Vietnamese construction workers on a number of building sites across the GDR in the spring of 1989, also bore success. The SAL accepted that the Vietnamese were unsuited to the work owing to their "weaker constitution". It also agreed that the training-in period, during which the workers were paid a relatively low basic wage, was too long. As a result, they were given new jobs and allowed to move up the pay scale. As was typical in many other disputes, the

[110] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6423. Abt. Planung und Finanzen, Information über die Parteikontrolle zur Durchführung des Beschlusses des Politbüros des ZK der SED von 10 Feb. 1976, 5 Apr. 1976.
[111] BStU, ZA, BdL, 5566. E. Mielke, Befehl 12/76 zur Bildung einer nichtstrukturellen Arbeitsgruppe Ausländer, 1 June 1976.
[112] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6528. Ehrensperger to Mittag, 15 Apr. 1987.
[113] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 30. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989.

authorities attempted to save some face by deporting a few alleged ringleaders who, they claimed, had made "unacceptable demands".[114]

By the late 1980s, there was evidence to suggest that foreigners could capitalise on their economic and productive power which accrued from their numerical dominance in some factories. By September 1989, almost all foreign workers were employed in production, three-thirds of them as shift workers.[115] Indeed in first nine months of 1989 alone, as the FDGB noted critically, 18,000 German workers abandoned shift work while 28,000 contract workers took it up.[116] The authorities initially welcomed this trend in the workplace. In March 1988, Department XVIII of the Erfurt MfS reported that contract workers, "enticed by supplementary wages", were "employed in carrying out work that is labour-intensive or unhealthy".[117] By and large, it was in favour of the concentration of foreign workers in particular sectors as it

> leads not only to the prevention of conflict with GDR workers but to a possible increase in work productivity and also supports the endeavours of delegating countries, in particular Vietnam, to isolate their citizens in the GDR.[118]

Yet, this analysis ignored the flipside of the increasing over concentration of and over dependency on foreigners in industry. Arguably, conditions in the late 1980s served to enhance the collective strength and internal solidarity of contract workers that had always been evident but which ironically the socialist state had been very slow to appreciate. In the late 1960s, for example, half of all Hungarian workers failed to return to the GDR punctually from their holiday leave in Hungary. There were no mass sackings however and factories had to request the assistance of the Hungarian authorities to arrange their return.[119] And as has been shown, Mozambican workers at the Fajas factory in Suhl refused to accept instructions from their East German supervisors unless they came via their own group leader whose own authority was limited.[120]

Their strength in numbers and indispensability in guaranteeing production targets served to empower foreign workforce even more. A tannery in Hirschberg, which was unable to get East Germans to take up the physically-demanding and dirty jobs at the factory, became totally dependent on Cuban and Vietnamese labour, a situation which the workers took advantage of. Sick rates were high and the Vietnamese produced more

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[114] Ibid., fo. 29.
[115] Ibid., fos. 22-26.
[116] Report of the FDGB on foreign workers and talks with the SAL, 22 Sept. 1989. Quoted in Eva-Maria & Lothar Elsner, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus*, Rostock, 1994, 191.
[117] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 7. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988.
[118] Ibid., fo. 6.
[119] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Vermerk, 25 May 1970.
[120] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 90.

in moonlighting activities than during regular working hours.[121] Given the unavailability of alternative labour sources, there was arguably little the factory could do to enforce discipline. In its last "annual report on the political-operative situation among foreign workers in the GDR", complied in September 1989, Stasi Main Department XVIII noted that "Vietnamese workers in particular are displaying an ever greater level of self-confidence in the way they enforce their interests and often transgress legal basics and societal norms". For example, in retaliation for a raid by customs officials investigating export limit transgressions at the Stern-Radio factory in Berlin, the Vietnamese workers produced less, with norm fulfilment dropping from 113 to 80 percent. Similarly, when officials attempted to investigate 15 cases of alleged theft by Vietnamese workers at the Fortschritt menswear factory in the same city, daily production norms plummeted to 35 percent. Under pressure to meet production targets and with no alternative labour available, the report noted critically that factory and state officials "retreated" from challenging such activity.[122]

Shift work may have helped empower contract workers outside of the workplace too. A minder for Vietnamese workers in Berlin, who was positively predisposed to her charges, claimed the unconventional hours worked by the Vietnamese left them with ample time during the day to locate and purchase the consumer goods they desired.[123] This gave them an advantage over East German workers, who increasingly worked more regular, daytime hours. In general, the attitudes of the contract workers to shift work are difficult to ascertain as their views were not recorded in any great deal by functionaries. Nor is the available testimony of workers particularly informative in this regard. H., a Vietnamese employee in a Brandenburg factory, claimed to have had little problem with the two-shift system in operation in his factory and actually preferred the three-shift rota that was previously in operation. Although he failed to explain why this was the case, at the same time he alluded to the difficulties this caused for workers like himself and his colleagues who shared rooms but worked three different shifts.[124] In his testimony, H. may have been sidelining the negative aspects of working life in the GDR, a tendency Riedel has established was common among Algerian workers. Although they were dissatisfied with working conditions while working in the GDR, they tended to play down these negative aspects in retrospective interviews.[125]

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[121] BStU, ASt Gera, KD Schleiz, 1508. Lederfabrik Hirschberg, n.d. [ca. Autumn 1988].
[122] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fos. 26 and 28. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989.
[123] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 78. According to a *Betreuerin* for Vietnamese workers, who alleged that the Poles did the same but for profit!
[124] Ibid., 36.
[125] Almut Riedel, *Erfahrungen algerischer Arbeitsmigranten in der DDR*, Opladen, 1994, 14-16.

How did the conditions for contract workers in East German factories then fare in the wider, European comparative perspective? In a recent book, Hans Bentzien, a former East German culture minister and last director of GDR state television, has revived the disingenuous argument that there was something fundamentally unique about the East German approach to foreign labour:

> In contrast to the FRG there were no targeted recruitment campaigns to bring millions of 'guest workers' from particular countries like Turkey, Portugal or Greece to work in labour intensive positions or in poorly-paid jobs in the service sector.[126]

Far from representing a unique chapter in the history of European migration, the GDR example fitted the mould in many ways. In both systems, migrant workers formed an underclass or sub-proletariat, serving primarily the economic interests of the host states. Invariably, they were provided with positions that the native labour force was either unwilling or unable to fill. Rising living standards, state-sponsored continuous worker education programmes and labour shortages wooed East German workers out of the less-attractive, labour-intensive jobs in production. Penal reform in the late 1970s, which ended the deployment of prisoners in industry, exacerbated labour shortages at the bottom-end of the job market.[127] Contract workers proved crucial in plugging these gaps in the workforce.

What made the GDR unique in comparison was the strict adherence to a number of guiding principles that had originally informed Western migration policy but which were increasingly discarded in the 1970s and 1980s. Workers could not bring their families to the GDR and had no freedom of job choice or domicile. The rotation principle, also common in the West, was implemented far more rigorously in the GDR. Contract workers were also subjected to a number of forms of official discrimination. Regulations existed barring foreigners from promotion, assuming particular positions or from working in particular factories on grounds of security.[128] Contract workers were subjected to limits on remittance transfer, purchase controls, and the export of consumer goods. Although the rents paid by contract workers appeared low in comparison to Western rates, they did not benefit from the same levels of subvention enjoyed by East German workers. Contract workers paid up to 30 marks per month for a bed and a minimum of five square meters personal space in rooms that accommodated up to four

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[126] Hans Bentzien et al. (eds), *Fragen an die DDR. Alles, was man über den deutschen Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat wissen muß*, Berlin, 2003, 26.

[127] Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 39-41.

[128] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 6. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988. The instrument was entitled Richtlinie des Ministerrats zur Gewährleistung der staatlichen Aufsicht, Sicherheit und Ordnung beim Einsatz ausländischer Bürger in Betrieben und Einrichtungen der DDR v. 1971. BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/B 868. Similar regulations also applied to foreign students and in 1968 Ulbricht ordered the removal of all foreign students from the FSU Jena on security grounds.

workers, while the average working class East German family paid 52 marks monthly for a 63 square meter two-roomed modern flat.[129] Indeed, this exploitative practice had the full support of the *Politbüro*. Although it authorised a massive increase in the numbers of workers from Vietnam in early 1987, it also ruled that they were not to be housed in apartments already "earmarked" for East Germans.[130] Indeed, the grossest form of exploitation was the GDR's policy of creaming off a substantial portion of the wages earned by Mozambican contract workers in lieu of debts owed to it by the Mozambican government. This occurred without the knowledge of the workers, who were led to believe that the deductions would be paid out upon their return to Mozambique.

Contract workers were more vulnerable to disciplinary sanction than their East German counterparts and could be deported for a variety of workplace and social transgressions. In marked contrast to international students, whom the GDR envisaged as a form of diplomatic-political investment which would ensure the propagation of a positive image of the state abroad, contract workers had little chance to denigrate the GDR if they were fired and deported. According to the terms of the labour agreements, the approval of the embassy of the delegating country was required if a factory and the SAL wished to fire a worker. Yet, in cases involving "severe" transgressions of the "socialist work ethic or the norms of societal coexistence", the GDR authorities could act unilaterally.[131] In neither case was the worker given the right to appeal. Indeed, if he or she refused to leave voluntarily, the police could apply to the courts to have them taken into "deportation custody" under the 1979 foreigners' law. Yet, so-called *Rückführungen*, in effect extrajudicial repatriations ordered and carried out by factory officials, were far more common than police deportations. In 1987 in the *Bezirk* Erfurt for example, the courts ordered the deportation (*Ausweisung*) of three contract workers (two Cubans and a Mozambican), while factories requested the repatriation of 70 workers (56 Cubans, 20 Poles, 2 Vietnamese and one Mozambican) on the grounds of deficient work ethic and discipline.[132] Although it is difficult to put a figure on the total percentages of workers deported or repatriated, figures exist for the Algerians. Of the

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[129] Nguyen van Houng, "Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Vietnam und den Vertragsarbeitern aus Vietnam sowie die Situation der Vietnamesen in Deutschland heute", in: Deutscher Bundestag (ed.), *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission*, Baden-Baden, 1999, 1301-1363, here 1328, n. 93. Also observed by Helga Marburger, quoted in Hackert-Lemke & Unterbeck, "Betreuerinnen", 91f.

[130] Resolution submitted by Willi Stoph to the *Politbüro*, 27 Mar. 1987. Reproduced in Müggenberg, *Die ausländischen Vertragsarbeitnehmer*, 56-61.

[131] See 6.17.3 of the Rahmenrichtlinie zur Durchführung von Regierungsabkommen, 1 July 1980. Reproduced in: Elsner/Elsner, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus*, 140-65.

[132] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 33. Übersicht über Fluktuation ausl. Werktätiger 1988.

3,257-strong cohort which arrived in 1975, a staggering 27 percent were deported or repatriated within four years, costing the SAL 450,000 marks in flight tickets, a sum it subsequently deducted from the social security contributions it was obliged to transfer to the Algerian government.[133] Of the 108 Algerians who began work at the Rüdersdorf cement works in 1974, 36 were repatriated within three years. Yet, as the breakdown suggests, some of these departures were voluntary. Ten workers applied to return to Algeria for personal reasons, while two left on health grounds. Yet, in the majority of cases, the return of the workers to Algeria was hardly voluntary. Four were sent back for involvement in criminal offences, ten for "brawling and negative behaviour", and eight for "loitering in the workplace".[134]

According to some statistics, workers from particular countries were more likely to be deported than others. Of the 774 contract workers deported for disciplinary transgressions in 1989 for example, 369 were from Mozambique, 303 from Cuba, 95 from Vietnam and seven from Angola.[135] This must not be taken as evidence of greater wrongdoing on the part of the Mozambican and Cuban workers, however, but as a consequence of the prevalent racist attitudes in the GDR which were primarily directed at black contract workers. As chapter seven discusses in greater detail, a number of MfS reports in the late 1980s noted that the East German public reacted with particular disquiet at perceived disciplinary transgressions carried out by black, especially Mozambican, workers.

Although there can be no doubt that deportations rates were greatly influenced by the personal attitudes of factory officials, who were effectively allowed to decide on what constituted unbecoming behaviour, the presence in the GDR of agents sent by the state security or interior ministries of the labour delegating countries also played a role. They worked covertly in the background with the knowledge of only a few MfS officers. In 1985, for example, two such agents operated in the south-western *Bezirke*, disguised as employees of the foreign trading companies Polservice (Poland) and Cubatechnika (Cuba). The MfS praised the "sound Chekist" work of the Polish officer, a 62-year-old general. In contrast, the Cuban, a major, was dismissed as a "night owl", unable to adapt to GDR "living conditions" and who had crashed his car while drunk. Despite his own personal shortcomings, the Stasi noted that his guiding principle was

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[133] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Information über die Durchführung des Regierungsabkommens mit der DVR Algerien, 17 May 1979, 7. The Algerian government found the rate of repatriations far too high although the ONAMO agreed in every case.

[134] BStU, JHS, MF, VVS 001-339/77. Thiemann, *Die Aufgaben der Kreisdienststelle*, 15 Aug. 1977, 30. Some of the expulsions may have followed a strike by the Algerian workers in 1975.

[135] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 116.

the protection of Cuba's good name, and to this effect, he demanded the immediate repatriation of any worker involved in problems of any kind.[136] This helps explain why the number of Cubans repatriated at the request of factories in Erfurt was disproportionately higher – representing 80 percent of all deportations – compared to workers from other countries.[137] In the late 1980s, Vietnamese Interior Ministry officials were deployed at regional level to guide the Vietnamese supervisors in the factories.[138]

This chapter has attempted to show that the everyday reality for contract workers in the hostels and the workplace was far more complex than has been suggested in the bulk of the secondary literature. Clearly, the levels and systems of control in the workplace and hostels envisaged by the authorities were overambitious and never fully effective. This was in no small part due to the will of the contract workers as well as to inefficiencies in terms of planning and personnel. Although conditions in the workplace were difficult and demanding, contract workers could and did resort to strikes and, more commonly, more discreet forms of protest to demand changes. The GDR therefore meant more for contract workers than the sweat and toil in menial positions and the narrow confines of communal housing blocks and as the subsequent chapters will argue, the position of foreigners in East German society cannot be measured solely with reference to their living and working conditions.

[136] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fos. 12f. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988.
[137] Ibid., fo. 33. Übersicht über Fluktuation ausl. Werktätiger 1988.
[138] Vietnam's senior security official in the GDR was named Minh. See Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 74.

Chapter 5. Foreigners beyond the factory and college walls

Much of the discussion on the social interaction and activities of foreigners in the existing literature has sought to measure this exclusively by focusing on their interaction with the majority population. Not uncommonly, many studies claim that as foreigners had little or no contact with the GDR population, especially in the factories, their level of social interaction was minimal. This argument ignores key aspects of the everyday experience of foreigners in East Germany such as the fact that they spent much of their time interacting with each other and pursuing their own interests. While the reserved attitudes of the German population undoubtedly contributed to this situation, so too did the wishes of the foreigners. For many, it was logical, natural, and convenient to spend time with those who spoke the same language and who shared similar political, cultural, and social backgrounds. Group cohesion was accelerated among foreign students and workers owing to their common classification as foreigners by East German society as well as by virtue of their command of supranational languages, such as English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic. Meaningful social interaction did not always have to involve Germans. In 1969, for example, a KAS report noted the tendency of foreign students to "deliberately cut themselves off" from German colleagues, who for their part, showed little interest in getting to know their foreign classmates.[1] Yet, for many commentators, this self-sufficiency and interdependency in the sphere of social interaction was a result of state-orchestrated ghettoisation. This line of argument tends to view state policy, and especially its housing policy, as the most powerful determinant of foreigners' behaviour and ignores the ability of foreigners to subvert and circumvent state measures in the pursuit of their own everyday social and recreational agendas.

As the previous chapters have argued, student and workers' hostels did not isolate foreigners completely from the surrounding environment, not least owing to the determination and ability of their residents to subvert and evade authority and control. The lax levels of supervision in many hostels gave their residents a certain level of autonomy in their day to day activities. In addition, the often meagre and monotonous conditions in the hostels encouraged residents to explore the surrounding social and

[1] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Analyse der Arbeit im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen der DDR im Studienjahr 1968/69, 15 Oct. 1969, 20.

recreational environments. In Dresden in 1977, for example, police noted that the failure of factory officials to have the faulty television sets and radios in the hostels repaired left the workers with nothing to do but drink.[2]

Apart from Almut Riedel's study, which has observed that former Algerian contract workers fondly recall their recreational exploits in the GDR, the bulk of secondary literature has given the impression that foreigners, particularly contract workers, suffered from widespread social exclusion and marginalisation.[3] This chapter examines the wide variety of everyday recreational activities foreigners engaged in and how these conflicted with East German expectations of "purposeful" recreational activity, paying close detail to activities frowned upon and even suppressed by the GDR authorities, such as drinking, consumerism, travel to the West, and religious pursuits. Rejecting the argument that foreigners lived an isolated and uneventful social existence, it suggests rather that they were empowered and capable of defining their own recreational activities. For many, working and studying in the GDR represented the first break from the traditional bonds of family and social convention, making East Germany an arena for the exploration of lifestyles and social activities inaccessible or forbidden in their native countries. In addition, East German shops were relatively well-stocked compared to home and many foreign workers preferred to spend their free time expanding their material possessions than availing of conventional recreational activities. Although their pursuit of particular recreational activities and material goods at times elicited negative and aggressive reactions from the public on the one hand and attempts at criminalisation and suppression by the authorities on the other, foreigners relied on their own systems of retributive action in attempting to combat these.

Official GDR perceptions on how foreigners were to spend their free time were an eclectic mix of paternalism, racism, and paranoia clothed in the ubiquitous socialist moralising tones of self-improvement and self-sacrifice. GDR officials always stressed the importance of ensuring foreigners pursued "purposeful recreation" in their spare time. What they meant were cultural and recreational activities endorsed by the party and which exposed foreigners to prescribed political, ideological and cultural norms. No form of recreational activity was innocuous according to this mentality, which is best encapsulated in all its aspects in a text prepared in the early 1960s by Prof. Katharina (Käthe) Harig, director of the Herder Institute in Leipzig:

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[2] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 17 June 1977, 7.
[3] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus, späte Adoleszenz und Protest. Algerische Vertragsarbeiter in der DDR", in: *KZSS*, 53:5 (2001), 76-95, here 83.

> Encouraging our [foreign] students to spend their free time constructively and discouraging them from sauntering about, wasting time and taking unhealthy long naps, is a complicated pedagogical task requiring a lot of patience and pedagogical tact to acquaint them with the strict daily timetable that best suits our climatic conditions. The motto of the Herder Institute is 'Wherever we are not lies the enemy' which makes it necessary to keep a watchful eye on whom students spend their spare time with. We have to combat a number of influences which we do not approve of, such as acquaintances with petty-bourgeois thinking people who try to associate with the foreigners, easy girls, and spending nights in unsuitable dance and late bars. Furthermore, we have to create a study milieu that reflects the healthy lifestyle and the broad cultural progress of our people in the GDR.[4]

Accordingly, foreigners not only had to be protected from themselves but from sections of the population which the SED perceived as hostile. Harig was influenced in her approach by the model set by the Moscow Lumumba University, the international students' college established in 1960. In 1961 she observed: "Naturally one can sense the enemy's work in the Lumumba University [which] separates itself from destructive, incapable and deceitful elements within days."[5] Likewise in the GDR, nothing was considered too harmless by officials. When a lecturer of the TH Dresden took it upon himself to organise conversation circles in order to help Chinese students practise their spoken German, he was criticised by the college SED branch for enabling the students to come in contact with a "whole series of indefinable old ladies and others".[6] To this end, officials sought to ensure foreigners associated with "progressive workers". Unregulated social contact served to undermine what the students were told in class about life in the GDR, as leading FDGB functionary Rolf Deubner outlined to the academic council of the HSDG in late 1960:

> I don't want people to get the impression that we think they [the African students] should be treated like children. They need to be included in cultural life because the conversations that they have outside the classroom are, as you know, totally different to the ones inside class. These talks need to be evaluated more because they clearly indicate the kind of problems [the foreigners] have difficulty with.

In agreement was Dr Felgentreu, deputy head of the HSDG, who pointed out that experience had shown him that enabling an African student to share a room with a German student, to visit his home and to accompany him on holidays ensured the omnipresence of "our influence" and prevented "all attempts to import other influences".[7]

Never too far beneath the surface of these arguments was the belief that the GDR had a civilising mission. In its first "supervision programme" for foreign workers

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[4] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/467. K. Harig, Direktorin der HI, Form der Arbeit mit ausländischen Studenten in der außerunterrichtlichen Zeit, n.d. [ca. 1963], 2.
[5] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1649. Bericht über meine Reise nach Prag zur Eröffnung der Universität des 17. November am 9. Nov. 1961, 5f.
[6] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Bericht über die Teilnahme an der Parteigruppensitzung des Lektorats Deutsch an der TH Dresden am 13.4.1959.
[7] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/2123. Protokoll der Tagung des Wissenschaftlichen Rates der HSDG am 23 Nov. 1960, 14-16.

(1961), the FDGB argued that the development of "highly-qualified, class conscious and skilled workers and friends of the GDR" was best achieved by enabling foreign apprentices to work in the "best trade union cells or socialist collectives" as well as being encouraged to make contact with "progressive German families".[8] A 1966 revision of the programme instructed factory trade union officials to help foreigners maintain their country's cultural traditions, to celebrate national holidays, and to participate in factory cultural groups in order to acquaint them with "socialist culture" and "purposeful leisure time". In addition, officials were to promote after work contacts between foreigners and "German families", although the programme no longer mentioned that the latter were to be of the "progressive" type.[9] The belief that foreigners could improve themselves by associating with suitable German families remained constant. Bemoaning the proclivity of workers to spend their spare time drinking heavily in bars and dance venues, a Dresden police official wrote in 1982 that more effort was needed to bring the contract workers together with GDR workers which would enable the former to "learn and acquire the best traditions of the German working class".[10]

Foreigners were not the only objects in this debate on "purposeful recreation". The discourse on regulating the social activities of foreigners was similar in tone and content to broader debates on youth culture taking place in the GDR and as such should be seen as part of a wider generational conflict. It is also important to point out that some foreign students supported the view that social interaction required regulation. In 1962, for example, the Cypriot students' group submitted a report to the SED arguing that the cooperation of the authorities was essential to enable students spend their spare time sensibly and with the right people. It warned that:

> The lack of recreational opportunities for foreign students and the resulting isolation leads to recreational time being spent in pubs and dance bars of the most varied kind. Here, the foreign students mostly find those people who have nothing good to say about socialism, the government, or the party, and who have a negative effect on them.

The Cypriots claimed foreign students were often confused and disappointed when confronted with actual conditions in the GDR, making them likely to return home as anti-communists. (The opposite was the case they claimed with foreign students who studied in the West – they returned home as communists). Thus, they proposed the

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[8] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8297. Beschluß (S 329a/61) des Sekretariats zur Betreuung der ausländischen Arbeiter in der DDR, 29 May 1961, 3.
[9] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8297. Schlußfolgerungen für die politische, kulturelle und soziale Betreuung, 19 Jan. 1966.
[10] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46778. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 10 Feb. 1982, 9.

establishment of a central cultural centre for the city's foreign students as a way to ensure better provision and supervision of recreational activity.[11]

What did the GDR in the mid-1960s have to offer international students in terms of "purposeful free time activity"? The Herder Institute in Leipzig, which prepared all foreign students in the German language and other subjects before they moved on to the regular universities, claimed that its students could take advantage of a variety of cultural and recreational activities, such as art, music, theatre, concerts and sports. Some older students learned to swim, while African students went skiing. Students could also take courses in sailing, driving and motor sports organised by the Society for Sport and Technology (GST). Students were also encouraged to present papers on the political situation in their native countries to internal college seminars. Tours to various cultural, historical, industrial sites and collective farms around the country were on offer, and the Herder Institute claimed that "there are barely any foreign students for whom the names of the major industrial plants of Schwarze Pumpe, Eisenhüttenstadt, Hettstädt, Leuna, Sosa dam, and Warnow dock mean nothing". During their summer holidays, students could go on work experience or participate in summer camps.[12] Yet as the Cypriot students claimed, the situation changed radically once students were dispersed from the familiarity of the Herder Institute to the regular universities and colleges, where there was often no system of organised or supervised recreation. This resulted in some students in their fifth or sixth year of university never setting foot in the Leipzig Opera or the Berliner Ensemble, the Cypriots claimed, adding pessimistically that apart from the singular efforts of some students themselves to organise cultural activities, students were generally left to their own devices. This, they concluded, left students exposed to the perilous morals of pubs and the dangerous political doublespeak of GDR medical students.[13]

The Cypriot perspective was valid in some points. The activities organised by the Herder Institute were undoubtedly popular with its students, who were generally in their first year in the GDR. As they progressed to regular universities and colleges, boredom seems to have been a feature of college life for some students, especially in the colleges located in smaller, provincial towns. In 1971, for example, the social and recreational activities in Ilmenau were so limited that the Soviet Higher Education Ministry made a formal complaint to the GDR authorities. The Soviets were acting on feedback from its

[11] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/624, fos. 93-103, here 95 and 98. Bericht der Hochschulgruppe der zypriotischen Studenten, n.d. [ca. Feb. 1963].
[12] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/ IV A 2/9.04/467. Harig, Form der Arbeit mit ausländischen Studenten, n.d. [ca. 1963], 4.
[13] See n. 11.

students, who complained about the lack of a theatre in the town (the nearest was in Weimar) and the "monotonous" weekend atmosphere in the town's youth clubs owing to the tendency of East German students to travel home for the weekends. The situation was compounded by the lack of books, lectures and sporting facilities, with no equipment available for winter sports.[14]

In the 1970s and 1980s, foreign workers had to rely chiefly on their own initiative in organising free time activities as the ability and willingness of factories to do so could vary considerably. Some factories organised just the bare minimum stipulated by the labour agreements, such as organising national holiday celebrations for their workers.[15] Others, like the VEB Kunstseidenwerk in Pirna did nothing, allowing the hostel to descend into a hive of "criminal activity" according to the police.[16] Ultimately it was the enthusiasm of the East German supervisors or minders allocated to the workers that dictated the type and frequency of factory-sponsored events on offer. However, workers did not always appreciate or understand the nature of the activities organised for their benefit as a minder for Vietnamese contract workers experienced. In an interview she recalled how she made a great effort to secure tickets for a performance of Swan Lake at the State Opera in Berlin only to find that none of her 31 Vietnamese workers turned up. Cultural and linguistic incompetence on both sides led to some confusion. The minder failed to anticipate that the meaning and significance of the terms Swan Lake and State Opera would not be immediately evident to the Vietnamese.[17] Similarly, officials of the Fajas factory in Suhl were shocked that the Mozambican workers they had taken on a visit to Buchenwald laughed in the grounds of the former concentration camp.[18]

There were also recreational outlets available outside of the factory environment. In Rüdersdorf, where Algerians were employed in a local cement works in the late 1970s, the local MfS claimed that there were plenty of sporting and recreational activities on offer and Algerians could even join the soccer, judo and even philatelic associations in the town.[19] Whether the workers availed of these facilities is unclear. Significantly, however, foreigners were not allowed to form sporting clubs of their own under local

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[14] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Information über einen an der TH Ilmenau durchgeführten Besuch, 5 Mar. 1971.
[15] The Vietnamese Têt festival for example. Irene Runge, *Ausland DDR. Fremdenhaß*, Berlin, 1990, 38.
[16] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 17 June 1977, 7.
[17] Hackert-Lemke & Unterbeck, "Betreuerinnen", 100.
[18] Landolf Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, Berlin, 2002, 128.
[19] BStU, JHS, MF, VVS 001-339/77. Bernd Thiemann, *Die Aufgaben der Kreisdienststelle bei der politisch-operativen Kontrolle der zeitweilig in der DDR tätigen Ausländer aus nichtsozialistischen Staaten und Gebieten*, 15 Aug. 1977, 25.

government regulations. In addition, in a September 1974 ruling, the DTSB debarred teams comprising solely of foreign workers from participating in sporting championship events which progressed to national level. The timing of the decision was hardly accidental and coincided with the arrival of the first cohorts of Algerian workers. The relaxation of the ruling two years later allowed foreigners to participate in competitions as individuals or in teams up to *Bezirk* level providing they had the endorsement of an existing sporting club.[20] The policy against contract workers forming their own associations was also enforced by other organisations. In the late 1980s, for example, a Vietnamese cultural group was refused affiliation to the Berlin *Kulturbund* on the grounds that the existing forty *Kulturbund* workgroups in the city adequately provided for the cultural needs of the Vietnamese.[21] Although contract workers faced restrictions in participating in competitive sporting meetings, they nevertheless formed their own informal sporting teams and cultural groups. In Hoyerswerda, Algerians set up a number of musical groups and teams in volleyball, soccer, and boxing, which were subsidised by the recreational fund of their employer, Schwarze Pumpe.[22]

By and large, workers had to rely chiefly on their own initiative to organise recreational activity. Typically, the mass of this activity took place beyond the gaze of factory officials and the police and as such does not feature in state-generated historical records to the same extent as some of the more problematic aspects of recreational activities of foreigners. Likewise, the sheer normalcy of most aspects of everyday recreational activity means that it does not stand out in any significant way in the retrospective memories of the foreigners themselves. Characteristically, workers' free time was taken up with a range of internal hostel activities and external recreational pursuits. In 1989, the everyday social activities of Vietnamese workers, employed in a Brandenburg factory, and Cubans working in a textile factory in East Berlin were remarkably similar. In the Cuban case, the factory had long ceased providing social activities which had taken the form of museums visits, boat trips and the factory birthday celebration. In the hostels, the Vietnamese occupied themselves with table tennis, while the Cubans played volleyball on a pitch located onsite. Both hostels staged discos, which in the Vietnamese case were attended by German women. The workers from both countries also ventured out to a nearby disco – but never alone, as one

[20] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Richtlinie der SAL für die Einsatzbetrieben zur Durchführung des Abkommens DDR-Algerien, 1 Aug. 1979, 47.
[21] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 99.
[22] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. SAL translation of Algerian newspaper article by Abdelaziz Sebaâ in *Algérie actualité*, 14-20 June 1979, 10f. [of translation].

Vietnamese worker commented.[23] In addition, the Vietnamese played host to and visited compatriots living in other hostels as well as making the occasional trip to the cinema. The other pastimes mentioned by the Cubans were dominoes, shopping, television, and a music group, which was funded by their embassy. Trips to local bars, while considered expensive by some, were also part of the Vietnamese and Cuban recreational repertoire.[24]

The tendency for contract workers to socialise amongst themselves and within their hostels should not be taken simply as the product of state-orchestrated ghettoisation. While conditions may not have been the best in the hostels, foreigners enjoyed and appreciated the familiarity they afforded. Indeed, the post-*Wende* calls made by well-intentioned East Germans to have the hostels closed and their residents provided with regular accommodation were not endorsed by all contract workers, as recalled in an interview in 1990 by the GDR's leading independent advocate of foreigners' issues, Rev. Christfried Berger of the Berlin Ökumenisch-Missionarisches Zentrum (ÖMZ):

> Of course ghettoisation is one of many causes of xenophobia. But when we [the ÖMZ] discussed our catalogue of demands openly with foreigners, they did not take on board this demand unanimously. You know, they absolutely wanted to live in a community of their own compatriots, where they could cook, live, dance and sing to their own tastes and they would feel really confined if they had to live in nothing but two or three-bed roomed flats somewhere amongst Germans.[25]

Not all recreational activity, however, took place within the familiar confines of the hostels. Foreigners had always sought out recreational pursuits unavailable in their own countries, ignoring and rejecting in the process the many attempts of officials to organise "purposeful" recreational activity. Two reports from the criminal police department in Halle, dating from 1977 and 1979, are exemplary not only for the weaknesses of official attempts at recreational regulation but also the determination of foreigners to avoid it.

> Particular difficulties and problems arise from the fact that the different characteristics, mentalities, religious and family bonds of citizens of other states and nationalities are partly unknown and accordingly disregarded. This shortcoming affects among other things the purposeful cultural care of these citizens suited to socialist conditions.[26]

Two years later, the same department reported:

> The three-shift rota on the one hand and the still unsatisfactory selection of cultural themes appropriate to national peculiarities on the other represent objective difficulties in organising recreational activities for these citizens. This results in the citizens spending their time in bars, overindulging in alcohol, and committing crime.[27]

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[23] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 37-39.
[24] Ibid., 43-46.
[25] Quoted in: Ibid., 101.
[26] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Halle, Periodische Information, 1 June 1977.
[27] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Wortbericht, n.d. [ca. Jan. 1979].

Evidently, the fact that workers came and left the factory and hostel at all hours frustrated factory plans, which were not appreciated by the workers at any rate. Although the latter report failed to spell out what was meant by suitable "cultural themes", it is unlikely that Algerians would have had much interest in such, especially when rendered by East Germans officials. Algerian workers appreciated the GDR for what it had to offer, and in Halle and elsewhere they were engaging in and enjoying an activity – drinking – which was frowned upon but not illegal in Algeria. Riedel describes the Algerians behaviour as a form of "delayed adolescence" and it was this "noncommittal sampling of different lifestyles and leisure" that made their time in the GDR so unique and unforgettable.[28] It was not just an Algerian phenomenon and could be found in all groups. In 1982, police in Dresden reported that:

> The majority of foreigners spend their free time in bars and at dances, where alcohol is taken in great amounts, resulting frequently in bodily injury, rowdy behaviour and other disturbances. In the majority of criminal offences, overindulgence in alcohol plays a decisive role. This applies especially to the workers from Mozambique, who almost without exception never touched alcohol before arriving in the GDR. It now seems apparent that they realise the effects of alcohol but yet in many cases, they are incapable of controlling the consumption to appropriate digestible amounts.[29]

Foreigners took to the bars of the cities and towns they worked in, which as police in Gera bemoaned in 1977 with reference to Polish and Algerian workers, had no qualms in serving them copious amounts of alcohol.[30] Bars and restaurants became focal meeting points for workers. In Leipzig in the late 1970s, for example, it was common for Algerian, Polish, and Hungarian contract workers to congregate in and around the Mitropa restaurant at the central train station, particularly on Fridays nights, while the Burgkeller was another popular venue. Undoubtedly, these central locations allowed workers living in different hostels throughout the city and its hinterland to meet at the start of the weekend to discuss the past week's events and happenings. Some years later, contract workers had appropriated new centres in the city's suburbs. In the south-eastern part of Leipzig city in 1982, the Probstheida and Kronenquelle were where the Cuban, Mozambican and Hungarian workers "agglomerated", while the Lindenhof and Alte Salzstraße in Leipzig-Grünau were popular with the Algerians, Cubans, and Mozambicans.[31]

Clearly, foreign workers wanted their own social space where they could meet up and socialise, a desire which in a small number of towns was recognised by factory

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[28] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus", 77.
[29] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46778. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 10 Feb. 1982, 7.
[30] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Gera, Bericht zu Ermittlungsverfahren, 16 June 1977, 4.
[31] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843 and 46778. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattungen zu eingeleiteten Ermittlungsverfahren, 18 Jan. 1979 and 9 Feb. 1982, 7. Alte Salzstraße was a relatively new venue, opened in 1981.

officials and the police. In 1979 in Halle-Neustadt, a "Club of the Hungarian People's Republic" was founded, which officials hoped would stop the violent attacks of Hungarian workers on the police and the East German public.[32] In the same year and for the same reason, an Algerian café was opened in the town of Bischofswerda, where a number of sporting and cultural initiatives were undertaken to reduce the alleged unruly behaviour of the contract workers. On the anniversary of Algerian independence, the factory awarded the best 15 Algerian workers with bouquets, certificates and more importantly, cash premiums. Algerians were also encouraged to participate in factory sports events with their German co-workers, taking first and fourth place in the 1981 works soccer tournament. In addition, officials worked to end the long-running feud that had broken out in 1979 between Algerian and Cuban contract workers. After an initial "friendship meeting" held in July 1981, the Cubans attended the Algerian national holiday celebrations that November and invited the newly-formed Algerian music group to perform at their festival in Dresden the following month. A joint Algerian-Cuban sports day was also planned. Even in this relatively successful case, however, the GDR officials did not shy away from using force to maintain order. In 1977 they oversaw the establishment of an Algerian "stewards group" consisting of handpicked workers to supervise the behaviour of their compatriots at discos and other events. Despite the advances above, factory officials ordered the deportations of over 16 Algerian workers for disciplinary misdemeanours in 1981/82 on the grounds that they could ill afford to have their successes "destroyed by negative forces".[33]

The attempts by officials to organise recreational activity were by their very nature self-defeating as they were based on the presupposition that the authorities knew what was best for the workers. The yearly sporting and recreational plans drawn up by factory bureaucrats found little resonance with workers more interested in the low brow range of recreational and cultural activities unavailable in their own countries and who were accustomed to spontaneity when it came to occupying their spare time. After the Mozambican workers at Fajas in Suhl took up playing football on their own accord around the hostel in the early 1980s, factory officials appointed a football trainer. Yet, none of the workers turned up for his training sessions.[34] Arguably, the Mozambicans were doing nothing more than protecting their private sphere against unwelcome encroachments by authority. By September 1989 not much had changed and the Stasi in

[32] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Bericht, 16 July 1979, 2.
[33] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842, 47843, and //8.0/51098. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Informationen, 17 June 1977, 8, 5 July 1979, and 29 July 1982; SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Bericht zur Arbeit mit den algerischen Werktätigen, 16 Nov. 1981, 5.
[34] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 128.

the *Bezirk* Erfurt noted that although Mozambican workers were interested in sport, they were reluctant to participate in organised matches or avail of the sessions booked for them in sports centres. The admission made in the same report that the needs of Mozambican workers had been "given insufficient consideration" in the planning of recreational activities came far too late.[35]

Cultural activity in the form of religious observation and culinary pursuits also occupied the free time of workers. Unlike in the case of the students, where the authorities were wary of challenging religious expression for diplomatic reasons, religious workers enjoyed far less sympathy from the authorities. Particularly in the 1980s, religious practice performed a cultural and social function and helped bring contract workers into close contact with sympathetic East German Christians, who before and after the *Wende* did tremendous work in defending the interests of foreigners in an increasingly hostile environment. Notably, reference to religion in files of state and party provenance is more notable by its absence. For example, none of the reports on Polish or Hungarian workers surveyed for this study contain any reference to religion. This is not to say that the workers were not interested in religion and as Röhr's detailed regional study on Polish workers in the Frankfurt/Oder border region notes, albeit fleetingly, in the 1960s Polish women transit workers demanded time off on Catholic days of obligation, for example.[36]

It was in dealing with Algerian workers that the issue of religion first surfaced in any significant way in internal reports. Diet was important for the Algerians and as Riedel has noted, they were more observant of Islamic dietary practices, such as the fasting rules during Ramadan and abstinence from pork, than of the rules on daily prayer and temperance.[37] The East German authorities seemed to have picked up on this and in internal guidelines published in 1976, two years after the arrival of the Algerians, the SAL pointed out to factory officials that they had to take into account that the workers "come from a foreign cultural group and that their habits differ from ours". The guidelines made specific reference to religion:

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[35] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 4. Schwarz, Information, 11 Sept. 1989.

[36] She provides no indication on whether the workers were successful however. Rita Röhr, *Hoffnung. Hilfe. Heuchelei*, Berlin, 2001, 86.

[37] Almut Riedel, *Erfahrungen algerischer Arbeitsmigranten in der DDR*, Opladen, 1994, 61. Recently, Riedel republished some of her findings on the religious and cultural outlook of Algerian workers under the title: "Wer guckt auf uns? Muslime Migranten in der DDR", in: *Horch und Guck* 40 (2002), 42-45.

> Most Algerian workers are Mohammedans [sic]. This gives rise to a number of specific problems, such as the observance of religious customs and holidays, dietary differences. These problems must be afforded understanding and empathy.[38]

Similarly, as an MfS thesis written in 1977 about the Algerian workers in Rüdersdorf indicated, state security believed it was its duty to safeguard the "national peculiarities" of the workers by facilitating their religious observance during Ramadan and by ensuring that they were provided with mutton for feast days.[39] The willingness of factories to serve ethnic cuisine to their foreign workers varied from place to place however. At the Fajas factory in Suhl, management made the effort while at the same time taking care to explain to German workers that the Algerians were not getting something better but just something different. According to Rev. Christfried Berger, director of the ÖMZ, this ensured that the "Algerians felt they were accepted and the German workers were informed and involved in a small way in the situation of their new colleagues". Clearly, the provision of special diets for workers had the potential to irritate German workers. Factories that made no special effort to provide customary food to Algerian workers such as Leuna and Schönebeck, Berger continued, had more social problems.[40] Indeed, as an Algerian newspaper report commented, only one worker was able to make couscous in the Algerian hostel in Schönebeck, making him extremely popular on days off when his colleagues attempted to prepare traditional dishes.[41] This state support and understanding for religious practice, uncharacteristic for the GDR in general, was brief and all reference to religious and cultural distinctions was dropped in a 1979 revision of the SAL guidelines on Algerian workers.[42] Three years later, a further SAL directive stipulated that contract workers were responsible for buying their own food and preparing it in the hostels.[43] Thus, in the early 1980s the Suhl Fajas factory only provided its Mozambican workers with ethnic cuisine for a number of weeks upon arrival after which they had to adapt to German food. Yet, the Mozambicans were not entirely helpless. The pragmatic local barwomen, Roswitha Menz, spiced up the traditional German dishes of *Eisbein*, *Jägerschnitzel*, and *Feuerfleisch* in order to suit the tastes of her Mozambican punters. More commonly, the

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[38] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Richtlinie für die Einsatzbetrieben zur Durchführung des Abkommens zwischen der Regierung der DDR und der Regierung der DVRA, 15 Apr. 1976, 4.
[39] BStU, JHS, MF, VVS 001-339/77. Thiemann, *Die Aufgaben der Kreisdienststelle*, 15 Aug. 1977, 28.
[40] Quoted in: Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 102.
[41] *Algérie actualité*, 14-20 June 1979, 10.
[42] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Richtlinie der SAL für die Einsatzbetrieben zur Durchführung des Abkommens DDR-Algerien, 1 Aug. 1979.
[43] Section I (7) of the Richtlinie [der SAL] für die Unterbringung ausländischer Werktätiger in Gemeinschaftsunterkünften vom 8 Feb. 1982 stipulated that factories were required to ensure that hostels had one hotplate for every three residents. Reproduced in Andreas Müggenberg, *Die ausländischen Vertragsarbeitnehmer in der ehemaligen DDR*, Berlin, 1995, 99-102.

Mozambicans prepared their own specialities, such as garlic chicken, in the hostels and the resulting aromas greatly annoyed local Germans.[44] The failure of factories to provide contract workers with suitable meals had negative consequences elsewhere. As foreign workers tended to buy up particular foodstuffs already in short supply in the shops, such as rice, they were a convenient scapegoat for the East German public who blamed them rather than the planned economy or its political architects for the empty shelves.

Although Algerian workers generally observed fasting and dietary customs, Rev. Christfried Berger believed that living in the GDR allowed them to place formal religious observance "on ice", a process which was facilitated by the absence of any Islamic clergy. In order to rectify this situation and acting on the suggestion of an Algerian Catholic bishop, Berger proposed that an imam be sent to the GDR to attend to the spiritual needs of the workers. Although the suggestion enjoyed the support of the Grand Mufti in Damascus, it was rejected outright by the East German authorities and enjoyed lukewarm support from the Algerian workers. Yet, officials were more amenable to religious issues when hard currency was involved. In the 1980s, for example, the hostels housing fee-paying Libyan apprentices were furnished with prayer rooms.[45] Muslims, however, were not dependent on clerics or other structures in observing their religion and in 1982 Prof. Heidorn, deputy minister at the MHF, told a KAS meeting that "certain religious views (Islam, supporting the Muslims [sic]) are being openly supported by some Arab students".[46]

Understandably, adherents of Christian denominations were better catered for by existing religious structures in the GDR. Contract workers from Vietnam, Cuba, Mozambique, and Angola, many of whom were Christians, were attracted to the churches. As one church activist recalled, the "socialist" labour agreements paradoxically and ironically introduced "God – black, singing and dancing" into "our parishes and towns". The range of church-based activities organised for foreigners throughout the GDR was extensive. East German parishioners attended discussion meetings entitled "foreigners as friends" and classes in Portuguese were also laid on. Courses in sewing, photography, English and driving were provided for the workers, as were retreats and weekend seminars in Portuguese on topics as diverse as church history, art, and baptism and confirmation preparation. At the behest of the Mozambicans, bilingual joint prayer services with East Germans gave way to

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[44] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 67, 70 and 94.
[45] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 102.
[46] SAPMO-BArch, DY 13/3056. Aktennotiz zur 4. Beratung des KAS am 7 Apr. 1982.

autonomous ecumenical Mozambican parishes administered by their own parish councils. In addition, Mozambicans established church choirs which participated in regional competitions. The Berlin ÖMZ (established in 1985), the network of Cabana foreigner clubs (from 1988) and a number of church publications, especially the magazine *Nah & Fern* (from 1989), all contributed to this effort.[47]

However, not all East German churchgoers were supportive of the work carried out with foreigners as demonstrated by the experience of Rev. Eberhard Vater and his wife Christina in Suhl. While the couple helped local Mozambican contract workers in a number of ways, in some parishes prayers were offered up that the Vaters might return to the "right track" and cease their involvement with the migrants. They were also subjected to gossip and name-calling, with some visitors to their own home expressing amazement that they allowed their Mozambican guests use their towels.[48]

Reflecting this broader public disapproval of church work with contract workers was the hostility of the MfS. In July 1987, the head of the MfS cross departmental working group on foreigners claimed that particular elements in the church were automatically drawn to foreigners in the belief that they were "anti-socialist".[49] In March 1989, Department XVIII of the Erfurt MfS called for increased measures to combat church activity with the workers as was the case in Eisenach.[50] There Dean Heino Falcke was outspoken in their defence.[51] In one area, the authorities discouraged a churchman from contacting foreign workers on the grounds that they already enjoyed adequate contact with their East German colleagues in the factories, which was not the case however.[52]

The opposition towards church involvement with foreigners was also supported by some of the labour delegating countries, in particular Vietnam. At a meeting with MfS Main Department XVIII in July 1988, the chief of the Vietnamese Interior Ministry task force in the GDR, comrade Minh, expressed the opinion that Western-based church

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[47] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 100-106, also, Dagmar Henke, "Fremde Nähe – Nahe Fremde. Ein Beitrag zur Ausländerarbeit der Kirchen in der ehemaligen DDR", in: *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 9:1 (1992), 119-132, 125f.

[48] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 43-53.

[49] Quoted in: BStU, JHS 21495, fo. 9. Olaf Wiede, *Zur weiteren Qualifizierung der politisch-operativen Aufklärung und Kontrolle von Ausländern*, 31 Mar. 1989.

[50] BStU, ASt Erfurt, Abt. XVIII, 192, fo. 26. Diskussionsbeitrag des Leiters der Abt XVIII zur Spionagekonferenz der Bezirksverwaltung, 29 Mar. 1989.

[51] See Marianne Krüger-Potratz, *Anderssein gab es nicht: Ausländer und Minderheiten in der DDR*, Münster, 1991, 52.

[52] Petra Vogelsang, "Gute Kinder – schlechte Kinder. Freundbilder und Feindbilder im Osten", in: Wolfgang & Ute Benz (eds), *Deutschland, deine Kinder. Zur Prägung von Feindbildern in Ost und West*, München, 2001, 68-81, here 68.

groups were attempting to gain influence with his workers.[53] Some members of the Vietnamese community were equally dismissive of church activity. A long-term Vietnamese resident, who was otherwise supportive of contract workers becoming more culturally involved in GDR society, questioned church interest in his compatriots on the on the grounds that most of them were not Christians.[54]

By 1989, however, the attitudes of state authorities towards church involvement with foreigners were no longer homogeneous. Main Department XVIII continued to argue that the church was simply capitalising on the "existing shortcomings in the guidance of the Mozambican workers" to "gain influence". It held up the example of the pastor of the Dresden Kreuzkirche, who organised a service for Mozambican workers whom he claimed felt "alienated". Sixty workers attended the ceremony and two were baptised.[55] Yet other reports compiled during the same period were not all so cynical and some officials began to recognise that church involvement was not simply the product of a missionary or proselytising zeal but was rather a legitimate attempt to fill a social void left by state policy. One sign of this was the decision of the SAL to send a participant to a meeting on contract workers organised and hosted by the ÖMZ in June 1989. Significantly, the SAL representative admitted to the existence of xenophobia in GDR, but attributed this to "alcohol abuse" and "occasional hooliganism" on all sides.[56] This new conciliatory approach was evident in other quarters. In an internal report compiled three months later, the regional chief of the Erfurt Stasi, major general Josef Schwarz, uncharacteristically commended the engagement of the church. Citing the examples of Eisenach (where a Portuguese language church service took place fortnightly), Erfurt (where the church hosted afternoon tea for contract workers) and Blankenhain, he argued that:

> The church has been greatly influential in the social integration of the Mozambican workers. The church displays none of the reserve mentioned above [referring to xenophobia] and without any prejudice, its representatives reach out successfully towards these people. It has been shown that the work of factories, neighbourhoods, and state and mass organisations is not enough to integrate foreign workers. The factories have no one with whom workers can talk about personal problems.[57]

Significantly, one of the last MfS theses on foreigners, submitted in March 1989, suggested that the MfS could avoid unnecessary "operational investigations" on

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[53] Minutes of meeting between MfS HA XVIII and Vietnamese security officers, 28 July 1988. Quoted in Michael Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR und ihre Beobachtung durch das MfS*, Magdeburg, 1999, 74-77.
[54] Quoted in Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 99.
[55] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 30. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung zur politisch-operativen Lage unter den ausländischen Werktätigen, 7 Sept. 1989.
[56] Imke Commichau, "Ausländer in der DDR – die ungeliebte Minderheit", in: *DA* 23:9 (1990), 1432-1439, here 1433. Also: Henke, "Fremde Nähe", 126.
[57] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fos. 5f. Schwarz, Information, 11 Sept. 1989.

foreigners by appreciating that the "thought and behavioural patterns" of many foreigners, whether they perceived themselves as religious or not, were influenced by "certain dogmas".[58] Although the authorities certainly did not realise it at the time, the recognition that the formal and informal religious activity of contract workers was not a conscious attempt to undermine the state had come far too late.

Many of the activities popular with foreign students and workers were not recreational from the conventional East German perspective. Nevertheless, they were of major importance to the students and workers, perhaps surpassing sporting or cultural interests. For so many foreigners (and their immediate and extended families), a period of study or employment in the GDR presented a unique chance for economic and social advancement upon return. In the post-*Wende* rush to identify all that was lacking in the social and recreational conditions for foreigners in the GDR, commentators have ignored this crucial aspect of foreigners' experience.

The GDR exposed many international students and contract workers to a level of consumerism that they were previously unaccustomed to. As early as 1956, officials complained that students from socialist countries were misusing their scholarships to amass "a range of GDR technological products".[59] As the party projected its own ideals onto particular groups of foreigners, portraying them as selfless and heroic revolutionaries, functionaries and indeed members of the East German public found it difficult to accept that foreigners from certain countries had material interests or could develop these. Thus, the interest expressed by contract workers in material advancement challenged the paternalistic, idealised and ideological notions on what foreigners ought to be. The North Korean students and war orphans taken in by the GDR in the 1950s are an early case in point. In 1953, a report from the Workers' and Peasants' Faculty (ABF) of Leipzig University praised the "exemplary outlook of the Korean students in moral, political and educational matters", adding that this stood in stark contrast to the "selfish and politically-destructive attitudes" of their fellow German students.[60] Similarly, a report on North Korean apprentices contrasted their attitudes with their German workmates. As an official at a coal refinery works in Senftenberg noted in 1961: "Their

[58] BStU, JHS 21495, fos. 23f. Wiede, *Zur weiteren Qualifizierung*, 31 Mar. 1989.
[59] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/639, fos. 89-95, here 93. Report on Tag der Auslandsstudenten, 20-21 Jan. 1956.
[60] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/146. Bericht der SAL über die Überführung der ABF an der Uni. Leipzig, 10 Mar. 1953, 5.

eagerness to learn and their discipline often leads to them to serve as an example for their German trainees".[61]

Yet, the North Korean students and trainees were more like their fellow Germans than these projections suggested. Behind the mask of collective uniformity encouraged by the Korean authorities, individual traits were at hand. In 1954, for example, Leipzig university officials demanded more "proletarian modesty" from the Korean (and Bulgarian) students who were developing a growing proclivity for consumer goods, parties and making costly trunk calls home. The poor levels of "care" and "upbringing" provided for them since they came to the GDR, officials argued, pushed some of the students down the "dangerous road of arrogance".[62] Clearly and inevitably, the Korean students were adapting to their new environment in the GDR and taking advantage of what it had to offer. As a report informed Kurt Hager in 1957, the Koreans more than any other group were "most heavily affected by the influences around them" which left them unwilling to return to Korea. The report continued:

> The standard of living in the GDR is naturally better than that in Korea and as a rule the younger Korean students draw the conclusion that it would be personally more advantageous to live under these conditions forever or at least for a long time.[63]

The GDR did not only appeal to students from repressive Stalinist states. In August 1960, for example, the SPK noted that many of the Arab and African trainees who had come to the GDR on the basis of inter-governmental agreements were reluctant to leave as they felt conditions were better in the GDR.[64] Some months after Algerian independence, about a quarter of the 201 Algerian refugees in the GDR refused to follow the call of the Algerian trade union (UGTA) to return to Algeria, issued in May 1962. They based their refusal on the grounds that they were married to GDR women, or that they wished to complete their apprenticeships, or that they "simply wished to remain in the GDR". Indeed, some of those who had already left for Algeria subsequently returned to East Germany after finding that the Algerian repatriation offices in Paris, Köln and Italy had run out of funds to pay for their way home.[65]

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[61] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.05/119, fos. 11-44, here 16. Abschlußbericht des Min. für Volksbildung über die Ausbildung und Erziehung koreanischer Kinder und Jugendlicher in der DDR, n.d. [ca. 15 Mar. 1961].

[62] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/639, fo. 14. Bericht über die Arbeit der ABF, Abteilung Ausländerstudium, 27 Jan. 1954.

[63] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/640, fos. 56f. 3 June 1957. Abt. Wissenschaften to Hager, Koreanische Studenten in der DDR. TU Dresden reported similar tendencies in the early 1960s, see: BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Ausländerstudium, n.d. [ca. 1959/60].

[64] BArch, DE 1/21381, fo. 59. Konzeption für die Ausbildung nationaler Kader der ökon unterentwickelten Nationalstaaten duch die DDR, 18 Aug. 1960.

[65] Ibid., put the number of Algerians in the GDR at 215. By 30 Aug. 1962 only 52 remained. See SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/1647. Einschätzung über den Verlauf und den Stand der Rückkehr der algerischen Arbeiter, 30 Aug. 1962.

Clearly, the Algerians felt that remaining in East Germany best served their needs and saw little future in returning to France (which had banned Algerian labour after its defeat in the Algerian war) or indeed to Algeria.

There is also some evidence to suggest that students from the Eastern bloc utilised their free time to earn money in the GDR by taking on jobs in factories. The TH in Dresden reported in 1958 that Bulgarian students had taken on factory jobs to make pocket money, with one student regularly travelling from the city to Bitterfeld for this purpose.[66] In 1972, the Soviet Ministry for Higher Education complained to its GDR counterpart that Soviet students in Leipzig were entering paid employment.[67] As these international students were already in receipt of generous scholarships funded by the GDR, it is likely that the students worked in order to increase their spending power.

Contract workers were more determined to use their free time to acquire material goods. While the GDR market did not facilitate the realisation of what one Algerian newspaper referred to as the "classical expectations" of migrants, which was to return home with a car after a period of working abroad,[68] there were other goods keenly sought after by workers. These included motorbikes and mopeds (hugely popular modes of transport in countries like Cuba and Vietnam), white and black electrical goods, as well as spare parts, textiles, clothing, and foodstuffs.

Before examining in detail the significance that the acquisition of material goods played in the everyday lives of foreigners in the GDR, it is important to stress that they also sold goods they imported from abroad, usually in contravention of East German custom regulations. As such, they acted as purveyors and suppliers of consumer and cultural goods, a fact generally ignored in the literature on foreigners' consumerism in the GDR.[69] In her research on Algerian workers, Almut Riedel claimed that Algerian workers compensated for their low workplace status in two main ways. On the one hand, they took advantage of the perception common among some East Germans that they were in possession of "Western attributes". On the other, they indulged in "conspicuous consumption" or ostentatious spending in order to impress others in the

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[66] SAPMO-BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Niederschrift der wichtigsten Probleme der Aussprachen beim Besuch der THD, 30 Sept. 1958.

[67] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV B 2/9.04/136. Aktennotiz über das Gesprach mit Gen. Seliwanow, Min. für Hochschulbildung der UdSSR, 15 Dec. 1972.

[68] *Algérie actualité*, 14-20 June 1979, 7f. [of translation]. As the article made clear, the Algerians believed the GDR compared poorly with France, from where it was possible to return with a car. Not surprisingly, the contract workers were not impressed by the journalist's counterargument that potatoes and bread were cheaper in the GDR.

[69] See for example Jonathan Zatlin, "Race and economy in Soviet-style regimes: the East German case", in: *Ankunft – Alltag – Ausreise. Zeithistorische Forschungen zu Migration und Interkülturalität in der DDR-Gesellschaft*, Ms., Potsdam, 2004, 46-63.

social and recreational sphere.[70] Although most Algerians had only tenuous links with the West, they had some access to Western goods owing to the existence of an "ethnic network" which encompassed Algerians living in the West.[71] Taking a typically negative view of the same phenomenon, the MfS observed in 1977 that Berlin's Alexanderplatz had become a central meeting place for Algerians from both the GDR and the West. This forum allowed for "'dealings' in drug-like substances, hunting knifes, and other goods" smuggled from West Berlin.[72] Indeed, other groups of foreigners, such as the Vietnamese, could rely on similar networks much to the consternation of their own embassies.

As many international students had far greater access and exposure to the West than the Algerians, it arguably follows that their "Western attributes" were far more potent, which similarly helped compensate for the loss of familiar structures and social status in the GDR, and enhanced their standing in the eyes of some East Germans. Foreign students with valid passports were entitled to leave the GDR and West Berlin was the most popular and convenient travel destination. As such, trips to the West formed an important part in the recreational repertoire of these students, attracting both the curiosity and envy of the East German bureaucracy and public. Although the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 did little to prevent this traffic – a 1962 Interior Ministry internal order ruled that all foreign residents of the GDR in possession of a valid passport had the right to travel to West Berlin at all times – it did allow the authorities to keep this movement under greater surveillance.[73] While the authorities sought unsuccessfully to dam this traffic by means of verbal intimidation and a series of college regulations over the years, a KAS meeting in 1972 reconfirmed that there was simply no law on the books to prevent foreign students visiting "capitalist foreign countries" and that the only real means available to prevent Western travel was "political-ideological" work with the students.[74]

These trips were often necessary and, especially in the years of diplomatic non-recognition, foreigners had to travel to the West in order to renew their passports for example. Indeed, the East German authorities had a major interest in ensuring that foreigners did so because in the event of a passport expiring, foreigners effectively

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[70] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus", 85. The term "conspicuous consumption" was coined by Thorstein Veblen in his *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, New York (Macmillan), 1902, pp. 68-101.
[71] Ibid., 89.
[72] BStU, JHS, MF, VVS 001-339/77. Thiemann, *Die Aufgaben der Kreisdienststelle*, 15 Aug. 1977, 31.
[73] BStU, JHS, MF, 540. Theo Dudek, *Einige Besonderheiten bei der Werbung von operativ geeigneten Ausländern mit ständigem Wohnsitz in der DDR für die Abwehrarbeit des MfS*, n.d. [ca. 1966/67], 9.
[74] BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/B 1247a/2. Protokoll der Sitzung des KAS vom 15 Feb. 1972, 5f.

became stateless persons, who under GDR law could not be deported.[75] In addition, some students availed of the peculiar perception among officials that visiting the West strengthened rather than weakened their faith in socialism. Icelander Fylkir Thirisson travelled from Mittweida to West Germany in 1965 to participate in the Easter peace marches and gave a talk on his experiences upon his return.[76] An MfS thesis written the same year argued that trips to the West were not necessarily all that bad for foreign students, claiming that the "clarity of the contrast" between the two systems reinforced the anti-imperialist standpoint of the majority, who the thesis' author believed possessed a strong "sense of justice".[77]

This comparative freedom of movement allowed foreign students to move with relative ease between both systems. They could enjoy the benefits of both societies and they were not completely dependent on what the GDR had to offer in recreational or material terms. In 1965, the MfS estimated that on average 43.3 percent of the 11,216 citizens of non-socialist countries resident in the GDR visited West Berlin.[78] Four years later, the KAS was aware that 16.4 percent of students from non-socialist countries visited the West, with Indians, Nigerians and Guineans being most prominent.[79] As most students did not bother to inform the authorities of their impending trips, the proportion of students visiting West Berlin was undoubtedly much higher. It is also important to note that travel to West Berlin was not just the preserve of citizens from non-socialist countries and in 1965 one college complained that Cuban students were visiting the enclave.[80]

Trips to the West gave foreign students access to Western markets and made them key purveyors of consumer goods to the East German economy of shortages. Foreign trade unionists enrolled at the FDGB's academy at Bernau near Berlin, for example, made regular trips to West Berlin, despite official discouragement. As one report from August 1962 suggested, visits to the enclave were frequent and at times had commercial or political purposes. The envy of the reporting functionary, the academy's director Dr. Karl Kampfert, was evident as he listed the names of the students in possession of

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[75] BStU, JHS, MF, 540. Theo Dudek, *Einige Besonderheiten*, 12.
[76] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Analyse der nationalen Fachschulgruppen, n.d. [ca. 1965].
[77] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, *Einige Probleme der Verhütung von Staatsverbrechen, die durch in der DDR lebende Ausländer nichtsozialistischer Staaten begangen werden können*, 5 Dec. 1965, 23.
[78] Ibid., 27. Of this group, 30 percent travelled regularly to West Berlin, with the Italians (9.3 trips per person) the most frequent visitors, followed by Holland (9.2 percent), Austria (8.8 percent), and Spain and Sweden (7.8 each).
[79] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Analyse der Arbeit im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen der DDR im Studienjahr 1968/69, 15 Oct. 1969, 15.
[80] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Kubanische Studierende, n.d. [ca. 1965].

"Western" coats, soaps, and toothbrushes. Based on his information, exaggerated as it was, the foreign students were importing and selling Western goods to the local population, who as former "border crossers" (East Germans who worked in West Berlin before the construction of the Wall) had reserves of hard currency. In addition, they helped maintain contact between friends and families divided by the Wall.[81] In May 1966, university officials reported similar transactions in Leipzig, where Arab and African students (denigrated as "Trotskyites" and enemies of the USSR) travelled regularly to West Berlin, returning with clothing and other goods intended for their personal use and for "speculative trading".[82]

Even from towns located considerable distances from West Berlin, visits by foreign students were frequent and popular. Algerian students at the Freiberg Mining Academy enjoyed West Berlin for its "nightlife".[83] Dresden TU reported in early 1964 that its international students were "fascinated" by the advances in the West, with most travelling there during their term holidays. Students in receipt of a supplementary grant paid to them in deutschmarks by their governments, such as the Guinean, Indian, Malian and Ghanaian students, or hard currency remittances from their families, were at a particular advantage.[84] The East German authorities found it difficult to discourage such trips. In the mid-1960s, for example, college authorities bemoaned the fact that the Association of Iraqi Students and Workers in the GDR had no policy against its members visiting West Berlin or taking holidays in the West. Needless to say, both were popular.[85] Even into the 1980s, international students were still travelling to the West, with one source in 1984 suggesting that the rate lay between a "100 and 150 percent [sic]".[86]

Although contract workers did not enjoy the same travel freedoms as international students from non-socialist countries, they had access to external goods and markets which they used to their advantage in the GDR. This was particularly evident among Polish and Hungarian workers, and especially from the late 1980s, Vietnamese workers. Unlike East German citizens, who had to wait until 1972 before they were allowed to

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[81] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/458. Kampfert (HSGD) to FDGB, 1 Aug. 1962.
[82] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Schreiben der Abt. IV an die Abt. Wissenschaften, 6 May 1966.
[83] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41383. Bericht über die Bildung von Organisationen ausländischer Studenten und Facharbeiter in der DDR, 25 July 1963.
[84] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/1. Zur Lage unter den ausländischen Studenten, n.d. [Jan. 1964]. Also: SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Analyse der Arbeit im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen der DDR im Studienjahr 1968/69, 15 Oct. 1969, 15f.
[85] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. IS Mittweida, Verband der irakischen Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR, n.d. [ca. 1965].
[86] SAPMO-BArch, DY 13/3058. Beratungen mit Leitungen von ausl. Studentenverbänden vom 10 bis 15. Dez. 1984.

travel without visas to Poland and Czechoslovakia, Hungarian workers employed in the GDR were free to visit these countries and, according to police reports, frequently did so at the weekends. Trips home were also popular and in 1970, Hungarian contract workers returning to East Germany from visits home were reportedly in possession of "beat material" in the form of "jumpers, shirts, records and books" which they sold to GDR youths. At the end of the decade, police reports claimed Hungarians were selling similar products of Western provenance.[87]

Likewise, throughout the 1970s Poles were major purveyors to the GDR black market and police reports provide an insight into the palette of Polish contraband, which included cosmetics, jewellery, woollens and jeans ware, chewing gum, lollipops, photos of "beat formations" (i.e. of Western bands), stars and stripe badges, halogen lamps, real and imitation leather jackets, drills, fan heaters, and radio and television valves.[88] By the late 1970s in Leipzig, the black market was no longer a discreet phenomenon, with police estimating that up to sixty Poles were involved in illegal trading around the city's main train station at any given time. When the DVP and customs officials confiscated contraband from one Pole in early June 1979, they were surrounded and attacked by forty of his incensed compatriots who managed to pull the goods from the police vehicle.[89] The GDR market was a lucrative one and according to one police report, a Polish couple managed a turnover of 20,000 marks in two years selling ladies pullovers at 50 marks a piece.[90] As the Polish economy collapsed in the early 1980s, much of this trade evaporated, not least owing to the GDR's decision to impose strict controls on its border with Poland. In 1981 the number of Poles and Czechs convicted of smuggling and illegal trading offences in the GDR was at its lowest point since 1975.[91] GDR goods, in particular foodstuffs, were increasingly coveted by Polish contract workers. In 1982, the SAL (at the behest of customs and with the support of the Polish embassy) expelled 55 Polish workers for "repeated and gross" transgressions of customs regulations. Large amounts of foodstuffs such as pepper, chocolate, gelatine, peanuts, mints, chewing gum, and baking materials had featured predominantly in the car boots of these Polish workers.[92]

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[87] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Information zur Lage auf dem Gebiet der Ordnung und Sicherheit im Zusammenhang mit dem zeitweiligen Aufenthalt junger ungarischer Werktätiger in der DDR, 25 Sept. 1970; and DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 5 July 1979.
[88] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842 and 47843. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Informationen, 17 June 1977; 14 Dec. 1977, and 5 July 1979.
[89] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattung, 17 July 1979, 3.
[90] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 17 June 1977, 2 and 7.
[91] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46780, fo. 676. Kriminalistische Registierung von Ausländern, 17 Mar. 1982.
[92] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6485. Ehrensperger to Mittag, 19 Nov. 1982.

Perhaps more than any other group of migrant labour, Vietnamese workers were determined to use their time in the GDR to increase their own and their families' wealth and were less inclined to use it to explore new recreational pastimes. This had its causes in the precarious economic situation in Vietnam, which in the 1980s was crippled by massive inflation, material shortages, and chronic unemployment. This served to generate intense competition for the limited number of contract worker positions and it was common for applicants to bribe their way through the recruitment procedure. In some cases doctors demanded considerable payments before issuing the certificate of clean health required for all applications. As such, contract workers were a family's sole source of income and hope, and given the widespread corruption involved in the application process, represented a costly investment. Internal pre-*Wende* Vietnamese and East German reports estimated that contract workers could spend up to 8,000 marks in bribing officials in order to get to the GDR. Applicants raised this capital with the help of their fellow villagers or borrowed it from "Chinese usurers" allegedly at an interest rate of 60 to 80 percent. This meant that in the GDR the Vietnamese worked two years to pay off their debts, two years to make some money for their families, and one year for their own personal benefit. As unemployment was a certainty upon returning to Vietnam, families expected returning workers to have enough savings to last them eight years.[93]

The internal economic situation in Vietnam, thus, greatly determined the avocational activities of the Vietnamese workers in the GDR. Their priority was wealth creation rather than recreation in a leisure sense. In July 1987, MfS Main Department XVIII observed that the behaviour of the Vietnamese was characterised "primarily by material interest and ideological disinterest".[94] In late 1988, GDR customs claimed that it took little time for most workers to begin with the "selective purchasing of articles" after arriving in the GDR.[95] As Broszinsky-Schwabe has claimed, whenever she asked Vietnamese workers about their recreational activities, she was told that "We're here to provide for our families at home and we don't forget that for one minute".[96] Her observations are confirmed by other sources. H., a Vietnamese worker employed in a

[93] BStU, ASt Erfurt, Abt. XVIII, 203. Rückinformation zu aktuellen Problemen beim Einsatz ausländischer Arbeitskräfte, 5 May 1989, 3f.
[94] Konzeption für eine Beratung mit dem MdI der SRV im August 1987, 8 July 1987. Quoted in Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 84-86, here 85.
[95] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Zollverwaltung, Information über die Ein- und Ausfuhr von Waren und über Verletzungen zoll- und divisenrechtlichen Bestimmungen durch Bürger der SRV, 26 Sept. 1988, 2.
[96] Edith Broszinsky-Schwabe, "Die DDR-Bürger im Umgang mit 'Fremden' - Versuch einer Bilanz der Veraussetzungen für ein Leben in einer multikulterellen Gesellschaft", in: Sanem Kleff, et al. (eds), *BRD-DDR. Alte und Neue Rassismen im Zuge der deutsch-deutschen Einigung*, Frankfurt a.M., 1990, 18-46, here 28f.

Brandenburg factory, pointed out that the GDR enabled him to support his war-widowed mother and his two siblings to whom he regularly sent goods parcels. Like many of his co-workers, he was pragmatic about living and working in the GDR, remarking that: "If things gotta be, they gotta be."[97] Economic need led Vietnamese workers to put up with the often less than opportune conditions in the GDR. Not only would a premature repatriation represent a wasted investment but it would destroy one's prospects of securing a job and an apartment back in Vietnam.[98] Many Vietnamese workers were preoccupied by the situation in Vietnam, as described by a Vietnamese citizen who had moved to the GDR in the 1970s:

> The other [older] Vietnamese have barely any contact with GDR citizens. They mostly speak poor German, and often it often doesn't interest them as they only spend time amongst themselves and think of home all the time. I've noticed that the 18-year-olds, who are just out of school, are more open about this country. And the older ones, they just simply think about home and put up with things here.[99]

Owing to its sheer scale, the Vietnamese labour transfer accentuated the consumerist trends which had been evident among earlier groups of contract workers, making these more evident to the security forces and, more importantly, to the public. The number of Vietnamese workers rose rapidly from 8,459 in 1986 to 20,776 in 1987, reaching 50,998 in 1988, and peaking at 59,686 in 1989. Thus, by September 1989, Vietnamese workers formed 61 percent of the total contract workforce in the GDR.[100] The social composition of the Vietnamese labour was also different in many ways to previous groups of contract labour. Whereas the first Vietnamese workers were young, poorly-educated and often demobilised soldiers, the workers sent in the late 1980s were older and often equipped with secondary, and in a few cases, third-level education. Many had already spent more than the four to five years working in the GDR, retained by factories that resisted the official labour rotation policy in the face of growing labour shortages. Indeed, the 1987 revision of the 1980 GDR-Vietnamese labour agreement allowed for the recruitment of Vietnamese citizens who had already worked in the GDR. With the massive increase in numbers, a critical mass was reached, allowing for the development of a Vietnamese contract worker community that was experienced, numerically strong, educated and equipped with a variety of skills which the workers used to achieve their economic goals in the GDR. Unlike other groups of contract workers, the gender balance was by and large normal with women representing a significant portion of the total Vietnamese workforce. The presence of married couples

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[97] Quoted in Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 38.
[98] Ibid., 51.
[99] Quoted in: ibid., 96f.
[100] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 27. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989.

was another factor which enhanced this internal social coherence, lessening the need or the will to seek out social interaction with the majority population. Vietnamese hostels were more socially and culturally autarkic than others, representing nodes within a larger network of communities, encompassing not only the GDR, but Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria (which both employed Vietnamese labour), and according to the MfS, West Germany, France and the USA.[101]

In their attempts to increase their incomes and, as a consequence, their purchasing power in the GDR, Vietnamese workers displayed remarkable levels of determination, self-initiative and business acumen. These efforts brought them into conflict with the authorities and the public. The former generally viewed unregulated economic activity with disdain and suspicion for ideological reasons. But even when the Vietnamese utilised legal means to increase their wages by taking on overtime, weekend and nightshifts for example, they attracted the odium of the German workforce for doing so, as the previous chapter has shown. In contravening East German law, the Vietnamese (and other) contract workers did not believe they were breaking any moral law, rather they felt they were pushed into illicit activities by the dictates of the planned economy. The peculiarities of the GDR system made it necessary, if not logical, for foreign workers to engage in activities that the state branded illegal. As an internal, inconvertible currency, East German marks were worthless outside the GDR and indeed it was illegal to bring them out of the country. Sending home remittances was also unpopular given the rampant inflationary character of the dong and other currencies. This led workers to do everything possible to convert their hard-earned wages into products or hard currency that would help safeguard their futures upon return to their native countries. The methods they employed to do so reflected the complex attempts of the GDR authorities to limit the export of consumer goods out of the country.

In 1988, MfS Main Department XVIII observed that the Vietnamese treated their time in the GDR as a "supply mission" on behalf of their families which drove them to use all "legal and illegal means to acquire money and consumer goods". In this effort they enjoyed the full support of the Vietnamese government which came to view the contribution of its workers in the GDR as a "strategic aspect of foreign trade". Consequently, in 1988, it dropped all import restrictions and custom levies for returning

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[101] Notes of meeting between Zollverwaltung and Vietnamese Vietnamese embassy trade representative on 26 Nov. 1987, quoted in Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 87-91; BStU, ZA, Abt. X, 112, fo. 109-110. Information über die Beteiligung von Bürgern der DRV am Schmuggel und an der Spekulation, 25 Sept. 1987; and BStU, ZA, HA XVIII, 8880, fo. 8-11, Rückinformation zu operativ bedeutsamen Problemen, 7 Feb. 1989.

contract workers.[102] Significantly, the official Vietnamese Communist Party newspaper, *Nân Dhân*, supported the demands made by Vietnamese contract workers for a more generous allowance in the amount of goods they could send home in the post. This demand was expressed at a meeting of the Vietnamese youth movement in Sofia in October 1988, attended by contract workers from across the Eastern bloc. In addition, the delegation of Vietnamese workers from the GDR called for the provision of more cultural and sporting activities, improved accommodation conditions, and greater freedom of movement to visit compatriots employed in other Eastern bloc countries.[103]

The economic activity of Vietnamese workers took a number of forms. Most commonly, workers manufactured clothing during their spare time in their hostels, selling the produce of this "cottage" or hostel industry to East Germans. In addition, some workers organised the importation of commodities from abroad, which they subsequently sold to East Germans. Using the cash generated by this activity, the Vietnamese purchased particular consumer goods during their stay in East Germany which they intended to send abroad to Vietnam.

The indigenous production and selling of clothing and textiles was carried out by even the first cohort of Vietnamese workers. A wide assortment of garments, in particular jeans ware and shirts, were tailored according to the newest Western fashions and were much sought after by East Germans. As has been shown, the enforcement of rules and regulations in the hostels was often lax and this allowed the Vietnamese to use them to their own advantage, effectively moonlighting in order to boost incomes. In May 1986 at the steelworks in Gröditz near Riesa, disgruntled East German workers complained that the Vietnamese workers stayed up the whole night in the hostels producing clothing only to rest during regular working hours.[104] In September 1989, the MfS in Erfurt claimed that the failure of factory and hostel officials to enforce the regulations prohibiting avocational activities had enabled the Vietnamese to turn their hostels into "workshops". Sewing machines were essential in this enterprise and the Vietnamese workers used the classified columns of the regional SED-run newspaper, *Das Volk*, to buy them.[105] Such adverts had been freely appearing in the columns of the

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[102] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 27. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989.
[103] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. A day after the article appeared in *Nân Dhân* on 17 Oct. 1988, an ADN-Info referred to the article. In a letter to Mittag a day later, Beyreuther (SAL) rubbished the complaints.
[104] BStU, ASt Dresden, AKG-Pi, 128/86, fo. 7. Information über Verhaltensweisen vietnamesicher Arbeitskräfte im VEB Stahl- und Walzwerk Gröditz, Riesa, 20 May 1986.
[105] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 9. Josef Schwarz, Information, 11 Sept. 1989.

paper since 1986, if not earlier. Among the many buy and sell adverts inserted by East Germans for goods of all kinds and provenance, the following was typical:

> Sewing machine sought. Tran Thi Kim Doan, Clausewitzstr. 66/48, Erfurt 5080.[106]

The business acumen of the Vietnamese was evident elsewhere. Vietnamese workers employed at the VEB Lederfabrik in Hirschberg (*Bezirk* Gera) bought a hundred mainly second-hand sewing machines from GDR citizens, which they posted to their families in Vietnam or used to produce clothing in the GDR. Shirts produced privately with these machines were sold to German workers in the factory for between 80 to 120 marks each.[107] In addition, Vietnamese workers also sold their produce on the streets, at tourist attractions, in front of department stores, at flea markets as well through the second-hand A&V (*An- und Verkauf*) shops.[108]

The East German market was the most important and convenient source of goods, despite the state having erected a number of bureaucratic hurdles designed to limit the purchasing activity of contract workers. Although the government introduced a regulation in 1982 which required foreigners (including contract workers) to present their identity cards when purchasing certain products that were in short supply,[109] Vietnamese workers took advantage of the inability of many East Germans to distinguish their faces. Between 1986 and 1987, the reported misuse of identity cards increased fivefold while the value of goods and currency confiscated from Vietnamese suspected of minor misdemeanours jumped from 140,000 to over 460,000 marks.[110] In one case, a Vietnamese worker employed in the GDR since 1982 made 10,000 marks profit over a three month period in 1985 as the result of what officials deemed "speculative trading". Equipped with the identity cards of some co-workers who had returned to Vietnam and financed with some hard currency provided by an Algerian friend, he managed to purchase 37 record players in the *Intershops* for 439 deutschmarks a piece only to sell these later through the second-hand A&V stores for 2,788 marks each.[111]

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[106] *Das Volk*, 2 May 1986, 6.
[107] BStU, ASt Gera, KD Schleiz, 1508. Lederfabrik Hirschberg, n.d. [ca. Autumn 1988].
[108] BStU, ZA, Abt. X, 112, fo. 81f. Information über den Missbrauch von Aufenthaltsgenehmigungen durch Ausländer, 10 Dec. 1987, BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 8. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988; BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 10. J. Schwarz, Information, 11 Sept. 1989; SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Zollverwaltung, Information über die Ein- und Ausfuhr von Waren durch Bürger der SRV, 26 Sept. 1988, 5.
[109] Mentioned in Edith Broszinsky-Schwabe, "Die DDR-Bürger im Umgang mit 'Fremden'", 38.
[110] BStU, ZA, Abt. X, 112, fo. 81f. Information über den Missbrauch von Aufenthaltsgenehmigungen durch Ausländer, 10 Dec. 1987.
[111] BArch, DO 1/8.0/51097. BDVP Dresden, Sofortmeldung, 8 Jan. 1986.

Goods were also sourced in the West either directly by the workers themselves or with the help of others. According to MfS and police reports, foreigners dealt extensively in a range of Western goods, such as home electronics (especially hi-fi stereo players) and some Eastern European goods, such as Polish silverware, before expanding in 1987 into computers, electronic calculators, and car parts, and in 1988, video recorders and other home electronics. Western goods commonly were imported illegally with the help of so-called "privileged persons" or members of the diplomatic corps. According the MfS, over a six month period in 1989, a group of Vietnamese workers (mostly employed at the Berlin VEB Herrenoberbekleidung "Fortschritt" but including three workers who had avoided repatriation and had been living illegally in the GDR since 1987) managed to smuggle goods worth 1.5 million marks with the help of five African diplomatic passport holders. These goods, which included 1,800 car radios, 10,000 audio cassettes and other electronics, were then distributed to a wide circle of 40 Vietnamese middlemen and sold at markets, on the streets and through the second-hand A&V stores across the GDR, realising a total turnover of 2.3 million marks and 10,000 marks profit for each for the organisers. There is evidence to suggest that some Vietnamese workers were able to travel to West Germany owing to the inability of East Germans to distinguish Vietnamese faces. In 1989, a Vietnamese translator alerted the MfS in Magdeburg that his workers were borrowing the passports of Western-based Vietnamese exiles, who were visiting the GDR, to make short trips to the West.[112] Another important source for goods was Vietnam. From 1988, GDR customs reported that approximately 30 to 50 percent of Vietnamese workers arriving to the GDR attempted to "smuggle" goods illegally for the purposes of "speculative" trading with kimonos, jeans ware, blouses, cosmetics, quartz watches, "plastic shoes" and jewellery featuring predominantly.[113] According to GDR customs, Vietnamese workers also used their visits to contract worker compatriots in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Bulgaria, to import consumer goods to the GDR for "speculative" purposes.[114]

The total extent of these "smuggling and speculative" activities is difficult to ascertain, not least owing to the existence of wildly divergent and at times incredible figures complied by GDR customs, police and Stasi. According to GDR customs, illegal trading by contract workers resulted in a loss of 129,000 marks in revenue in 1984,

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[112] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 29. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989.
[113] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Zollverwaltung, Information über die Ein- und Ausfuhr von Waren durch Bürger der SRV, 26 Sept. 1988, 4.
[114] Notes of meeting between Zollverwaltung and Vietnamese embassy trade representative on 26 Nov. 1987, quoted in Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 87-91.

rocketing to 3.2 million marks three years later.[115] MfS Main Department VI claimed that between 1 January 1987 and 31 January 1988, 72 contract workers were suspected of illegally importing and selling goods worth a staggering 25 million marks in total.[116] In addition, customs also claimed that in the first half of 1988, 54 Vietnamese workers had been tried for their involvement in illegal foreign currency exchanges valued at 50 million marks with Western "currency foreigners" (*Divisenausländer*).[117]

However, most Vietnamese workers were simply involved in the purchase of goods for their own personal use and benefit and their specific consumption pattern reflected the shortages of the Vietnamese market.[118] A customs report of 1988 listed the most sought-after goods as mopeds and bicycles, accessories and spare parts, new and second-hand sewing machines, anoraks and cowls, cloth, soap, sugar and medicine.[119] The focus on these particular products brought them into conflict with the East German public, who blamed them for empty shop shelves, but also with the state, which installed a number of controls designed to reduce the amount of goods taken out of the country by the Vietnamese and other workers. At the most basic level, foreign workers faced controls at the point of purchase. A 1982 regulation required foreigners to present their GDR identity cards when purchasing particular listed goods, which enabled the authorities to keep track of the spending activities of individual workers.[120] At another level, workers faced limits in the number and value of goods parcels they could send home. While Algerians were entitled to send one parcel home a month, Vietnamese, Cubans and others had the right to send one only every two months. In addition, the value of the contents could not exceed half of the worker's wage earned in the same period.[121]

According to the various contract labour agreements, contract workers were allowed to take home goods worth 50 percent of their total net income generated during their time in the GDR. This meant, theoretically at least, that returning Vietnamese workers could take home goods worth anything from about 20,000 to 27,500 marks

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[115] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 8. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988.
[116] BStU, ZA, Abt. X, 112, fo. 47-50. Information zu Erscheinungen des Schmuggels und der Spekulation durch ausländische Werktätigen, 15 Feb. 1988. Their nationalities were as follows: Vietnamese (51), Polish (16), Mozambican (3), Cuban (1) and Angolan (1).
[117] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Zollverwaltung, Information über die Ein- und Ausfuhr von Waren durch Bürger der SRV, 26 Sept. 1988, 5.
[118] Minutes of a meeting between the MfS HA XVIII and Vietnamese security officers in the GDR, 28 July 1988, quoted in Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 77.
[119] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Zollverwaltung, Information über die Ein- und Ausfuhr von Waren durch Bürger der SRV, 26 Sept. 1988.
[120] Edith Broszinsky-Schwabe, "Die DDR-Bürger im Umgang mit 'Fremden'", 28. Shops provided local criminal police department with bills of sale. See DO 1/8.0/41773, 2. Information zu Problemen mit vietnamesischen Staatsbürgern, n.d. [ca. Dec. 1986], 2.
[121] Broszinsky-Schwabe, "Die DDR-Bürger im Umgang mit 'Fremden'", 28.

according to MfS and SPK wage calculations for 1989.[122] Yet, Vietnamese (and other) workers faced considerable bureaucratic hurdles in attempting to do even this. On the one hand, the East German authorities confiscated freight destined for Vietnam on the grounds that it was intended for commercial rather than personal use while on the other hand they imposed export quotas for particular goods.

Up to the late 1980s, export quotas only existed for motorbikes and mopeds while the export of cars was expressly forbidden. Contract workers wishing to export vehicles were required to secure relevant licences from the Ministry for External Trade. In a complicated procedure, workers had to submit licence applications six weeks in advance, which had to be accompanied by a sales receipt, a statement of net income and an export form.[123] This served to complicate the procedure, which was undoubtedly the desired effect. The export allowances of workers from difference countries varied, however: Algerians were entitled to two motorbikes or mopeds while Vietnamese workers were mostly limited to only one motorbike or moped each.

Although the workers were legally entitled to buy and ship home what they wanted before the official imposition of comprehensive export quotas in March 1989 (see Table 4), GDR customs frustrated the export of Vietnamese acquisitions on the grounds that they were destined for commercial rather than personal use. As early as 1980, SAL guidelines stipulated that the purchases Vietnamese workers wished to take home were not to "bear the character of commodities in either type or amount",[124] a clause which effectively gave police and customs the freedom to confiscate at will. GDR customs also secretly and rigidly enforced its own internal limits before the formal imposition of export quotas in 1989. In the first eight months of 1988 alone, GDR customs intercepted 4,700 mopeds in freight shipments destined for Vietnam, confiscating 700 of these and returning the remaining 4,000 to their senders. In the same period, they intercepted and prevented the export of goods not formally under any export restrictions, such as moped spare parts (600 engines, 1,500 frames, and 29,000 fan belts), bicycle spare parts

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[122] For the MfS calculation, see BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 27. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989. The SPK put the average gross annual wage of Vietnamese workers at 12,520 marks, amounting to 62,600 marks over five years. Vietnamese wages were subjected to a twelve percent income levy ostentatiously for the "construction and defence of the Vietnamese fatherland". See SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Schürer to Mittag, 10 Apr. 1989, 6.

[123] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Richtlinie der SAL für die Einsatzbetrieben zur Durchführung des Abkommens DDR-Algerien, 1 Aug. 1979. This procedure was based on § 16 der 11. Durchführungsbestimmung zum Zollgesetz and was also contained in paragraph III. 3 (c) of the 1980 Rahmenrichtlinie.

[124] Appendix 6, clause 3 of the Rahmenrichtlinie [der SAL] zur Durchführung von Regierungsabkommen zwischen der DDR und anderen Staaten über die zeitweilige Beschäftigung ausländischer Werktätiger in Betrieben der DDR, 1 July 1980. Reproduced in: Eva-Maria & Lothar Elsner, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus*, Rostock, 1994, 140-65.

(38,000 chains, 310,000 lamps, and 430,000 spokes), as well as 60 tonnes of sugar, 2.4 tonnes of safety pins, 27 kilometres of cloth, 68,000 film rolls, and 39 kilometres of electrical cable. Customs officials were also busy in the postal sorting offices in the same period, intercepting and turning back 1,000 parcels filled with goods destined for Vietnam.[125]

Table 4. *Export restrictions imposed on Vietnamese contract workers returning to Vietnam after completing their labour contracts – in the GDR before and after 1 March 1989 and in the ČSSR from 1985*[126]

	Informal limits pre 1 March 1989	*Official limits post 1 March 1989*	*ČSSR (from 1985)*
Total value of goods not to exceed	50% of total wages (estimated at 15,000 marks)	50% of total net wages (estimated at 20,000 marks)	
Bicycles	3-5	5	1
Spare parts	"reasonable amount"	10 tyres, 20 tubes; 10 ball-bearings	1 rear or front hub, 20 spokes & nipples, 2 pedals, 4 brake blocks
Motorbikes/mopeds (total)	1	2	2 (1 moped & 1 motorbike or 2 motorbikes)
Chains	"reasonable amount"	1	
Sewing machines (new or second hand)	2-4	2	1
Cameras		1	
Radios		2	
Anoraks	10	8	
Cloth (total)	150m	150m	100m (excluding lining and rayon)
of which lining		100m	
Photo paper		50 pks	
Film roll		50 pcs	
Soap	"a few hundred" pcs	300 pcs	20kg
Sugar	150kg	100kg	
Hand cream			40 pcs
Sewing needles			200 pcs
Thread			5kg
Toothpaste			50 pks
Hacksaw blades			150 pcs
Handkerchiefs			120 pcs

Glossary: pcs = pieces, pks = packs

In addition, there may have been more surreptitious methods to prevent goods reaching Vietnam, as illustrated by a scathing letter sent by a concerned East German industrial manager to the TV programme *Prisma* in early 1989. She pointed out that

[125] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Zollverwaltung, Information über die Ein- und Ausfuhr von Waren durch Bürger der SRV, 26 Sept. 1988, 3.

[126] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Zollverwaltung, Information über die Ein- und Ausfuhr von Waren durch Bürger der SRV, 26 Sept. 1988, 4 and 7f.; and SAL Ordnung [der SAL] zur Ausführung von Waren durch Werktätige der SR Vietnam, quoted in Susanne Paul, "Inseldasein im fremden Land: der rechtliche und soziale Status der Arbeitsmigranten in der DDR", in: *Zeitschrift des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat*, 7 (1999), 59-67, 64. Also: BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 27. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989.

freight destined for Vietnam, containing bikes, rugs, woollens and cloth belonging to returned contract workers, never left the GDR. At the VEB Fortschritt in Bischofswerda, she counted 120 crates of cargo which had been lying about exposed to the elements for up to seven months. Although the workers had paid up to 3,000 marks in transport costs, the state-run shipping company, Deutrans, claimed there were no vessels available to ship the goods to Vietnam.[127] The difficulty in shipping freight to Vietnam was in part due to the fact that there was no port facility capable of unloading container cargo ships in Vietnam, meaning freight had to be transported in wooden crates. There were also restrictions on air freight and returning workers were forbidden to take excess baggage aboard planes.[128]

In March 1989, the GDR introduced comprehensive export limits for Vietnamese workers (Table 4) in a unilateral move that was opposed by the Vietnamese government. The first signs that the GDR was planning to impose export quotas on Vietnamese workers was in September 1988, when, as chairman of the Council of Ministers, Willi Stoph requested the SAL and the SPK to look into the matter.[129] Ominously, at a meeting held in East Berlin a month later with Vo Van Kiet, deputy chairman of the Vietnamese Council of Ministers, the state secretary at the SAL, Wolfgang Beyreuther, did not disclose the plans to enforce export limits although the two agreed to revise a number of other contentious issues such as the pregnancy, citizenship, and marriage regulations (see chapter six). Indeed, the plans totally contradicted Beyreuther's assurance to his Vietnamese interlocutor that the GDR now wished that the Vietnamese workers benefit from the "achievement of the unity of social and economic policy".[130] When the GDR eventually informed the Vietnamese government of its plans, at negotiations held in Berlin in December 1988, they were rejected out of hand by labour minister Nguyen Ky Cam on the grounds that they stood contrary to the policy of the Vietnamese government, which had dropped all import barriers on returning workers. Demonstrating how important these material remittances from workers in East Germany were for the Vietnamese economy, Nguyen Ky Cam demanded that the GDR not only facilitate workers in exporting consumer goods to Vietnam but that it send consumer goods in lieu of the social security and wages

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[127] Letter dated 24 Jan. 1989. Reproduced in: Ina Merkel (ed.), *Wir sind doch nicht die Meckerecke der Nation!*, Berlin (Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf), 2000, 130f. My thanks to Dr. Josie McLellan for bringing this to my attention.

[128] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 115. Also SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7265. Letter from U. Brückner, Betreuerin, to Egon Krenz, 1 Nov. 1989, 2.

[129] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Zollverwaltung, Information über die Ein- und Ausfuhr von Waren durch Bürger der SRV, 26 Sept. 1988, 2.

[130] Gesprächsvermerk, 6 Oct. 1988. Quoted in Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 113.

transfers it was obliged to pay Vietnam under the terms of the labour agreement but which hitherto had been diverted to help reduce Vietnam's balance of payments with the GDR.[131]

The Vietnamese workers in the GDR greatly resented the restrictions, although they allowed for an increase in the number of bicycles and mopeds an individual could take home and were more generous than what their compatriots in the ČSSR enjoyed. Importantly, neither the Vietnamese supervisors in the factories nor embassy officials did anything to encourage the workers to adhere to the new rules. An activists' meeting held in Mittweida in May 1989 for contract workers and officials who were members of the Vietnamese Communist Party heard that the imposition of export limits on particular goods had caused workers "considerable moral conflict" given the expectations of their families and friends in Vietnam.[132] Indeed, the regulations seemed to acerbate panic-buying among Vietnamese workers, who in their desperation, bought as much as they could in the hope that at least some of the goods would make it through to Vietnam. In September 1989, MfS Main Department XVIII was receiving reports from all over the state that suggested that the:

> Vietnamese worker hostels represent real warehouses. Apart from industrial goods, foodstuffs are being increasingly hoarded. Dismantled mopeds, including canisters full of fuel can be found in rooms, on balconies and in the stairwells.[133]

Although it is doubtful that the Vietnamese workers were aware of their exact contribution to the East German economy, they must have been known that it was significant. Indeed in many cases they were buying the products that they had manufactured themselves. Confidential figures provide an insight into the remarkable productive output of contract workers, especially in consumer goods. In 1989, the SPK estimated that foreign labour produced the following annually: 30,000 cars, 11,000 mopeds, 6,400 motorbikes, 15,800 bicycles, 60,300 washing machines, 62,000 cookers, 185,900 fridges as well as 25.7 million items of underwear, 11 million items of clothing, 29 million tights, 5 million shoes, and 6.5 million square metres of curtain. They also made a significant contribution to the state's building programme, constructing 186 million marks worth of buildings, and producing 180,000 tonnes of cement and 175 million marks worth of prefabricated elements.[134]

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[131] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. Information über ein Gespräch mit Nguyen Ky Cam, 12 Dec. 1988.
[132] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 27. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989.
[133] Ibid., fo. 28.
[134] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7027. G. Schürer to Mittag, Aufstellung der wesentlichen Erzeugnisse, die durch ausländische Werktätigen produziert werden (Anlage 1 eines Beratungsmaterials für die Wirtschaftskommission beim Politbüro des ZK des SED), 10 Apr. 1989.

Other contract workers faced greater difficulty in acquiring material goods. The Cuban and Mozambican governments authorised East German factories to automatically dock 60 percent of wages exceeding 350 marks from the pay packets of their workers.[135] This seems to have encouraged Cuban workers to undertake measures to increase their real incomes by working overtime, in some cases choosing to do this in other factories to avoid the extra earnings being transferred to Cuba. In Berlin, some worked as gardeners during the weekends, while one enterprising worker made money by taking photographs at parties organised by Angolan workers.[136] Although some of the Mozambican workers employed in the early 1980s at the Fajas plant in Suhl worked up to 160 hours overtime in a month,[137] other reports, such as one compiled in September 1989 by Main Department XVIII, claimed that Mozambicans had had little opportunity to "develop materialist interests".[138] Perhaps the difficulty in sending freight to Mozambique compared to Cuba served to dampen the consumerist interests of the Mozambicans. On the other hand, Polish contract workers experienced the least difficulty in bringing goods home as they had the freedom to travel to Poland. In addition, they were entitled to take home goods valued at 80 percent of their total earnings upon completing their contracts.

Denying the majority of workers a fair opportunity to benefit from the fruits of their labour was perhaps the most discriminatory and exploitative characteristic of East Germany's system of foreign labour and caused greatest resentment among the workers. Perversely, it was not unusual for MfS analyses to denigrate the workers (and other foreigners) as parasites. As early as 1965, the first MfS dissertation on foreigners, which was subsequently used as schooling material for MfS officers, claimed that many of the foreigners living in the GDR who had previously spent time in the West strove to secure "an easy and if necessary parasitical life". In early 1988, MfS Department X referred to the "parasitical lifestyle" of foreigners engaged in what it deemed to be illegal trading. In two reports penned in 1989, Main Department XVIII continued the analogy. In February, it equated the "increasing materialist interests" of Vietnamese workers with the "glorification of western lifestyles (consumerism)", while in September, it claimed that this "glorification of capitalist means" represented a "parasitical way of living",

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[135] Cuba: Siebs (1993), quoted in HL 1999:1871; Sandra Gruner-Domić, *Kubanische Arbeitsmigration in die DDR 1978-1989. Das Arbeitsabkommen Kuba-DDR und dessen Realisierung*, Berlin, 1997, 27-32. Mozambique: Hans-Joachim Döring, *'Es geht um unsere Existenz'. Die Politik der DDR gegenüber der Dritten Welt am Beispiel Mosambik und Äthiopien*, Berlin, 1999, 230-239.
[136] Gruner-Domić, *Kubanische Arbeitsmigration in die DDR*, 32. Also Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 46.
[137] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 79.
[138] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 30. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989.

adding the caveat that this was what German workers were saying.[139] Even as the GDR was in collapse, elements in the Stasi and the East German public were united in their negative and racist attitudes towards foreigners.

Valuable insights into the everyday activities of foreign workers and students and the specific problems they experienced in adapting to GDR society can be extracted from the abundance of police and MfS incident reports, which are also useful in reconstructing some of the aspects of everyday social interaction with the indigenous population. This section draws on such material in order to illustrate the types of trouble some Hungarian, Algerian, and Cuban contract workers found themselves in and also how this was viewed by the authorities and public. Admittedly, the use of police material is highly problematic as it invariably focuses on trouble (in the form of crime, fights, and assaults) rather than on the unproblematic everyday occurrences involving foreigners. As such, the portrayals contained in the incident reports are not fully representative of foreigners' experience. Given the paucity of other accounts, however, they are an invaluable source which must be subjected to a high level of critical analysis in order to strip away the security organs' subjective rendering of what they deemed to be criminal behaviour. The GDR was no different to other European countries of its time in that there was a tendency among police, party, and the general public to equate foreigners with crime and social trouble. Indeed, given the particularly paranoid outlook of police and state security and the lack of internal checks and balances on state activity, this tendency was perhaps more pronounced in the GDR.

Before examining the type of trouble foreigners encountered, it is important to point out that prior to the arrival of the contract workers, foreigners were for the most part an insignificant feature in GDR crime statistics. In 1964, for example, a HAPM report noted that foreigners were responsible for only 140 or 0.2% of all registered criminal incidents, with the vast majority of perpetrators being temporary visitors to the GDR and not its 29,000 foreign and stateless residents.[140] The earliest crime statistics on international students were similar and during the 1965/66 academic year only 26 undergraduate foreign students (out of a total of 2,889) were the subject of police investigations with half of these ending up in court.[141]

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[139] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, *Einige Probleme der Verhütung von Staatsverbrechen*, 5 Dec. 1965, 10. Also: Report of Abt. X, BVfS Erfurt, 30 Jan. 1988, quoted in Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 78ff; BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fo. 20. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung, 7 Sept. 1989; and BStU, MfS, ZA, HA XVIII, 88807, fos. 8-11. HA XVIII, Rückflußinformation zu operativ bedeutsamen Problemen im Zusammenhang mit dem Einsatz der Volkswirtschaft der DDR, 7 Feb. 1989.

[140] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27730. Konzeption zum Referat – Ausländerkontrolle, 24 Mar. 1966, 2.

[141] BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/4067. Statistik für das Studienjahr 1965/66 (Studenten), n.d.

The incidence rate among contract workers was much higher although strong variations existed among the different groups of workers and at different times. In the *Bezirk* Cottbus, where a total of 2,360 foreign contract and construction workers were employed in 1977, there were only 13 incidents involving 15 workers in the first six months of the year.[142] Central police statistics for 1981 suggested that 5.4 percent of the Algerian, 2.8 percent of the Cuban, 1.1 percent of Mozambican workforces had been prosecuted that year. Bodily harm was the most common offence, with the *Bezirke* of Dresden and Halle having the highest incidence rates as well as the highest concentrations of foreign workers. 755 incidents gave rise to 478 preliminary court proceedings against 366 foreign contract and 112 East German workers. GDR citizens were more likely to be injured in such affairs: of the 522 people injured in violent altercations involving foreigners, 358 (69 percent) were GDR citizens while 164 (31 percent) were contract workers. Significantly, in 97 cases involving fights between foreign workers and GDR citizens, the police decided not to press charges owing to a lack of evidence.[143]

Police statistics that suggest that foreigners were chiefly to blame for incidents need to be treated with some caution, however. As will be shown below, there is considerable evidence to suggest that many local police units discriminated against foreigners. There were a number of reasons for this. In the aftermath of incidents, Germans were more competent in getting their side of the story across to local police who, generally trained to believe that East Germany's problems were external in origin, required little convincing that foreigners were more likely to be at fault. Safe in the knowledge that their views would be met with a favourable response, East Germans were therefore more likely to report matters to the police than their foreign adversaries, who in turn had to rely increasingly on their own forms of retributive action. Indeed, as the authorities slowly and grudgingly came to the realisation in the late 1980s that the GDR had an indigenous problem with racism and xenophobia, some reports revealed that foreigners were more likely to be the victims rather than the perpetrators of crime. In Erfurt in 1987, for example, the MfS recorded that East Germans carried out 138 offences against foreigners, who in turn were responsible for only 43 incidents against Germans.[144]

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[142] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Cottbus, Bericht, 18 June 1977, 2.
[143] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46778. Vorkommnisse mit Beteiligung von Bürgern Algerien, Kuba und Mosambik, 26 Feb. 1982, 10. This document contains handwritten adjustment to the statistics, which point to a higher incidence rate. As it is not clear whether these figures apply to the year in question, this research has adhered to the original data.
[144] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 8. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988.

Yet, the dominant perception within the security organs was that foreigners were more inclined towards criminality. In his 1965 thesis, the first MfS study on foreigners, Paulsen argued that foreigners enjoyed special privileges owing to the reluctance of the police, party and public to treat their legal misdemeanours with the same seriousness and vigour as those perpetrated by East Germans. This was particularly evident, he claimed, in cases involving defamation of the state. He also warned that foreigners coming to the GDR via the West deserved the particular scrutiny of the authorities owing to what he saw as the degenerate effects of the West. These negative influences resulted, he argued, in the high rates of criminality among former "guest workers", particularly from Italy and Spain, who took up residence in the GDR:

> The decay and corruption process of the imperialist camp has taken its toll on the [foreigners] concerned: the unscrupulousness in their choice of methods to secure an easy or if necessary parasitical living is a common ascertainable sign of asocial behaviour.

Thus, in 80 percent of crimes carried out by former *Gastarbeiter* in the GDR, the MfS claimed to have established that they had been "failures" in their native countries and in the West and that their personal "deficiencies" led them to seek compensation by means of "speculative crime, womanising, and alcohol excess" in the GDR.[145] In effect, Paulsen was suggesting that foreigners were particularly inclined towards crime and susceptible to bad influences. A HAPM report written three months later rested on the same assumption but claimed that the inevitable effect of living in the GDR and the concomitant process of "socialist re-education" resulted in the vast majority of foreigners adapting successfully to East German life.[146] It was a convenient explanatory model which described non-European foreigners as easily-led and easily-influenced, as the willing or naïve victims of the West, and whose only chance of moral and cultural salvation was through exposure to the social reality of East Germany.

However, this exposure brought with it its own set of problems, which mainly resulted from the complete failure of the authorities to appreciate the range of personal, emotional, cultural and other difficulties foreign students and workers experienced in the GDR. As Patrice Poutrus has noted in his study on Spanish communist émigrés, the authorities did not expect or anticipate that they would encounter any difficulties in integrating into everyday GDR life. When problems inevitably occurred, these were invariably attributed by the authorities to the weak characters of particular individuals

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[145] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, *Einige Probleme der Verhütung von Staatsverbrechen*, 5 Dec. 1965, 1, 8, and 10f.
[146] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27730. Konzeption zum Referat – Ausländerkontrolle, 24 Mar. 1966.

rather than on the shortcomings of SED asylum policy.[147] Similarly, the conditions set out in the labour exchange programmes, the nature of factory life, as well as the social and economic conditions in the countries whence workers came also gave rise to specific social problems among contract workers in the 1970s and 1980s. These problems often resulted in the transgressions of GDR legal norms although the foreigners involved did not always believe they were doing anything untoward in a moral sense. Rather, they felt they were simply rectifying the legal, economic, and social inequalities they faced in the GDR.

The utter failure of the first contract labour agreement – signed between GDR and Hungary in May 1967 – to make any provision for the social and recreational needs of the workers led to a relatively high incidence rate of crime among the predominantly young single male workers. As police noted in 1970, the "inadequacy of cultural-political leisure-time activities" led to the workers spending their time in bars and overindulging in alcohol. In addition, they argued that Hungarians were oblivious to the East German traffic regulations. In 1968, police carried out a total of 38 investigations against Hungarian workers, which was an insignificant number of cases considering that the Hungarian workforce numbered 7,100 in the same year. 24 of these incidents occurred in the second half of the year and involved the following types of cases: bodily harm (14), resisting police arrest (five), rape (two), "rowdy" behaviour (one), joyriding (one), and theft (one). The Hungarian crime rate grew steadily in the following years. In 1969, police registered 135 incidents, and in 1970, 132 in the first half of the year alone. In the latter period, incidents such as assault (51 cases), drunk driving (19), resisting arrest (18), and theft (10) predominated. Significantly, 75 percent of all Hungarian perpetrators were drunk, acted in groups, and were in their first year of employment. By 1970, there were 13.4 incidents per 1,000 Hungarians in the GDR compared to 9.4 incidents per 1,000 East Germans aged between 18 and 25 years old.[148]

Indeed, the statistics may have been higher was it not for the tendency of factories to summarily deport alleged troublemakers thus preventing the courts and the police in carrying out their functions. It was not until 1970 that police claimed that this "factory justice" of earlier years had ceased. Yet, the Hungarians were not entirely helpless in this situation and they devised strategies to protect themselves. As police reports

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[147] Patrice G. Poutrus, "Zuflucht im Ausreiseland – zur Geschichte des politischen Asyls in der DDR", in: *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung*, 2004, 355-378, here 370.

[148] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Meldeweg bei Straftaten durch Bürger der UVR, 10 Feb. 1969, and Information zur Lage auf dem Gebiet der Ordnung und Sicherheit im Zusammenhang mit dem zeitweiligen Aufenthalt junger ungarischer Werktätiger in der DDR, 25 Sept. 1970.

bemoaned, the Hungarians tended to "self-regulate or cover up" incidents.[149] This suggests that a high level of internal cohesion existed among the Hungarian workers, who socialised together and reacted collectively to external threats. Confronted with an overbearing state and an alien environment – in political and linguistic terms at least – and devoid of familiar social structures such as family, school and the workplace, this delineation and self-regulation may have also been an attempt to compensate for the sense of disorientation they felt in the GDR for which they received little, if any, advance preparation.

In resorting to their own retributive systems, the Hungarian workers may have been compensating for the inability of the police to admit that racism existed in the GDR (see chapter seven). The 1970 government report on the Hungarian labour exchange only made the most circuitous references to the hostile attitudes of the East German public towards the contract workers, noting that the former had not been provided with the "requisite political-ideological preparation" in advance of the arrival of the latter to their neighbourhoods.[150]

The inability of the authorities to appreciate the difficulties encountered by the Hungarian workers meant they were incapable of offering any real solutions to the problems at hand. Clearly unable to recognise any faults in the specifications of the labour exchange programmes, a top-level police report suggested that the Hungarians' misbehaviour resulted from their lack of knowledge of "GDR legal norms", language difficulties, and above all, the failure to develop any meaningful contact with their company collectives. The response was a security one in which the GDR authorities attempted to get Hungarian officials more involved in disciplining their workers. To this end a disciplinary committee was established in the Hungarian embassy in late 1971 which operated on a basis of a joint "disciplinary order" drawn up with East German officials. The SAL clearly called the tune as it organised quarterly schooling seminars for the members of the committee.[151] Other measures followed and in 1974, the SAL and the Hungarian Labour Ministry agreed that Hungarian "hostel educators" (*Heimerzieher*) be appointed for hostels with more than 150 residents in order to

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[149] Ibid.

[150] *Ministerrat* report, 7 Jan. 1970. Quoted in Sandra Gruner-Domić, "Zur Geschichte der Arbeitskräftemigration in die DDR. Die bilateralen Verträge zur Beschäftigung ausländischer Arbeiter, 1961-1989", in: *IWK* 32:2 (1996), 204-230, here 209.

[151] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Information über Vorkommnisse mit Beteiligung ungarischer Staatsbürger, 7 Mar. 1973.

supervise the "human and moral training" of the youths and to organise "sensible free time activities".[152]

The Hungarian example contains many of the characteristics that would surface time and time again among subsequent groups of contract workers, albeit in a more exaggerated form in some aspects. Social disquiet was more common among newly-arrived workers and their status as easily-identifiable minorities served to magnify their social activities and legal transgressions in the eyes of the police and indeed the public. This affected non-European workers in a much greater way, but like the Hungarians, they devised strategies to compensate for their weak social, economic, and legal status in the GDR.

In popular East German memory, Algerian workers are perceived to have been the most troublesome group of contract workers and often remembered in conjunction with knives and stabbings.[153] The available statistics tend to support the perception that Algerians were more problematic than other groups of workers. From 1974 to 1979, for example, they were two and a half times more likely than Hungarians and five times more likely than Poles to come to the attention of the police. During the same period, 981 preliminary court proceedings were initiated against Algerian workers. In 1978 alone, when there were 4,740 Algerians employed in the GDR, police registered 696 "special incidents" involving Algerian workers. Of these, 232 resulted in a court case, which represented an average of about twenty hearings per month.[154]

Yet, police files contain reference to only a few cases of stabbings by Algerians, two of which could be classed as self-defence. When two drunken Algerians were called to order on account of their unruly behaviour at a funfair in Zwickau in August 1978, one lashed out and stabbed three East Germans, wounding them seriously.[155] In Großenhain in December of the same year, a large group of East Germans attacked two Algerian workers on the street which resulted in one of the Algerians, a 23-year-old who had been working in the GDR for three years, inflicting near-fatal injuries on one of his East German attackers. In his defence, the Algerian argued that his use of the knife was necessary in order to compensate for the fact that he and his friends were

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[152] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Vereinbarung DDR-Ungarn zur Durchführung des Abkommens, 12 July 1974.

[153] As expressed in many conversations with eastern Germans from a variety of social and political backgrounds. For example, at a conference held in Berlin to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the June 1953 Uprising, a Halle-based historian and employee of the LStU Sachsen-Anhalt told the author that "the Algerians caused *us* a lot of problems" (emphasis added).

[154] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Information über die Durchführung des Regierungsabkommens mit der DVR Algerien, 17 May 1979, 6.

[155] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Karl-Marx-Stadt, Periodische Information, 16 Jan. 1979.

greatly outnumbered.[156] This research has only managed to uncover one stabbing incident that resulted in a fatality. In October 1981 in Altenburg, a 27-year-old Algerian stabbed dead a 17-year-old East German who had earlier insulted him in a bar and persistently challenged him to a fight.[157] Given the fact that incidents like these were never reported openly in the media but were nevertheless witnessed by many members of the public, they were the subject of intense speculation and gossip which has certainly contributed to the identification of Algerians with violence in the popular memory of East Germans.

An analysis of 35 incidents involving Algerians in the *Bezirk* Leipzig from early October 1976 to late March 1977 provides more evidence that knives and stabbings did not feature in the vast majority of incidents.[158] The towns concerned – Wurzen, Oschatz, Meuselwitz, Lippendorf, Böhlen and Laußig – were relatively small provincial centres. The types of incidents fell into two main categories – non-violent and violent. There were six cases in the former, involving theft, missing persons, and slander. The remainder fell into the latter category and mainly involved violence against the person and included five incidents of Algerians attacking Algerians, four of Germans attacking Algerians, and eleven of Algerians attacking Germans (including four allegations of rape and sexual assault). In the remaining four incidents, the available information suggests that both sides shared culpability. In the main, the violent incidents took place over the weekend, late at night and in or around bars, an indication in itself that Algerians were not an unknown quantity in the recreational and social fabric of the towns in which they lived and worked.

The response of the police and the state prosecution service to the incidents suggests that the punishment generally fitted the crime. Incidents, such as fist-fights, brawls, and even some stabbings, were classified as minor misdemeanours and the Algerians and Germans involved were subjected to fines or disciplinary proceedings in the factories. After one mêlée in a workers' club in Böhlen neither the German nor the Algerian workers wished to press charges, an indication perhaps that both sides recognised their joint culpability in their affair and had no desire to see a weekend ruckus end up in court. Similarly, a mass brawl in and around the "cement workers' club" in Laußig was treated as minor misdemeanour by police, even though the violence was sparked off by an Algerian slashing the hands of two GDR opponents with a razor blade.

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[156] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 10 Dec. 1978.
[157] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. SAL to Mittag, 30 Oct. 1981.
[158] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Leipzig, Auskunftsbericht, Anlage II, 12 Apr. 1977, *passim.*

In three of the four cases involving violent or sexual assault against women, police decided against pressing charges on the grounds of insufficient evidence, or because the alleged victim was deemed to have offered her consent, or because the alleged victim was of unsound mind. The approach taken by the DVP towards rape allegations is typical of the difficulty women encounter in general in paternalistic societies in trying to prove rape allegations. In general, police were not impressed by GDR women complaining about the behaviour of Algerians. One woman, who was punched in the face by her Algerian boyfriend after she refused to let him into her flat, saw the case dropped owing to lack of evidence.

The sample also proves that GDR citizens who attacked Algerians could face prosecution. Indeed, in early 1976 in Böhlen four East Germans were sentenced to jail terms of up to a year for attacking three Algerians.[159] What is also significant is that the police dropped assault charges against three Algerians accused of fighting on the grounds that they had been provoked by "insults regarding their membership of another nation", which was about as far as police could go in recognising racially-motivated attacks.

The brief descriptions of the remaining cases suggest that it was the Algerian workers who attacked GDR citizens. Again, alcohol and bars featured in most fights, some of which involved disputes over women. It is important to note that Algerians faced greater sanction under the law when compared to East Germans in that they could be deported as well as having to face prosecution.[160] Yet, as some of the more serious incidents suggest, prosecution, incarceration and deportation were not automatically or swiftly imposed by the police against foreigners accused of miscreant behaviour. Indeed, some accused were released pending trial. The threshold for deportations or remand was high enough to exclude most offences. Only in one exceptionally violent case did police explicitly call on the state prosecutor to support a deportation order. It involved an Algerian, arrested in October 1977 for assaulting an East German and fracturing his skull with a belt buckle. He was released, and the following January, he caused grievous bodily harm to two of his compatriots in a bar room brawl over a woman, smashing a bottle over the head of one and beating both with his belt buckle.

Releasing Algerians arrested for serious cases of assault was not uncommon, as demonstrated by the example of 22-year-old Abdelkader H., an employee of the Maschinenwerk Meuselwitz. In January 1977, during a row in the HOG Stadthaus in

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[159] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/6423. Information über die Parteikontrolle, 5 Apr. 1976, 5.
[160] §59 of the StGB directed that deportations could take the place of a custodial punishment or follow it.

Meuselwitz, H. attacked a number of GDR citizens with a broken beer glass. In February, he attempted to rape a woman, threatening to kill her or a member of her family if she reported the incident to the police. After she ignored his ultimatum he stabbed her brother-in-law a month later, almost killing him. Only at this point was H. taken into custody but was soon released and he returned to work. In early September 1977, he and four Algerians attacked a GDR couple in the Klubhaus in Meuselwitz, beating the man and dragging the woman outside before raping her in a car park. H. was once again arrested.[161]

Despite these exceptions the sample suggests that incidents involving Algerians attacking Germans were far more likely to lead to a police investigation and come to the attention of the state prosecutor. For example, in the five incidents where the Algerian attackers were identified, four cases were passed on to the state prosecutor while one was classed as a minor misdemeanour. This contrasted sharply with police reactions to the four cases involving Germans attacking Algerians. According to the available information, only one resulted in charges being pressed. These were subsequently dropped however and the incident was referred to the relatively innocuous workplace "conflict commission".

The discriminatory attitudes of local officials led contract workers to resort to their own retributive resources in dealing with their opponents. This was particularly apparent in Laußig, situated in *Kreis* Eilenburg, where senior regional police officers were sent in early 1978 in an attempt to explain the high rate of attacks carried out by Algerians on East Germans. According to the investigative team's report, common attitudes among the Algerian workers were:

1. In the GDR you've got same distinctions in the treatment of people as in Algeria.
2. Whoever is a GDR citizen or who carries a function always is always right.
3. Whoever doesn't bow before authority suffers.

Crucially, the report also confirmed the suspicions of the Algerian workers that local officials had made "distinctions in the judgement and treatment of victims and also perpetrators" but it denied that local police were to blame for this. Rather it was the fault of the Algerian and GDR supervisors, who invariably tended to suppress or play up the role of Algerian workers in incidents. To counteract these inequalities, the report continued, the Algerian workers in Laußig resorted to "vigilante justice". As a consequence, the state prosecutor's office and the Algerians' employer, VEB Betonwerk Laußig, implemented measures to ensure the maintenance of "socialist law

[161] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattung, 16 Dec. 1977.

and order". While the nature of these measures is unclear, they had some success and in the second half of 1978 the numbers of violent attacks carried out by Algerians in *Kreis* Eilenburg sank to zero.[162]

What contributed to this relatively high incidence rate of crime among Algerians? Through her interviews with former Algerian contract workers, Almut Riedel has established that they saw physical violence as an acceptable and legitimate means to solve disputes and to protect their honour. It was a view that they had taken with them from Algeria, where insults and wrongdoings were commonly revenged using such means.[163] While the cultural reasons identified by Riedel certainly contributed to the preparedness of Algerians to strike back at attackers and perceived adversaries, the volatile political and economic situation in Algeria may have also played a role. The government of Chadli Bendjedid, which assumed power after the death of president Houari Boumédienne in 1978, was less enthusiastic about Algeria's relations with the GDR and the Eastern bloc.[164] In addition, the decrepit state of the Algerian economy meant that the majority of returnee contract workers, many of them newly qualified and skilled, found it almost impossible to find work. Indeed, the fact that they had worked in the GDR was now seen as a burden in the new political climate. The experience of one worker, Mohand B., who was 27 and single, can be viewed as representative for many. He had worked and qualified at the VEB Edelstahlwerk in Lugau, which he claimed to have enjoyed immensely, before returning to Algeria in June 1979. Despite registering with the regular labour exchange and the local ONAMO office, 18 months later he was still without a job. In a questionnaire filled out for the Algerian Ministry of Labour, he questioned the point in sending workers abroad to gain experience and qualifications for non-existent jobs in Algeria. Workers faced a vicious circle upon return to Algeria, he explained, before proposing some solutions to the problem:

> You don't find work. If you find a job, then you don't have a flat. If you find a flat, then you can't find a job. It would be better if they allowed the workers remain abroad until retirement. [I call for the] foreign residency permits to be extended and for assistance for those who don't have any work to return to the GDR until jobs and flats can be guaranteed in Algeria.[165]

A measure of this disquiet can be gained from the fact that many Algerians took the step of submitting petitions to Erich Honecker or wrote to the GDR embassy in Algiers

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[162] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattung zu eingeleiteten Ermittlungsverfahren, 18 Jan. 1979, 9.
[163] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus", 88.
[164] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Bericht der SAL, n.d. [ca. 6/1981]; and Stellungnahme, 15 June 1981.
[165] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Fragebogen, 20 Dec. 1980, [trans. by IBE, Ber. Ökonomie]; the difficulties faced by returning workers were also noted in the FRG press, see ADN-Info, 5 Feb. 1981.

complaining about their post-return situation.[166] It was inevitable that this dissatisfaction was communicated back to the Algerian contract workers in the GDR and indeed this was mentioned in a number of internal reports from 1979 to 1982.[167] As the Algerian workers had always been told by their government that the 1974 agreement would benefit them personally and economically, the mood of the workers in the GDR swung to despondency as they realised that firstly, their GDR work experiences counted for nothing in Algeria, and secondly, that their marriages, relationships, friendships and parenthoods would come to an abrupt and arbitrary end once their labour contracts expired.

The Cuban experience was similar to the Hungarian and Algerian cases in that workers from the Caribbean island relied on their own retributive resources in conflict with East German adversaries. In September 1979, the BDVP Halle reported that since the previous January there were only 15 incidents among the *Bezirk*'s 538 Cuban residents, consisting of 460 contract workers, 75 apprentices and three students.[168] As was the case with other groups of contract workers, the Cubans were at times victims and at times perpetrators of these incidents, which were similar in character to those involving Algerians and Hungarians. While many of these incidents were of minor significance, such as petty theft, one robbery deserves particular mention. It involved Cuban workers in Zeitz stealing 14,700 marks in cash from the room of their Cuban "group leader". This fund represented the sum automatically deduced from the workers' wages and which was intended for the Cuban embassy in East Berlin. As such, the theft may have been an attempt by workers to expropriate money which they believed was rightfully theirs.

There were also other types of incident, which on closer examination seem to have been interrelated. These were two rape allegations, a number of assaults, and three group fights between Cuban and East German youths which occurred over a six week period in the cities of Merseburg and Zeitz, located about 40km apart in the *Bezirk* Halle. Most tragically, one of these skirmishes in Merseburg led to the drowning of two Cuban workers. The incident led to a detailed police investigation and their transcripts of interviews held with a large number of East German youths are a most valuable contemporary historical source in reconstructing the reality of everyday social interaction between young East Germans and foreign workers, touching on the issue of

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[166] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Stellungnahme der Sektion Arbeitsökonomik, 15 June 1981.
[167] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. SAL, Einschätzung der Möglichkeit der Verlängerung von Arbeitsrechtsverhältnissen algerischer Werktätiger, 17 Mar. 1981.
[168] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Bericht zum Einsatz kubanischer Werktätiger, 24 Sept. 1979, 5, *passim* unless otherwise indicated.

racism, relationships, self-defence among foreigners, and police practices in dealing with incidents involving them. Although other chapters discuss some of these issues in more detail, the Merseburg and Zeitz incidents provide enough material for a case study and will be examined in full here.[169]

The available evidence suggests that the Cuban workers began arriving in Halle in early 1979 and by the summer numbered about 460 workers. The Cubans were not the first contract workers in the *Bezirk* and in June 1978 the region's factories employed a total of 7,650 Hungarian, Algerian, and Vietnamese workers and trainees.[170] As the police admitted in a number of reports, factory authorities did not enjoy full control over the recreational activities of the contract workers, who they claimed spent their time getting drunk in bars which led them into committing "criminal offences".[171] In addition, they also believed that the Hungarian workers were the most problematic group in terms of public order. In the city of Halle, they were regularly involved in street fights with East German youths and police, while in Bad Dürrenberg near the town of Merseburg, they smashed up a bar and beat up six East Germans in what was described as a "groundless" attack. Indeed, as the police pointed out, there was very little for foreign workers to do in Merseburg apart from drinking and most workers headed straight for the bars upon leaving work.[172]

It was into this already problematic context that the Cubans arrived and within a short space of time according to police reports, they were engaged in much of the same problematic behaviour as the Hungarians. The incidents illustrate the complex and two-sided nature of Cuban interaction with the local population, as well as the ability of Cuban (and East German) youths to resort to their own resources in seeking retribution against their enemies. In Zeitz, the Cubans reportedly enjoyed a good rapport with some local youths, typically denigrated as the "particularly negative" variety by police, while simultaneously encountering trouble with other youths. Visits to local discos were a popular pastime in the town, as was the case in Merseburg. This brought the workers into contact with people of a similar age and, as police noted disapprovingly in Zeitz, relationships quickly developed between the Cuban men and East German women.

In Merseburg, the weekend discos held in the "Saaletal" bar were extremely popular with young East Germans, Hungarians, and Cubans. The venue was capable of accommodating about two hundred patrons, up to a fifth of which were Cubans on any

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[169] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47851 & 47852, passim unless otherwise indicated.
[170] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Bericht, 14 June 1978, 2.
[171] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Wortbericht, 15 Jan. 1979.
[172] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Bericht, 16 July 1979, 2.

night. The discos enabled people from different countries to talk and dance with one another and for the formation of friendships. The disco held on Saturday, August 11, 1979, was typical in this regard. On the evening in question, the venue was packed with young East Germans (including twenty uniformed but off-duty NVA soldiers), Hungarians, and Cubans. As some patrons later described, some East German girls were dancing with Cubans and in many cases Cubans and East Germans shared tables and engaged in conversation.

Some German youths in the hall were less enthusiastic about the presence of the Cubans, however, and had been involved in fisticuffs with the Cubans some weeks previously. At one stage in the evening, they took offence at the sight of one Cuban, 24-year-old Padro F., wearing an NVA cap he had snatched from one of the soldiers. Although these youths later claimed that Padro F. was trying to start fights with other patrons, another East German eyewitness dismissed the claim that he was in any way threatening but was simply dancing in a "lively" way:

> I'd like to emphasise that I didn't get the impression that he intended to pester other citizens by his behaviour. I thought that he wished to demonstrate how people 'move' where he comes from.

One of those aggravated by Padro F.'s behaviour was Hansi B. (25), who stormed over and removed the cap from the Cuban's head. Padro F. took this as a challenge to a fight and the two went outside to sort out their differences. Both were drunk and the fight failed to take place after the some other Cuban workers intervened and restrained their compatriot.

That was not the end of the matter and Hansi and up to ten friends (including some Hungarians) agreed to randomly seek out and attack some Cubans later that night. They found a number of victims around the town and brutally beat them in what were clearly racially-motivated assaults. An eyewitness who viewed the attacks from her balcony recalled how she heard one of the youths shout: "The *Neger* must be here, he must have escaped down here, have another look, he must be here." When he was found some moments later, she heard a youth scream: "Here he is, here he is, come on, beat him dead!" at which the youths surrounded and kicked him. In the early hours of the following morning, three Cubans were admitted to hospital as a result of these beatings.

Although the three injured Cubans reported the matter to the police the following morning, they and some of their compatriots nevertheless meticulously planned a revenge attack on their assailants. Later that evening (August 12), 23 Cubans left their hostel, equipped with leather belts and homemade whips (cut from electrical cable), and headed in the direction of the "Saaletal" where the last disco of the summer holidays

was taking place. Marching in three groups, they were led by someone dressed entirely in white, who punched the air in front of him with his gloved fists as he walked. Encountering three East German youths on the way, the Cuban leader threatened them with a knife and spelled out his gang's plans to them in broken German: "Yesterday three of us, now revenge comes." When the Cubans reached the bar, most remained outside, while nine stormed the venue. Although Hansi B. was their main target, they indiscriminately whipped and beat other patrons, many of whom were fairly inebriated, as only bottles of wine had been served that evening owing to a shortage of beer. When the disco-goers sought to escape from the bar, they came under a volley of stones pelted by the other Cubans who had waited outside. In the ensuing mêlée, the German youths gave chase to the Cubans, who began to retreat back to their hostel which was located on the other side of the Saale. Although most of the Cubans managed to make it across the nearby bridge, a number of them had no other option but to take to the river in an effort to avoid their pursuers.

In the event, two Cubans – Andres Garcia (21) and Delfin Guerra (19) – drowned. One because he was unable to swim and the other after he was intentionally struck on the head with a bottle flung from the bridge above by a 21-year-old East German woman, Sabine M. She had been hit on the head with a stone during the attack on the disco and obviously seeking revenge, aimed and threw the bottle at the struggling Cuban below shouting: "You pigs, here's some more drink for you!" She was not the only one throwing objects at the Cubans and other bystanders had been pelting stones. Racist abuse was also hurled at the Cubans by the angry crowd, and Hansi B., who had organised the attack on the Cubans the previous night, shouted: "Pigs, you black dogs deserve to be killed!" Although it was clear to most people on the bridge that the Cubans had drowned, no one bothered to inform the police of this fact when they eventually arrived on the scene. Indeed, most people were unperturbed at what they saw and later made their way to other bars and discos in the town to continue drinking. Only one East German bystander, Lothar M. (18), was brave enough to dive into the river in an attempt to rescue the Cubans. Another had considered doing the same but was afraid of the reactions of his peers. After police recovered the bodies of the two Cuban workers from the river some days later, they found in the trousers pocket of one a handwritten note containing the name, address and telephone number of an East German woman. They had obviously met previously and this is a poignant example that anti-Cuban hostility was not shared by all.

Although local police carried out extensive investigations into the incident and pretty much established who was involved and their culpability, they took no further action. On the contrary, the whole incident was covered up and whitewashed. Neither Sabine M., who eventually admitted to throwing the bottle intentionally, nor any of the East Germans or Cubans involved in the incidents of August 11 and 12 were charged. In addition, police described the initial assault by East Germans on Cubans on August 11 as motiveless, although they were aware that some of the attackers shouted racist abuse as they kicked their victims. The involvement of Hungarian workers in the chain of events was also concealed from the final police report provided to the Cuban embassy. This was on the explicit orders of the MdI in Berlin which instructed that:

> Our foreign minister is to be provided with a final report on the two unnatural fatalities, which will comment on the sequence of events on August 12 without describing the level of involvement of individuals. He will provide this report to the Cuban embassy if necessary.

What is also worthy of note is the approach taken by Cuban officials to the affair. In a meeting with the police in Merseburg on August 15, they requested that the six Cubans arrested on the night of the fracas be kept in custody in order not to make the situation in the Cuban workers' hostel worse. Police had to turn down this request on the grounds that "according to GDR legal principles this would represent an intrusion into the rights and freedoms of Cuban citizens in the territory of the GDR".

In resorting to attacking the Saaletal bar, the Cuban workers demonstrated their complete rejection of the police and conventional legal procedure. Previous negative experiences with the DVP may have encouraged this type of action. By covering up the drowning incident and its causes, the police and the Cuban authorities in effect confirmed the Cubans' suspicions of conventional justice. Indeed, the majority of the Cuban workers refused point blank to cooperate with the police inquiry into the chain of events. Even those identified as having been involved in the attack on the disco denied outright that they had been near the premises on the night in question. The Cuban workers continued in their attempts to take the law into their own hands. Three weeks later, a Cuban worker wrought his revenge on one of the East Germans who lead the counterattack on the Cubans from the Saaletal on August 12, stabbing him in the loin during a scuffle on a bus.

The methods used by Cuban workers in Magdeburg to protect themselves and their interests were not unique. Ten days after the attack on the Saaletal, Cuban workers in nearby Zeitz carried out a retaliatory attack on East German youths that closely resembled the Merseburg attack in strategy, which strongly suggests that the Cuban workers in both towns were in close contact. After a mass brawl broke out in a bar

between Cuban and East German youths, the Cubans left the premises and lay in wait for their GDR opponents to leave, pelting them with stones and injuring four people in the process. Two rape allegations, registered with the police earlier that day, had led to the bar brawl. One of the alleged rapes had been committed six weeks earlier, the other a fortnight previously, and involved East German victims who shared the same hostel as the Cuban workers. Clearly and for different reasons both sides involved were furious at the allegations. The GDR youths were outraged when they heard of the rape allegations, while the Cubans were enraged that they were made in the first place. In any case, the police in Zeitz shelved the rape investigation on the grounds the victims had engaged in "sexual relations with the suspects either before or after the reported crime". This may have been the reason for a subsequent fight in mid-September in Zeitz which left a dozen GDR and one Cuban citizen with injuries. In both incidents, the DVP decided in favour of neither side, dropping all charges for violent assault and imposing fines on some of those involved.[173]

In the same year, other areas witnessed similar clashes and the determination of the Cuban workers to take the law into their own hands. A premeditated attack by Cubans on Algerian workers in a hotel in Bautzen in March 1979 was motivated, police claimed, by the sincerely-held belief among Cubans that they "had to take revenge" for an attack carry out by Algerians on a Cuban worker which took place a week earlier. Like in the Magdeburg and Zeitz cases, the Cubans ignored conventional legal avenues completely. After the incident, police noted that

> Cuban citizens are in no way prepared to name compatriots who might be in a position to make a statement on the facts of the case in question or who were involved in the violence. They would rather take all the blame personally.[174]

The experiences of Hungarian, Algerian, and Cuban contract workers demonstrate a number of common features. All groups were deeply suspicious of authority, especially the uniformed police, a suspicion that the Algerians took with them from home. In conflict with each other and with East German youths, contract workers felt their interests were best served by their own methods of retribution and punishment. Although internal divisions naturally existed among workers from the same country, these differences were put aside when members of the group were targeted by others. Whether it was in response to physical attacks by East German youths or raids by police and customs in the search for goods, workers could and did resort to collective solidarity as a way of defending their interests.

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[173] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Bericht zum Einsatz kuban. Werktätiger, 24 Sept. 1979.
[174] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47851. BDVP Dresden, Zwischenbericht, 3 Mar. 1979, 12.

The similarities in the Hungarian, Algerian, and Cuban experiences should serve to dispel any "culturalist" assumptions that would purport that workers from non-European countries (Algeria or Cuba) or from countries informed by Islamic culture (Algeria) would have experienced more difficulty in adapting to GDR life than their fellow contract workers from Europe (the Poles and Hungarians). Faced with many of the same problems of living and working in the GDR, the workers reacted in much the same way. However, there are some crucial differences, especially in how the different nationalities were viewed by the East German public. While no evidence exists in the files consulted to suggest that Hungarians were subjected to racist abuse, the opposite was the case in the Cuban and Algerian contexts. Indeed, as the Merseburg incident showed, some Hungarians participated in the beating of black Cubans on the night of August 11.

This chapter has attempted to present a more nuanced insight into the recreational activities of foreign workers than has been provided in the bulk of the existing literature on the subject. Workers and students did venture beyond their hostels, seeking out and indulging in a wide variety of free time activities, encompassing sports, games, religion, consumerism, dancing and socialising in bars. Frequently, the types of activities engaged in by foreigners did not match East German perceptions of organised recreational activity. Mirroring the deficits of official youth policy in the GDR, the system proved unable to adapt to or accept the particular needs and aspirations of the predominantly young, mainly male workers and students. On the one hand there was the paternalistic apprehension towards unregulated and intimate social activity, while on the other there was the unwillingness to allow foreigners participate as equals in the consumers' market. Were the authorities to devise and implement policies more tailored to the specific needs of foreign students and workers, this would have depended on the ability of the system to undertake fundamental revisions of key principles. However, the system displayed no evidence that it was capable of such an approach, rather it persistently attempted to regulate and prescribe behaviour, criminalising and suppressing particular activities in the process. This was also apparent in the state's approach to personal relationships between foreigners and East Germans, which is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 6. Positive interaction with the East German public

The perceived "otherness" of foreigners did not necessarily lead to their marginalisation in GDR society. On the contrary, it was an aspect that in many cases facilitated greater interaction. Foreign students and workers were a link to the outside world for those East Germans whose horizons did not end at East Germany's borders. Although international students and contract workers had contact with East Germans in the universities and the workplace (discussed in earlier chapters), interaction also developed beyond these confines and beyond the gaze of the authorities. Indeed, as research carried out in 1990 suggested, foreigners were more likely to have had contact with East Germans who were not their co-workers than with their East German workmates.[1]

The GDR authorities were generally suspicious of and hostile towards any contact between East German and foreign citizens that took place beyond the organised and supervised forms and forums envisaged for the purpose. Indeed, the authorities persistently denigrated East Germans who associated with foreigners, classifying them as women of ill repute or rowdy youths. In Schwerin in 1960, for example, the three Algerians employed as transport workers in a city factory reportedly had a large circle of GDR friends, aged between 17 and 22, who regularly visited their flat. The police however classified these youths as troublemakers and city centre loiterers.[2] Similarly in Zeitz in 1979 police claimed that is was precisely the "negative youths" who sought out contact with locally-employed Cuban workers.[3] This reflected the general practice of the authorities to equate non-conformist behaviour with political hostility and moral degeneracy, which was not always the conscious intention of the disaffected youths concerned. Arguably, for many East Germans, contact with foreigners represented a chance to break free from the humdrum of everyday life, a motivation which the authorities were incapable of appreciating.

The secondary literature has also been slow in acknowledging such contact, placing greater emphasis rather on the racism and discrimination endured by foreigners. While foreign workers and international students were undoubtedly confronted with and

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[1] The results were published by Wilhelm Breuer (ed.), *Ausländerfeindlichkeit in der ehemaligen DDR. Studie zur Ursachen, Umfang und Auswirkungen von Ausländerfeindlichkeit im Gebiet der ehemaligen DDR und zur Möglichkeiten ihrer Überwindung*, Köln, 1990. Quoted in Eva-Maria & Lothar Elsner, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus*, Rostock, 1994, 61.

[2] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41383. Einschätzung, 10 Jan. 1960, 4.

[3] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Halle, Bericht zum Einsatz kuban. Werktätiger, 24 Sept. 1979, 5.

subjected to various forms of racism and discrimination (discussed in the following chapter), interaction with parts of the population was also a feature of everyday life in the GDR. Granted, the majority of the population was passively indifferent towards the foreigners living, studying, and working in their midst, a reaction captured in Irene Runge's recollection in 1993 that:

> Whoever didn't work in the textile, chemical, foodstuffs, engineering or other productive sectors; whoever didn't have a 'home' in a flat in the easily-recognisable high rises on the outskirts of towns; whoever evaded the barracks where these young and alien people were billeted in over a thousand places in the country, didn't know much about these foreigners.

In the main, she continued, it was only "every now and again on the street [or] in the morning rush hour" that most East Germans encountered foreigners, "who called to one another in foreign languages and different tones, using unknown gestures".[4] In Runge's opinion, the scope for interaction with foreigners in the GDR was severely limited, confined to those who worked or lived alongside contract workers. As the previous chapters have argued, however, the perception that foreigners were holed up and cut off from society in barrack-like accommodation is somewhat exaggerated and is derived from an overestimation of the potency of state regulations and a corresponding underestimation of the ability and determination of foreigners to surpass them. This thesis argues that the arenas of contact were not as limited as has been suggested and that the presence of foreign workers and students in the GDR produced personal, private, and intimate binational relationships, which were seen as something completely natural by those involved.

Apart from the universal reasons that bring people together, there were particular factors that encouraged binational relationships in the GDR, where international students and contract workers were, for the most part, young, male and single. In the 1965/66 academic year, for example, only 11.3 percent of foreign students and postgraduates were married and living with their spouses in the GDR.[5] Significantly, the 1967 Hungarian labour agreement specified that only single workers were to be sent to the GDR, while the Cuban and Mozambican agreements expressed a preference for single workers.[6] Only in the Polish, Cuban and Vietnamese worker contingents were women a significant factor in numerical terms. Other groups reflected a crass gender

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[4] Quoted in: Halina Hackert-Lemke/Heidrun Unterbeck, "'...das war in der DDR so festgelegt...' Betreuerinnen erinnern sich an ausländische Vertragsarbeiter", in: Harry Adler et al. (eds), *Zwischen Räumen. Studien zur sozialen Taxonomie des Fremden*, Berlin, 1999, 87-104, here 87.

[5] BArch, DR 3/2. Schicht/4067. Statistik für das Studienjahr 1965/66 (Studenten), n.d. In 237 cases, the spouse was an East German, in 107 a compatriot, and in 32 of another nationality.

[6] Sandra Gruner-Domić, "Beschäftigung statt Ausbildung. Ausländische Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen in der DDR (1961-1989)", in: Jan Motte et al. (eds), *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik - 50 Jahre Einwanderung. Nachkriegsgeschichte als Migrationsgeschichte*, Frankfurt a.M., 1999, 215-40, here 235.

imbalance: in 1979, only 19 of the 3,249 Algerian adults (of which the vast majority were contract workers) living in the GDR were women. Similarly, in 1989, only 55 of the 1,439 Mozambican workers in the *Bezirk* Erfurt were women.[7]

The political nature of the state encouraged many East Germans into seeking contact with foreigners. Writing in 1991, a former Polish student recalled that in the 1970s, foreigners were the objects of friendly interest because they helped liven up the monotonous atmosphere of actually-existing socialism. Indeed young East Germans even considered it cool to attend discos in foreigners' company.[8] Similarly, Riedel notes that Algerian workers in the 1970s attracted the "particular curiosity" of the East German population. Indeed, their perceived otherness allowed them a certain level of success in forming personal relationships.[9]

However, for a considerable section of the East German population (regardless of age, gender, or proximity to the regime), binational contacts, romances and relationships were something sinister and abnormal and the result of any number of ulterior motives but rarely of the attraction or love of two individuals. Given the demographic composition of foreigners in the GDR – overwhelmingly male and single – it was inevitable that binational relationships tended to involve East German women rather than men, a phenomenon that aroused the paternalist ire of state and society. East German women who dated foreign men were confronted with the chauvinistic and underlying racist attitudes of the public and the male-dominated state and party bureaucracy in particular.

What fuelled the opposition of East Germans to binational relationships and marriages? Owing to the considerable paper trail in the form of archives, it is much easier to chart the opposition of functionaries in the police, party, and state apparatus. However, as the political and functionary class was part of society and not isolated from it, its views are broadly reflective of wider social and moral attitudes and may be taken as a benchmark of general opinion. Although there was no formal ban on binational marriages as such, functionaries deployed a number of arguments in opposing them. In doing so, functionaries rarely resorted to explicit racist arguments. East Germans, and in particular functionaries, were aware of the official self-perception of the state as an anti-fascist paradise of proletarian internationalism and were adept at expressing written criticism within the bounds of official discourse. Yet, functionaries could vent their

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[7] DO 1 /8.0/50196 and BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 1. Generalmajor Schwarz, Information über aktuelle Probleme beim Einsatz ausländischer Arbeitskräfte, 11 Sept. 1989.
[8] Andrzej Stach & Saleh Hussain, *Ausländer in der DDR. Ein Rückblick*, Berlin, 1991, 18.
[9] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus, späte Adoleszenz und Protest. Algerische Vertragsarbeiter in der DDR", in: *KZSS*, 53:5 (2001), 76-95, here 76.

racism indirectly, by adding the caveat that their reports were reflecting the opposition of the public towards binational contacts for example. In the main, however, functionaries used more conventional arguments to oppose binational relationships. For some, they represented the first steps towards *Republikflucht*. Others believed they had a duty to protect citizens from what they saw as the inevitable moral and social degradation involved in moving abroad. There was also the argument that relationships and marriage could contribute to the brain drain of the developing world.

First and foremost, officials claimed that binational marriages represented nothing more than an attempt of East German citizens to escape from the GDR or of foreigners to gain residency rights. In 1983, the head of the MfS department XX in the *Bezirk* Magdeburg claimed that there was a growth in the tendency of:

> foreign students, particularly those from sub-Saharan Africa, trying to remain in the GDR through love affairs with GDR female citizens, and GDR female citizens deliberately entering into love affairs with the intention of being able to leave the GDR through marriage.[10]

In 1985, police in Roßlau and Halle noted how two women, who had married men from Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone and who had moved to those countries, ended up in West Germany.[11] As Gruner-Domić's interviews with Cuban contract workers in East Berlin in 1989 established, some "entered into sham marriages in order to remain on [in the GDR] for another few years, for as long as it took them to reach the desired economic standing".[12] Although there is some evidence to support this claim, it is impossible to estimate the ratio of genuine to paper marriages and the files provide countless examples of genuine marriages and relationships which the state nevertheless tore apart.

The arguments used by functionaries often disguised a more deep-rooted paternalistic desire to control women, as demonstrated by a dispatch from the GDR embassy in Moscow sent in 1958 to the MfAA in Berlin:

> A particular problem is the issue of relationships between young boys and girls and the related marriage question. Recently we have had to deal with this issue in Leningrad. Leading comrades only intervened after some particularly unpleasant incidents occurred there. It involves the behaviour of young girls in their first year of studies who enter into really reckless, superficial and rotating relationships, especially with other foreign students, which has led to two second-year girls getting pregnant. Talks with the two failed to result in any change in their behaviour. After this question was dealt with [...] before a sitting of the national students' committee, both girls were sent back to the GDR.

By marrying of their own free will, the embassy contended, the "girls" were breaking "the obligation they undertook, namely that upon the completion of their studies they would place their acquired skills at the service of their state, the German Democratic

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[10] BStU, ASt Magdeburg, Abt. XX, 4143, fo. 140. Stand und Ergebnisse der politisch-operativen Sicherung, 31 Aug. 1983.
[11] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. VPKA Roßlau and VPKA Halle to HAPM, Feb. 1985.
[12] Irene Runge, *Ausland DDR. Fremdenhaß*, Berlin, 1990, 47.

Republic".[13] Officials saw binational marriage as reneging on an unwritten contract between citizen and government. Twenty years later, the GDR consulate in Kiev reported that women students were in regular transgression of state regulations on relationships, which called for "demarcation" from other students.[14]

When it came to regulating the relationships of international students, GDR university educators could look to Soviet examples for inspiration, as demonstrated by the observations on Moscow's Lumumba University made by Prof Käthe Harig, director of the Herder Institute (HI) in Leipzig. It was run on strict lines, as Harig's report observed: "Girls are not allowed to visit dormitory rooms. Students however can entertain every kind of visitor in the clubroom." The report suggested that African students were particularly interested in relationships and noted that many of them had been "shamelessly swindled by Western embassies" to abandon the USSR for West Germany where they were promised "single rooms" and "great opportunities to establish contacts with women". This led one SHF functionary to make a handwritten note on the margins alleging that the foreign students "definitely weren't disappointed in that regard".[15]

Officials also deployed the equally paternalistic argument that East Germans, particularly women, needed to be protected from foreigners for moral and political reasons. At the College of Engineering in Eisleben in 1975, a functionary purported that the "pronounced levels of intimate contact" between Algerian and East German students was taking its toll on the "class awareness" of the women involved.[16] The first MfS thesis on foreigners, submitted in 1965, warned that as all foreigners were potential "couriers" for Western "human trafficking organisations", it was essential for the MfS to place their interaction with the GDR population under "operational attention" in certain circumstances. Foreigners, the thesis noted, used "foodstuffs, semi-luxury and consumer goods" to encourage East Germans, particularly professionals, to leave the GDR. In addition, it claimed (without providing any corroborative evidence) that the majority of East German women who married and emigrated "could not find work

[13] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/624, fos. 56f. Schreiben die DDR-Botschaft in Moskau an das MfAA, n.d. [ca. Jan. 1958]. The embassy also demanded that the MfAA approach its Soviet counterpart with a request that East German students be denied abortion services in the USSR on the grounds that this was illegal in the GDR.
[14] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV B 2/9.04/134. Generalkonsulat der DDR-Kiew, Analyse der Zusammenarbeit mit der KPdSU und dem Leninistischen Komsomol an den Hochschulorten der Ukraine und Moldawiens, 22 Mar. 1976, 9.
[15] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1649. K. Harig, Bericht über meine Reise nach Prag zur Eröffnung der Universität des 17. November am 9 Nov. 1961, 5f. The Lumumba University opened its doors on 17 November 1960 and was exclusively devoted to the third level education of students from the developing world. In its first year, it attracted 48,000 applications for its 600 places.
[16] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/vorl. SED/18017. Information über besonderes Vorkommnis, 11 Dec. 1975.

according to their qualifications in their partners' native countries and in extreme cases even ended up in real danger situations and social risk", mentioning climate, social conditions and prostitution in this context.[17]

Functionaries also argued that the interests of foreign states were best served by preventing a brain and body drain of qualified and trained personnel. In this regard, the GDR saw its strict application of the rotation policy, which aimed at the eventual repatriation of all international students, trainees and workers, as the defining difference to the policies applied by Western countries. In order to ensure that foreigners remained psychologically prepared for the inevitability of repatriation, functionaries saw it as their duty to prevent the alienation or deracination of foreigners from their native cultures or homelands. In 1967, an FDGB functionary urged vigilance to ensure that foreigners did not overstay their welcome:

> Under no circumstances can we allow our foreign guests to continue doing course after course here in the GDR, which allows them on one hand to lose contact with their homelands and on the other to acclimatise to our conditions to such an extent that they lose sight of the real purpose of their presence here, which is to support their own people.[18]

By 1989, some official viewpoints on binational marriage reflected opinions that would not have seemed out of place in the manifestos of contemporary Western European far-right parties. An MfS thesis, which opened by praising the levels of integration of foreigners in the GDR, went on to argue that foreigners had the potential to "directly or indirectly" threaten GDR society, specifically mentioning marriage in this context. The reasons used to support this claim, listed incoherently in the thesis and quoted verbatim below, reflected the belief that there were fundamental cultural differences distinguishing foreigners from East German citizens:

> Conflict situations, which are brought from foreign countries and regions and carried out in the territory of the GDR (e.g. Iraq-Iran).
> Concentration of people of the most varying citizenship, who use what are for them convenient conditions for personal gain (for example marriage with GDR citizens to secure residency in the GDR), and connected with criminal deeds.
> Other attitudes to life and mentalities, which when heaped up [sic] can critically shape a particular territory.
> Ideological problems (for example close ties to religion, petty-bourgeois ways of thinking and behaving).[19]

Preventing relationships and marriages was a key component in ensuring foreigners returned home after their studies or work contracts and police, state security and the

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[17] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, *Einige Probleme der Verhütung von Staatsverbrechen*, 5 Dec. 1965, 33 and 39.
[18] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/7298. Aktennotiz über die Aussprache mit dem Koll Bwalya, David, Zambia, 7 Mar. 1967.
[19] BStU, JHS, 21514, fo. 17. Dirk Teichert, Zur weiteren Qualifizierung der Erarbeitung perspektivvoller Ausgangsmaterialien für die Suche und Auswahl vom IM-Kandidaten unter Ausländern zur Arbeit im und nach dem Operationsgebiet, 31 Mar. 1989, 17.

mass organisations all played a major role in this effort. In 1963, immigration officials of the BDVP Magdeburg claimed that it intended to take action against the relationships between Greeks and Arabs and Germans in cooperation with the criminal, constabulary, and the permits police departments.[20] Foreign students who wished to stay in the GDR for whatever reason attracted the same level of suspicion from the authorities as GDR citizens who expressed a desire to leave it. Indeed, in 1969 the KAS implied that it was the "political-ideological diversionary activities" of the "class enemy" which encouraged foreign students, especially those "who are at least supporters of destructive opinions", to remain in the GDR.[21] International students were also expected to uphold this obligation to party and state. In 1985, the FDGB reminded a Columbian student who wished to marry his GDR girlfriend and take up residency in the GDR that it was his "duty as a comrade [...] to return to his homeland after completing his [party] mission in the GDR in order to take his place in the struggle of his people".[22]

In its determination to impede binational marriages, the state attempted to break up relationships directly or relied on a complex bureaucratic system to refuse marriage licences.[23] Although the GDR abolished the paragraph of the 1913 citizenship law which stated that German women automatically lost their German citizenship upon marriage to foreigners, its replacement – the 1954 Order on the Equality of Women in Citizenship Law – enhanced the authority of the state rather than the rights of women citizens.[24] Whereas the 1913 law prevented foreign males acquiring German citizenship by marriage, the East German variation effectively prevented German females from using marriage to non-East German citizens as a means to leave the GDR. Although women were no longer stripped of their German citizenship automatically upon marriage to a foreigner, the new law did not give them choice to acquire their husband's citizenship if they wished. Subsequent laws, which were designed to complicate and frustrate the licence application procedure for binational marriages, further strengthened the hand of the state. While the departments of internal affairs at county level were nominally empowered to decide on applications, the police and state security were the real arbiters. A 1957 law gave officials at *Kreis* level the power to seek the opinion of

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[20] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41383. Einschaätzung der im Bez Magdeburg nach §4 der Meldeordnung gemeldeten Ausländer und Staatenlosen, 19 Jan. 1963.
[21] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Analyse der Arbeit im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen der DDR im Studienjahr 1968/69, 15 Oct. 1969, 15.
[22] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/13001. Aktenvermerk, n.d. [ca. Feb. 1985].
[23] Heidrun Budde, *Voyeure im Namen des Sozialismus. Ehe Ost-West nach 1972*, Berlin, 1999.
[24] Anordnung über die Gleichberechtigung der Frau im Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht, 30 Aug. 1954. *ZBl.* 1954, 431. It replaced §6 of the Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz, 22 July 1913, *RGBl.* 1913/I, 583-593.

officials in an applicant's native country on his or her marriage application and to refuse them if permission was not forthcoming.[25] From 1964, local authorities were even obliged to solicit the opinions of factories and mass organisations on individual marriage applicants.[26] A further tightening of the internal regulations in 1977 gave officials the power to refuse applications for reasons that had absolutely no basis in East German law. One file, covering refusals from 1979 to 1984, shows that applications were turned down because applicants had elderly parents to support, were previously divorced, had children from previous marriages, had family in the West, were deemed of bad character or "foolish", had too many boyfriends in the past, or because their parents or siblings opposed the application. In one case in Pirna, police refused a German-Algerian application because there was "no state interest" in the proposed marriage.[27]

Convincing foreign students and workers that they treat their time in the GDR as a temporary and transient biographical episode proved a difficult task, especially considering that the GDR sought to promote itself as a harmonious and peace-loving state, devoid of the social, political and economic contradictions of the West and elsewhere. In addition, foreigners were constantly reminded of the relative backwardness of their homelands and of the long and arduous struggle required to free them from the vestiges of colonialism. These conflicting messages led many foreigners to question whether their futures were best served back home or in Europe. The SED aimed to produce foreigners prepared to place their individual abilities at the service of the greater collective in their own countries. What the SED often got were cohorts of foreigners primarily interested in defining their own lives and only too aware of the real situation in their homelands.

Rejecting GDR forms of organised friendship, international students inevitably carved out their own personal relationships. The earliest MfS theses on foreigners accepted that they had little problems in establishing relations with East Germans, whose openness towards foreigners was typically attributed to ulterior and selfish motives. The first such thesis, completed in 1965, observed critically that East Germans "approach foreigners [...] independently, in order to start up or re-establish purchasing, speculative, or negative contacts with West Berlin". Even in jails, it argued, convicted foreigners were the "focus of attention for a range of GDR prisoners [...] who see in

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[25] §10, Abs. 1 of the 1. Durchführungsbestimmung zum Gesetz über das Personenstandswesen, 7 Jan. 1957, *GBl.* 1957/I, 77-79.
[26] This procedure was laid down by MdI Dienstanweisung 50/64. See cases in BArch, DO 1/34.0/32833.
[27] BArch, DO 1/34.0/49371. The new powers were granted by Ordnung 0118/77 of 8 Mar. 1977. See also Heidun Budde, *Voyeure*, 76ff.

them the possibility of establishing a variety of contacts with West Berlin after their release from prison".[28] As the latter demonstrates, the MfS (and police) were at pains to denigrate the types of people they believed were naturally inclined towards foreigners. In a similar fashion, a subsequent thesis noted that

> upon entering public spaces, foreigners, particularly those who appear to come from non-socialist states, often make quick contact with GDR citizens, especially with those circles who in any case have a negative attitude towards the GDR.

Significantly, the same thesis stressed that foreigners were engaged in the "glorification of western lifestyles (consumerism)" in "thought and deed".[29] Although the author did not attribute foreigners' popularity to their Western habits, there was a clear link between the two as Almut Riedel's research years later with former Algerian contract workers has suggested. She credited the popularity of Algerian workers among East Germans to their more imagined than real "access to Western attributes" as well as their "conspicuous consumption".[30]

The possession of real or imagined Western attributes was not a prerequisite for the development of relationships, as demonstrated by the example of young North Korean trainees and students in the 1950s. Spread out in small groups across the GDR, a strong measure of acculturation and the forging of intercultural relationships were inevitable. For the German and Korean authorities this was an unwelcome development and one report even referred to such contact as "fraternisation" (*Verbrüderung*). A report to Kurt Hager, submitted in June 1957, described how Korean students in Dresden "in the main have contacts with German girls" and are "strongly influenced by them as a consequence".[31] These contacts lessoned the interest of the youths in returning to Korea, which prompted the embassy to crackdown on everything it felt did not psychologically prepare the youths for repatriation. This resulted in the "flight" of five Korean students to West Berlin during 1957. The SED believed that "through a lack of class consciousness, alienation from their homeland, fraternisation and illusionary expectations on the 'freedom' of the imperialist West, [some youths] were pushed into betraying their socialist homeland".[32] There can be little doubt that the embassy's radical decision that autumn to repatriate 94 apprentices, which represented almost a

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[28] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, *Einige Probleme der Verhütung von Staatsverbrechen*, 5 Dec. 1965, 4 and 33.
[29] BStU, JHS, MF, 540. Theo Dudek, *Einige Besonderheiten bei der Werbung von operativ geeigneten Ausländern ... für die Abwehrarbeit des MfS*, n.d. [ca. 1966/67], 14 and 22.
[30] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus", 85.
[31] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/640, fos. 56f. Abt. Wissenschaften to Hager, Koreanische Studenten in der DDR, 3 June 1957.
[32] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/638, fo. 106. Die weitere Entwicklung des Ausländerstudiums in der DDR bis 1965, n.d. [ca. 1960].

sixth of the total number of Koreans apprentices in the GDR, for "disciplinary transgressions" was motivated by similar concerns.[33]

Characteristic for early reports is the outright condemnation of any sexual contact involving Africans and Arabs and East German women. As many of the reports discussed below show, much of the evidence on relationships was derived from gossip circulating among members of the East German public and were as such undoubtedly the product of continuing stereotypical assumptions based on race and ethnicity, which made Africans and Arabs into an object of fascination and envy and which viewed them as predatory and prolific sexual subjects. The 13 Guineans employed at a factory in Pößneck in 1960, described otherwise as diligent and disciplined workers, found their private after-work activities subjected to the intense observation of factory officials. Reports noted their alleged lack of thrift, their habit of sleeping on bare mattresses despite the regular provision of clean sheets, and most particularly, their womanising. One functionary wrote:

> According to our observations there are dozens of acquaintances with girls and women that often extend into intimate relations. The local population are talking about these. Some of the women involved are under the supervision of the local health authority but intervention by the organs of the state or the school management is not really possible. For their part, the women have provided evasive answers or have trivialised such relations in discussions.[34]

As the report made clear, the Guineans were not dependent on official intercession in order to interact with locals and they resisted the attempts made by factory officials to "create" personal relationships, arguing that such manufactured efforts were a "limitation of their freedom of movement". Other reports were similar in their obsession with the alleged nocturnal activities of foreign workers. In the same year, the SED party secretary at the VEB Sachsenring in Zwickau reported on the alleged frequency of sexual contract between four Algerian employees and East German women:

> In the sexual field the complaints are even more serious. It is not unusual for the Algerians to sleep with up to three different women within a fortnight. Their neighbours have complained repeatedly to us for this reason.[35]

A number of reports from a Magdeburg diesel motor factory, where three Syrians were in training since November 1958, also stressed the apparent ease at which they could strike up relationships. As the FDGB noted, the decrepit conditions of their hostel, which they shared with younger GDR apprentices, meant that the three spent

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[33] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/640, fo. 56. Abt. Wissenschaften, Information an Genossen Hager, 3 June 1957.
[34] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/20/57, fos. 48-52. Letter from Betreibsberufsschule Heinz Kapelle, Pößneck, to Abt. Internationale Verbindungen, ZK of SED, 28 Sept. 1960.
[35] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/20/355, fos. 44f. Letter from VEB Sachsenring Automobilwerke Zwickau, to Abt. Internationale Verbindungen, ZK of SED, 1 Feb. 1960.

"every evening in cafés where they make the most varied acquaintances".[36] A year later, factory officials called for the deportation of one of the group, a 38-year-old Syrian trade unionist and apprentice mechanic, on the grounds of his absenteeism and disinterest in learning. The factory doctor lent his support, claiming that he was unable to bear the German climate and "way of life" and because "his extensive intercourse with women" was taking a toll on his health.[37] Again, the alleged womanising of foreigners was seen as something un-German and physically unhealthy. In another case, the FDGB believed a visiting Algerian trade unionist was in need of therapy owing to his alleged erratic behaviour with women:

> L. tries to drink more than he can hold, and he is particularly easily aroused by female charm. This was evident in how he wanted to drag the woman pianist off to his bedroom ... He even tried to get 64-year-old *Kollege* B. of the Central Council of the Land and Forest Trade Union up to his room. He claims that his chances with women are ruined by D.'s [another foreign trade union representative] age and peaceful disposition. Other details provided by D. have led us to the conclusion that *Kollege* L. may even be sexually obsessed by inclination, which has an intense nervousness as a natural consequence.[38]

On the other hand, there is also some evidence to suggest that foreigners were overwhelmed by the relative level of sexual freedom in the GDR. As the example of a number of Syrian apprentices suggests, some took advantage of this while others were more critical. The Syrians came to the GDR in the late 1950s under the terms of an official training agreement, and many of the trainees were from wealthy and influential Syrian families and spoke English or French fluently. Unbeknown to them, a small number of their compatriots were members of the Syrian Communist Party. A mere five weeks after their arrival in the GDR, one of these covert communists discussed the activities of the group with a GDR functionary, who in a subsequent report recalled:

> Comrade B. then turned to the issue of sex, which occupies an important role for them here as foreigners. The observations that they have made to date have not been the best. He talks of our Arab friends finding it easy to meet many girls while out having a stroll and that these girls are immediately 'all for it'. To date, not one genuine relationship has developed from these acquaintances. He agrees that through German families, good contact can be made with young, progressive German girls.[39]

As the quotation suggests, some foreigners were unable to appreciate the signs given out by East German women. What the women possibly saw as friendliness or innocuous flirtation was interpreted as sexual promiscuity by "comrade B.". Undoubtedly, social norms in East Germany contrasted radically with those of Syria, where it was generally

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[36] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8349. FDGB, Bericht, 12 Jan. 1959. In January 1959, the three went on hunger strike in a dispute over their training.
[37] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8349. Report of the factory trade union leadership, 16 Jan. 1960. He was later deported.
[38] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/458. Heilbehandlung des algerischen Bürgers L., Amar, 14 Nov. 1963.
[39] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8349. Notes of a meeting with Syrian student Abdelnur Bricho, n.d. [Jan. 1959], 3.

unacceptable socially for women to go for walks unaccompanied or to chat up male strangers. In the opinion of Vijoy Batra, otherwise so critical of the GDR, women were exceptionally friendly towards particular foreigners:

> Now and then it appeared to me that girls showed maybe too much of a liking for men with dark skin. The communists use this to their own advantage by delegating loyal FDJ girls to befriend us. It's their duty to accompany us to the theatre or to dances, to influence us in a 'positive' way, and to make us happy with society. The outcome is a string of illegitimate children fathered by foreigners. But if the foreigners want to marry these girls, they're told at the registry office that 'marriages between German girls and foreigners from enemy countries are forbidden'. One just wonders whether the Afro-Asian countries are enemy or befriended countries.[40]

While Batra may have been writing from experience, his analysis needs to be taken cautiously as his publisher, the Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs, was keen to portray the GDR population as innocent victims and communists as evil perpetrators. Given the socially-conservative climate of West Germany of the early 1960s, his assertion that SED policy invariably led to teenage pregnancies involving foreign men was bound to shock readers.

Statistics for binational marriage in the GDR are fragmentary and were first collated by police in the mid-1960s. Between 1963 and 1966, for example, more than 645 East Germans married citizens (mainly students) from non-socialist states. Marriages to citizens of the socialist bloc states were more common, amounting to 276 such unions in 1965 alone.[41] The number of relationships was obviously much greater and the statistics provide no indication of the number of marriage applications turned down by the authorities. One source claims that in Leipzig practically all of the thirty applications submitted by international students during the first half of 1965 in Leipzig were granted.[42] Yet, in a 1962 report, the Union of African Students and Workers in the GDR (UASA) noted that its members were "getting into great political conflict as a result of the unclear, differing and administrative treatment of marriages between African men and German women". While the UASA agreed that registry officials were entitled to request foreigners to submit written proof that applicants were single, it failed to understand why they were also obliged to obtain the written support of their governments for the marriage. The strict rules on marriage the GDR, the UASA purported, contrasted totally with Western European norms and served to turn students against the GDR.[43] In other cases, officials informed foreigners that they could only submit applications for marriage and residency from abroad, a ruse designed to

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[40] Batra, *Studium bei Freunden?*, 10.
[41] BArch, DO 1/8.0/35339. Statistik zur Rückkehrer, Zuziehende und Ausländer, n.d. [ca. Dec. 1966].
[42] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, *Einige Probleme der Verhütung von Staatsverbrechen*, 5 Dec. 1965, 39.
[43] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/20/56, fos. 35-50, here 44. Bericht über eine Beratung des Exekutivkomitees der UASA und der DAFRIG, 7 Dec. 1962.

encourage foreigners to leave the country. In the event, applications sent from abroad were rarely accepted.[44] A possible explanation for the varying procedure from place to place was due to the fact that in the 1950s and 1960s, officials at *Kreis* level were entrusted with responsibility in this area. It is also not beyond possibility that officials took a more favourable attitude towards applications submitted by citizens from particular countries, especially those on which the GDR was focusing its diplomatic efforts.

Although most applications were accompanied with applications for exit visas, the statistics from the period provide no indication whether these were granted in all cases.[45] It is highly unlikely that this was the case, however. In 1965 in Leipzig, a hundred foreign students protested in support of the right of an East German woman to leave the GDR with her Congolese husband, who was facing deportation after he was expelled from the HI. Although an SHF official had attempted to dissuade her from leaving owing to the existence of "cannibals" in the Congo, the MdI eventually granted the woman an exit visa.[46] Referring to this and other incidents, one MfS thesis questioned the sense in allowing marriages on one hand but refusing exit visas on the other. Indicating that the author believed that an all out ban on intermarriage was the best way to remove this discrepancy, he pointed out that: "For some unknown reason (maybe because this is not possible) foreign students are not discouraged from marrying during their studies."[47]

Clearly, a ban would have had immense negative consequences for the GDR's standing internationally and would have laid it open to the charge of institutionalised racism. Internal preventative procedures were preferable, and as the GDR opened up in the 1970s, it intensified these procedures, with the result that relationships came under the increasing surveillance of the police and MfS. In 1972 in Leipzig, the MfS claimed it was necessary to keep the binational romances under observation as "it is not uncommon for these relationships to develop to the point where the GDR citizen in question applies to leave the GDR legally on the basis of marriage".[48]

The case of a Mauritian apprentice, Louis Jose P., shows clearly that state intervention to prevent the emergence of relationships between foreigners and East

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[44] BStU, JHS, MF, 540. Theo Dudek, *Einige Besonderheiten bei der Werbung von operativ geeigneten Ausländern mit ständigem Wohnsitz in der DDR für die Abwehrarbeit des MfS*, n.d. [ca. 1966/67], 17f.
[45] BArch, DO 1/8.0/35339. Statistik zur Rückkehrer, Zuziehende und Ausländer, n.d. [ca. Dec. 1966].
[46] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Informationsbericht über die Situation unter den ausländischen Studenten, insbesondere in Auswertung von Vorfällen in der Öffentlichkeit, 4 Feb. 1965, 7f.
[47] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, *Einige Probleme der Verhütung von Staatsverbrechen*, 5 Dec. 1965, 39.
[48] BStU, ASt Leipzig, Abt XX, 145/05, fo. 76. Bericht des Hpt. Leopold, n.d. [ca Autumn 1972].

Germans served only to exacerbate broader racist prejudices and stereotypes. P. was the only foreign worker in the VEB Werkzeugmaschinenkombinat in the southern provincial town of Plauen, where he began an apprenticeship in 1970. The town had some experience with foreigners in the past: it once had an apprentice school for foreigners in the late 1950s and, in the 1960s, the local VEBs, Plamag and Sachsendruck, occasionally trained African apprentices. P. had little success in making friends among his East German workmates. On the one hand, he was somewhat older than they were, while on the other he felt that they excluded him from the workplace collective. However, P. was more successful in establishing contact with women outside of the workplace, which attracted the attention and criticism of factory officials and townspeople alike. One report noted that:

> His contact with girls the same age has grown in scope. The resulting immoral behaviour was the subject of discussions between him, the director of the factory's apprentice school and his minder. [...] There has been absolutely no improvement in this regard as a result of these discussions. Indeed the opposite is true in that his immoral behaviour has worsened.

Although the factory tried to have him transferred to a town where there were more foreigners, P. managed to remain in Plauen and formed a relationship with Brigitte S., a young skilled co-worker, who gave birth to their child in March 1971. Although her family had no problem with P., the relationship generated immense public censure inside and outside the factory. As P. later wrote, "they even said to [my girlfriend] that she's going out with *Neger* as if that's something disgusting". Rather than deal with the racism of the workforce, factory management unsuccessfully repeated its the demand to the FDGB in Berlin that P. leave Plauen. As his apprenticeship neared completion, officials were adamant that P. would return home, arguing that his "current relationship with a GDR citizen, the mother of his child, naturally does not entitle [him] to remain in the GDR". In April 1972 he was put on a plane back to Mauritius from where he unsuccessfully appealed to the FDGB to allow him return to the GDR and to his daughter. The functionaries were unsympathetic and made handwritten notes on his letters in an effort to discredit his character, mentioning his "immense circle of friends, especially with young girls who came from places like Stralsund, Rostock and Leipzig to spend the night with P. in the workers' hostel", his "scandalous behaviour in public disco bars", and his "unique temper and arrogance". Another allegation mooted after his departure, which like most of the other accusations curiously found no mention in contemporaneous reports written while he was in Plauen, claimed that he had got another young woman pregnant who later had an abortion.[49]

[49] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/10538. This contains numerous documents relating to P.

P.'s experience shows how social and state opposition to such relationships were symbiotically interdependent. Functionaries could always justify their opposition to binational relationships as an expression of popular will and as a measure necessary to protect the women involved. In breaking up binational relationships, which were just as prone to the trials of any, the authorities ensured that popular misconceptions on their inadvisability were confirmed. State policy ultimately deprived women of husbands and partners, and children of fathers, which in turn had the potential to reinforce racist stereotypes that "miscegenation" was wrong and that foreigners were unwilling and unable to assume parental responsibility.[50]

Importantly, East German officials opposed and broke up relationships even in cases where there was absolutely no evidence or suggestion of any purported "immoral" or untoward behaviour on the part of foreigners, demonstrated by the treatment of an Upper Voltan apprentice named Pierre Joseph Poda, a qualified car mechanic who came to the GDR in 1968. After spending some time learning German at the HI branch in Radebeul, he began training at the Reichsbahn rail depot in Greifswald where he received his master craftsman's diploma in 1973. Poda was described as enthusiastic and studious by his supervisors and in his spare time attended adult education classes to catch up on his schooling. During his time in Greifswald he met and was engaged to a woman from Malchin, who gave birth to their child in early 1973, just some weeks before he was due to complete his course. Although they submitted a marriage application when the child was born, it took the local council until the end of the year to turn it down. In the intervening period, the FGDB and DVP placed Poda under immense pressure to return home but he insisted that they allow him to remain in the GDR until his application was processed. When this was turned down, the FDGB spelled out to Poda that in order for it to "fulfil [its] commitment to the trade union of Upper Volta", he would have to "return to serve the interests of his trade union and the progressive development of his country". However, in a passionate plea to the FDGB, Poda claimed that his duty was primarily to his family and found the prospect of having to leave them behind unbearable:

> I cannot avoid getting the impression that in decisions involving marriages between GDR female citizens and citizens of developing countries there are huge differences for which I understandably do not have a nor can find an explanation. As this is my vested interest, I most politely request that you to show some fresh interest in my life; I am a human being and have feelings and cannot contemplate this darkest day when I'll have to leave everything behind that I hold dear; that would break my heart.

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[50] On the experiences of binational children in the GDR, see: Josefine Janert, "Hauptsache, unsichtbar", in: *FAZ*, 6 Feb. 2001, 15, and Nicola Lauré al-Samarai, Unwegsame Erinnerungen: Auto/biographische Zeugnisse von Schwarzen Deutschen aus der BRD und der DDR, MS.

The FDGB was unmoved, claiming that it did not have the power to intervene in the marriage authorisation process. Given little other choice and faced with deportation if he refused to leave, Poda returned to Upper Volta in early January 1974 but continued to write from the capital Ouagadougou where he had found a job at an electricity works. In a clear attempt to impress the FDGB in Berlin, he claimed that as most of his fellow master craftsmen had been trained in West Germany, he had "to stay on the ball in order not to let the name of the GDR down", adding that he had been offered but declined the position of deputy works director. He begged for some resolution to the marriage issue, for which he was prepared "to fight tooth and nail" and to adopt East German citizenship. Although he had the support of his partner, the FDGB was unmoved. Indeed, in a reply to Poda which ignored the marriage issue, the FDGB berated him for having turned down the job promotion, exclaiming that: "Your skilled knowledge, ability, and political-societal experiences which you acquired from us, should really help you to promote the political and economic development of your country."[51]

In 1968, a Polish newspaper feature touched on the issue of relationships in a lengthy and detailed article on the Polish workers employed on the construction of the "Friendship" oil pipeline between Schwedt and Rostock. As the article noted, the Poles made considerably more in the GDR than in Poland and enjoyed spending their wages at the weekends. They evidently made more of an effort to impress the opposite sex than local youths and while they were rewarded with some success, they generated the resentment of East German youths in return:

> They impress the girls with their white shirts and ties, and with the fact that 'as husbands you surely wouldn't tell your wives to polish your shoes'. They are gallant, are capable of spending 20 marks on a dinner in a restaurant, kiss hands and all in all hold their own. Local boys often glower at them. They are simply jealous. They fear that the number of Polish-German marriages might grow; there are already six of them now.

Interestingly, the article also referred indirectly to the more traditional anti-Polish resentment encountered by the workers. It claimed that their involvement in such a prestigious construction project surprised and helped the older generation overcome their impressions of Poles made in "the pre-war times when Polish workers were coming in search of bread, a living, [and] to work in the fields".[52] As this article demonstrates, the media in labour-delegating countries was more prepared to talk about aspects of the everyday life of their workers than its East German counterpart.

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[51] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/10550. Contains numerous documents on Poda.
[52] NA, FCO 33/277. Andrzej Bober, "On the Hundred Fortieth Kilometre", in: *Życie Warszawy*, 7-8 July 1968, [trans. British embassy, Warsaw].

In many ways, the Polish example serves as a model for the general experience of foreign workers in the area of relationships, which developed despite the intentions of GDR and foreign officials. According to the labour agreement signed in 1967 between the GDR and Hungary, the former undertook "not to grant residence to the Hungarian workers after they complete their employment" apart from in exceptional cases.[53] Yet, in 1968, 24 Hungarian-German couples successfully applied for marriage licences.[54] Given the considerable bureaucratic hurdles in place – marriages involving applicants from socialist countries were also subjected to restrictions – the number of intercultural relationships must have been much higher. According to MdI Directive 03/68, the deputy chairperson for internal affairs at *Bezirk* level had to authorise the issuing of marriage licences involving foreign applicants and in reaching his decision relied on the opinions of the DVP, MfS, factory, and mass organisations on the couple's intentions.[55] In an attempt to complicate the procedure further, the regulations also stipulated that every application required the written consent of the Hungarian embassy, an endorsement that the GDR recommended to its Hungarian counterparts should only be issued in "exceptional circumstances", such as in cases where the couple were expecting or already had a child.[56] This cumbersome procedure ensured that applications could take months to process, which was the intended effect.

Once married, however, the binational couple faced yet another hurdle as marriage status did not automatically entail residency rights for either partner in either country. Depending on where the couple intended to reside, one of the partners had to seek an exit visa to leave his or her own country and a residency permit from the authorities in the other state. Of the 1,596 Hungarians who worked in the GDR from 1967 to 1970, 217 (or 13.6%) married East Germans during their contracts and 67 children were born to these couples. Two-thirds of these married Hungarians wished to remain in the GDR and accordingly applied to the Hungarian embassy for permission to do so. With just two to three months to go before the workers were scheduled to leave the GDR, the embassy had only granted 30 applicants permission to remain, while a further ten had

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[53] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. § 4 des Abkommens zwischen der Regierung der DDR und der Regierung der UVR über die zeitweilige Beschäftigung junger ungarischer Werktätiger zur Erwerbung praktischer Berufserfahrung im sozialistischen Betrieben der DDR, 26 May 1967.

[54] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Eheschließungen zwischen Bürgern der DDR und ungarischen Staatsbürgern, n.d. [ca. Dec. 1968].

[55] Anweisung Nr. 03/68 des MdI und CDVP über die Bearbeitung von Anträgen auf Eheschließung mit Bürgern der westdeutschen Bundesrepublik, der selbständigen politischen Einheit Westberlin und des Auslands, 15 Jan. 1968. See Heidrun Budde, *Voyeure im Namen des Sozialismus. Ehe Ost-West nach 1972*, Berlin, 1999, 155.

[56] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Eheschließungen zwischen Bürgern der DDR und ungarischen Staatsbürgern, n.d. [ca. Dec. 1968].

their visas extended for a year. It turned down thirteen applications while the remaining 89 awaited a decision.[57] When the GDR-Hungarian agreement finally expired after 16 years in 1983, over 40,000 Hungarians had worked in the GDR and approximately 4,300 (10.75 percent) had married East German citizens. Mostly male (80 percent), the vast majority (4,000) choose to remain in the GDR, while the remainder decided to move to Hungary.[58]

The Hungarian example made it clear that workers sought out personal relationships with East Germans regardless of the existence of East German and Hungarian directives aimed at their prevention. The Algerian workers who came to work in the GDR from 1974 were no different to their Hungarian predecessors in that they sought out personal relationships contrary to the intentions of the East German and Algerian authorities. According to an MfS source, Algerian officials had instructed the workers before they left for the GDR that under no circumstances were they to "tie themselves down to women" but were rather to devote all their attention on their work and training.[59] The workers disregarded such instructions and sought to define their own recreational activities but in the process seem to have faced considerably greater opposition from the authorities. In the *Kreise* of Triptis, Eberswalde, and Erfurt, Algerians encountered the open hostility of the police who subjected them to identification checks while out walking with their girlfriends.[60] Interestingly, the workers in these areas had arrived four months previously, which shows how quickly relationships could develop despite linguistic, cultural, and social barriers. By mid-1975, the first binational children had been born to East German-Algerian couples, who as a consequence demanded the right to marry and to live together.

At this early stage, the state organs were uncertain on how to respond to these developments and during the summer of 1975 the SAL and the DVP held discussions on the matter. The former proposed that Algerians who wished to marry be permitted to opt out of the labour contracts, continue working as regular workers, and be allowed to move in with their partners. The latter pointed out that such a change in working status would require the Algerians to apply for permanent residency permits which could only

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[57] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Vermerk, n.d. [ca. Sept. 1968].
[58] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41774. Press cutting entitled "40,000 junge Ungarn haben sich in DDR weiterqualifiziert", *ND*, 28 June 1983. It also noted that under the same agreement, 1,000 East Germans worked in Hungary, where some got married. 24 of these (90 percent who were women) chose to take up residence in Hungary.
[59] BStU, JHS, MF, VVS 001-339/77. Bernd Thiemann, *Die Aufgaben der Kreisdienststelle bei der politisch-operativen Kontrolle der zeitweilig in der DDR tätigen Ausländer aus nichtsozialistischen Staaten und Gebieten, und die sich daraus ergebenen Erfordernisse für das operative Zusammenwirken mit anderen Organen*, 15 Aug. 1977, 22.
[60] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Vermerk, 16 Sept. 1975.

be issued in cases involving "genuine relationships" (where a child was expected or had been born) and where the proposed domicile was deemed "sufficient".[61] In early August, police chief and interior minister Friedrich Dickel wrote to Horst Sindermann, who as chairman of the Council of Ministers was officially responsible for the labour transfer programme, requesting his opinion on the matter but the correspondence went unanswered. That October, when the workers began a wave of strikes, the authorities realised that they could no longer ignore the matter (see chapter four). At Schwarze Pumpe, where the largest strike took place, seven workers had been demanding the right to move in with their girlfriends and the refusal of the authorities to accede to this request undoubtedly contributed to the strike. In an effort to diffuse the situation, on October 21 Sindermann instructed the Interior Ministry to allow Algerian workers to move into private accommodation in the Schwarze Pumpe catchment area if they wished. His decision had the support of the SAL and the MfS.[62] As it applied only to workers in a specific area – involving the *Kreise* Spremburg, Hoyerswerda and Weißwasser – the move had little to do with a policy of liberalisation. In the ensuing months, the state regained its authority by transferring a hundred Algerian workers from Schwarze Pumpe to new factories. In addition, the SAL cancelled the intake of Algerian workers scheduled for 1976 arguing that it required time to allow the situation to "stabilise".

The authorities also introduced a more stringent marriage regulation. Under DVP Order 0118/77 of March 1977, the families of GDR applicants were now obliged to submit their opinions on the proposed marriage to the police. As Budde has shown, this gave the DVP countless reasons to reject applications. For example, police could reject an application on the grounds that the applicant had a duty to provide for his or her elderly parents even though GDR law contained no such obligation for parental care. Significantly, the order also instructed the authorities to issue refusals verbally.[63] Undoubtedly, the order was primarily an attempt to reassert state authority in the aftermath of the signing by the GDR of the Helsinki protocols, which necessitated the state to adopt more covert measures to prevent its citizens from leaving the state. It clearly had an impact on Algerian-East German relationships, which is discernible from the statistics. While there were 48 successful applications for marriage licences in 1976, in 1977 there were only 33. A much higher number of applications were submitted than

[61] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Vermerk über ein Gespräch mit Gen. Schmidt (SAL), 25 July 1975.
[62] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617 Sindermann to Dickel, 21 Oct. 1975.
[63] Heidrun Budde, *Voyeure*, Berlin, 1999, 85 and 118.

granted and in January 1978 alone, the authorities were processing 129 cases.[64] Indeed, police and MfS applied a preventative approach designed to disrupt relationships. In 1977, an MfS officer outlined the policy as adapted in the Rüdersdorf area where Algerians were employed at a cement works and who reportedly found little difficulty in establishing contact with the local population in the workplace and in the recreational sphere:

> In carrying out our duties, the priority is to prevent marriages taking place between Algerian workers and [female] GDR citizens by using appropriate measures. In special cases marriages may be allowed, but as this gives rise to political-operational problems, we must ensure that marriage is not used [as a means] to abandon the Republic.[65]

Similarly, the head of police immigration in the *Bezirk* Dresden claimed in 1978 that his department was deploying considerable operational resources for the "registration, control and surveillance of foreign citizens who have frequent contact with GDR citizens (women)", adding that the university administration was an important source of information for his officers.[66]

The governments of a number of labour delegating countries also disapproved of binational relationships. The policy of the Algerian government hardened over the years, signalled by the comments made by the Algerian labour minister on his visit to the GDR in May 1978. Addressing the workers in a number of factories, he announced that the embassy would no longer consent to marriage applications, even in cases where the workers had fathered children. Interestingly, he cited the negative experiences of Algerians marrying French women as the reason for his government's objection, which one SAL official ironically and hypocritically found discriminatory.[67]

The policy adopted by Vietnamese officials towards binational marriage was unlike any other. At a meeting with officials of the Consular Department of the MfAA in December 1984, embassy officials claimed that although the "Socialist Republic of Vietnam is in principle interested in the return of its citizens," it could envisage marriage between Vietnamese and East German citizens provided the Vietnamese applicants fulfilled a number of conditions. These were considerable and were undoubtedly designed to frustrate applications. Firstly, the situation of the applicant worker's family in Vietnam would have to be considered. Secondly, his or her employer or the delegating ministry in Vietnam had the right to have a say in the decision. In

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[64] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Untitled, n.d. [ca. Feb. 1978].
[65] BStU, JHS, MF, VVS 001-339/77. Thiemann, *Die Aufgaben der Kreisdienststelle*, 15 Aug. 1977, 22 and 31.
[66] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41619. Diskussionsbeitrag der BDVP Dresden zum Erfahrungsaustausch über die Kontrolle von Ausländern am 4 Mai 1978.
[67] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Information for Schmidt, Abt. Planung und Finanzen des ZK, 10 July 1978. Also BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Untitled, n.d. [ca. Nov. 1978].

addition, applicants needed to submit a number of documents in support of an application, consisting of a certificate of legal capacity from a local council, which had to be imprinted with an apostil by the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry, and letters of endorsement from the worker's Vietnamese factory or university or from the Vietnamese Interior Ministry. Significantly, Vietnamese embassy officials ruled out the possibility of East German citizens moving to Vietnam owing to the "complicated conditions in the country".[68]

At a subsequent meeting held a year later, Vietnamese embassy officials clarified their policy on marriage:

> Citizens of the SR Vietnam studying in the GDR can only submit an application for marriage and permanent exit visa after they have left the GDR and have worked for some years in their homeland. Regarding SRV citizens who are in the GDR for the purposes of vocational training [contract workers], the embassy is prepared to rule in favour of the aforementioned applications if the citizen's relationship has produced a common child and the Vietnamese citizen has paid his training costs.

Thus, the embassy was prepared to allow one Vietnamese worker whose East German partner was expecting his second child remain in the GDR provided he followed the requirements and contacted the "Cooperation Department" of the embassy to allow for a "concrete examination process".[69] This process was primarily financial and workers were expected to pay considerable sums of money to win embassy support for their marriage intentions, a practice which the SAL noted as early as 1984 was being commonly referred to as "*Freikaufen*" or buying freedom. In 1988, the "rates" were as follows: 5,000 marks for unskilled workers, 10,000 marks for skilled workers and 15,000 marks for third-level graduates. Payment of this money secured the support of the embassy for the applicant's intentions, and if the GDR factory and MdI agreed, the worker was released from the terms of the labour contract and was reissued with his passport.[70]

Without exception, the organs of the state pigeonholed the East Germans who freely associated with foreign workers as the most negative types in society. Such reports were undoubtedly a product of the deep-rooted racist and sexist sentiment in East German society, which was scandalised by binational relationships. In particular, women suffered from this consensus between state and society and reports never described women as acting on their own free will and judgement. Police in Sebnitz and Bischofswerda dismissed the women who associated with Algerians as either "negative" elements or helpless victims lured into the hostels and forced into having

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[68] See reprodution of minutes of meeting in Michael Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR und ihre Beobachtung durch das MfS*, Magdeburg, 1999, 117.
[69] Ibid., 116.
[70] Ibid., 118f. In 1984 the SAL put the cost of this "ransom" for graduates at 24,000 marks.

sex.[71] A year later, the same officer reported that "asocial female persons" were staying overnight at the Hungarian workers' hostel in Freital, while the Algerians in Sebnitz were offering "illegal quarters" to guests.[72] In Böhlen, factory security described the girlfriends of Algerian workers as "women with previous convictions, loafers from the industrial schools (*Jugendwerkhöfen*) as well as escapees from institutions run by the health authorities," adding dismissively that the Algerians working in the town divided their time between drinking and fighting over these women. Similarly, police in Leipzig denigrated the women who associated with Algerians as "providers of illegal quarters, the previously convicted, the criminally endangered and other negative persons".[73] In what was perhaps the most bizarre deployment of terminology, in 1977 an MfS thesis described the girlfriends of Algerian workers as "smuggle-willing persons",[74] which reflects the commonly held belief that women entered into binational relationships with the sole intention of leaving the GDR.

Given the impossibility of drawing neat dichotomies between state and society in the GDR, functionaries were undoubtedly expressing views widely held in East German society. Scherzer's interviews carried out in Suhl in 1982 convey the attitudes of some East Germans towards binational relationships. As is to be expected, the interviewees who expressed racist ideas opposed them. Illustrating the intrinsic link between racism and paternalism, the bottom line for Mauer, who lived next door to the workers' hostel, was "every tribe for itself". Showing his contempt for the women who went out with Mozambicans, he dismissed one as "no oil painting" who had "divorced especially" for a Mozambican. The factory's personnel manager, Seiler, claimed that he would throw out his own daughter if she dated a Mozambican.[75] Their views contrasted with those of the Rev. Eberhard Vater and his wife Christina, who established an alternative hostel in the early 1980s in the small town of Viernau, 20km outside of Suhl. The hostel generally accommodated those who felt ostracised by the regime and also provided East German women and their Mozambican, Cuban or Vietnamese partners an intimate and private space that was otherwise unavailable to them in the workers' hostels, in the women's homes, or in conventional East German hotels.[76]

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[71] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 15 June 1978, 10.
[72] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Dresden, Periodische Information, 5 July 1979.
[73] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattung, 17 July 1979, 6f.
[74] In German, "schleusungswillige Personen". BStU, JHS, MF, VVS 001-339/77. Thiemann, *Die Aufgaben der Kreisdienststelle*, 15 Aug. 1977, 31.
[75] Landolf Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, Berlin, 2002, 16, 22, and 43.
[76] Ibid., 43f.

Yet, opposition to binational relationships was not just racially motivated. Some disapproved of them claiming they were injurious for the foreigners. Foreman Rudi Gradtke, who favoured Mozambican above East German workers, argued that they needed to be protected from being "fleeced" by East German women. According to him (and others), some East German women took advantage of the Mozambicans' generosity (who by all accounts showered their girlfriends with gifts) by talking their way into engagements only to ditch their naïve fiancées later. This left the Mozambicans incensed who, according to their customs, demanded the return of their gifts and rings, and even sought legal advice on the matter from Gradtke who served as a juror in the local court.[77]

Women on the other hand questioned the wisdom of getting involved in relationships with Mozambicans on the basis that they had a predetermined shelf life. This was the view expressed by two women who were otherwise positively predisposed towards the Mozambican workers. As Roswitha Menz, a local barwoman, stated pragmatically: "Of course I wouldn't marry a Mozambican, it's not logical. They all have to go back sometime." In a similar fashion, 19-year-old worker Carmen Dietz exclaimed: "But the Mozambicans are not allowed stay here, after four years they have to go back for good. And what is the point in me getting engaged to one, only to find everything's over in four years."[78] They were not racists and each spoke out against the discrimination and marginalisation of Mozambicans; Menz in her bar and Dietz in the workplace (see the subsequent chapter). Dietz, however, feared the racist censure suffered by women who dated Mozambican men. Her friend, Angela, had a Mozambican boyfriend and when her brigade learned of this "all hell broke loose, they [especially the older women] treated her like dirt". She was also called a "nigger's slut" at a local disco. Given the pervasive climate of racism in Suhl, Dietz could not see herself ever marrying a Mozambican as she claimed that too many "people here are just too stupid to accept something like that". And although she found it a good thing that "there were more half-casts [sic] about than before", she was unsure whether they could cope with the teasing and gossip directed at them by the public.[79] The views of the two women demonstrate how state policy and social pressure in the GDR served to intimidate those who saw nothing inherently wrong with binational relationships, "miscegenation", or the presence of foreigners.

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[77] For the gifts, Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 114.
[78] Quoted in ibid., 67 and 114.
[79] Ibid., 114-16.

The outright condemnation by functionaries of almost all binational relationships means that the frequent allegations made in reports that Algerians and other contract workers were involved in underage sex or rape cannot be taken at face value. While there can be no doubt that some foreign men committed violent crimes of a sexual nature, it must be borne in mind that officials had an interest in criminalising binational interaction and tended to exaggerate the wrongdoings of a few foreigners to justify this policy. In 1984 Jena, for example, police staged a number of raids on an Algerian workers' hostel after four of the fifty East German women known to regularly visit it applied for exit visas to leave the GDR. The room searches in Jena and the discriminatory treatment of Algerians in East Germany in general led the Algerian embassy to issue a complaint to the MfAA in 1984. When the MfAA in turn sought an explanation from the police in Jena, the latter admitted that they were illegal under the law and internal police regulations but claimed they were necessary because young girls had being staying at the hostel. One was a 15-year-old girl, who was on the missing persons register and a certified source of sexually transmitted diseases; another was a 17-year-old absconder from an industrial school (*Jugendwerkhof*), while the third (17) claimed to have had sex with some Algerians and to have allowed them take nude photographs of her.[80] Yet, although some of this may have been true, the police undertook the raids to combat regular and not underage relationships and only by chance discovered the presence of these girls in the hostel, which they in turn used to justify their raids retrospectively.

Testifying to the genuine nature of many of these relationships, it was not uncommon for former Algerian and other contract workers whose partners failed to secure exit visas to seek to return to the GDR and their wives, girlfriends and children, usually travelling on tourist or transit visas issued by GDR consulates abroad. While police picked up and deported most shortly after their arrival, a few managed to remain in the GDR for considerably long periods. In late 1980, 22 Algerians who had worked for four years at the Leipzig GISAG factory, returned to the GDR, and in most cases, to their wives and girlfriends. They were part of an 80-strong cohort of workers who had begun work at GISAG in 1976. Owing to the unavailability of a single workers' hostel, the GISAG Algerians were housed in a number of hostels spread throughout the city, which police claimed made it difficult to "supervise" the workers, resulting in excessive

[80] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/48451. Kontollauftrag in VPKA Jena, 20 Feb. 1984.

drinking and rows with East Germans.[81] In addition, police claimed that the Algerians maintained extensive contact with East German women, and in typical misogynist fashion, denigrated these as the "weak, criminal" variety who travelled from all parts of the GDR to stay "officially and sometimes unofficially" at their hostels.[82] After completing their contracts at GISAG in July 1980, the workers returned to Algeria in order to take up employment in a steel foundry that the GDR was building in Tiaret. Finding that the factory was still under construction, 22 of them decided to return to the GDR. Back in Leipzig, seven moved in with their East German wives, seven with their girlfriends, while the remainder moved back into their old hostels. They also approached GISAG looking for their old jobs back. After police learned of the Algerians' presence some months later, they insisted that the Algerian embassy arrange for the immediate return of six former workers. Significantly, this number included four married men (two of whom were fathers) whose East German wives had been granted exit visas to leave for Algeria. The SAL and GISAG were prepared to allow the remainder stay in the GDR provided the Algerian embassy re-registered them as ONAMO contract workers and withdrew their passports accordingly.[83] Although the embassy initially agreed to this proposal, it failed to act on it with the result that the police deported the men in June 1981.[84] In going to such lengths to be reunited with their partners and families, these Algerians illustrated that relationships were strong, genuine and mutual and far removed from the negative portrayals contained in many police reports.

Some former contract workers were more successful in evading police attention after returning from Algeria to their wives in the GDR. In Hoyerswerda, two Algerians lived openly but illegally with their wives from 1979 to 1984, when police acting on a tip-off, arrested and deported the two. One was Ben A., who came to work in the GDR in 1974 as part of the first contingent of Algerian contract workers. In 1976, he met Edith U. and subsequently moved in with her to her flat in Hoyerswerda. After his four-year contract ended in August 1978, Ben A. had to return to Algeria even though his partner was pregnant. She gave birth to a daughter a short time later and both kept in contact by letter. A year later, he returned to the GDR on a one-week tourist visa and

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[81] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattung zu Straftaten und Vorkommnissen mit Bürgern anderen Staaten, 15 July 1977, and Berichterstattung, 16 Dec. 1977.
[82] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattung zu eingeleiteten Ermittlungsverfahren, 18 Jan. 1979, 10.
[83] Under the 1974 GDR-Algerian labour agreement, workers had to hand in their passports upon arrival in the GDR and received so-called ONAMO documents in return. This practice was explicitly designed to prevent the Algerians from making trips to West Berlin and the FRG.
[84] BArch, DO 1/8.0/51098 contains correspondence on the workers' case.

after seeing his partner and, for the first time, his child, decided to remain in the GDR. For over four and a half years, he managed to live openly in Hoyerswerda, despite the *Hausbuch* regulations that required the registration of visitors in private homes. Although his partner supported him financially, he also worked privately on a building job for an East German. "Nobody took exception to this", the DVP later established, which was also "due to the fact that there are many families with an Algerian spouse in Hoyerswerda". Significantly, the Algerian embassy had been aware of his presence since 1979 but it had instructed the Algerian supervisor in Hoyerswerda that his case "was a matter for the GDR authorities". Subsequent to his arrest and forced deportation, local police went through their records to check if any more Algerian "tourists" had overstayed their visas and found another, Azzedine F. He had also worked in Hoyerswerda from 1974 to 1978, during which time he met his partner Liselotte S. They lived together at her flat, which was prominently located over the Centrum department store in the city centre. Returning to Algeria after completing his contract, F. later came back to the GDR from Paris by car in August 1979 on a three-day holiday visa. He remained with his partner in the same flat until police picked him up and deported him five years later. While these cases are somewhat exceptional given the long period of time the two Algerians managed to evade police attention, police files contain many references to similar albeit shorter cases involving workers and students from a number of countries.[85]

Despite all the bureaucratic obstacles placed in their path by the East German and other regimes, some couples did succeed in securing both a marriage licence and the right of residency in the GDR. In March 1988, there were 1,200 former contract workers married to East Germans residing in the *Bezirk* Erfurt.[86] During the 1980s, there was a slow increase in the overall number of binational married couples enjoying residency rights living in the GDR (Table 5). Significantly, over half of the total number of binational marriages with residency involved citizens from labour-delegating counties. Although the statistics do not relate solely to marriages involving contract workers, these formed the majority in most cases. In the Hungarian case, for example, they amounted to two-thirds of the total. This proportion was undoubtedly greater in the cases of Algeria, Vietnam, Cuba, Mozambique, and Angola, as citizens from these countries mainly came to the GDR as workers. Clearly, Poles and Hungarians found it

[85] BArch, DO 1/8.0/2/95. BDVP Cottbus, Überprüfungsbericht zum ungesetzlichen Aufenthalt von zwei Algerischen Staatsbürgern in der Stadt Hoyerswerda, 8 June 1984. See also DO 1/8.0/51097, BDVP KMS, Sofortmeldung, 27 Mar. 1987, for a Vietnamese man who lived illegally in GDR for 18 months. These were not isolated incidents.

[86] BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL, 2029, fo. 9. Abt. XVIII, Berichterstattung, 9 Mar. 1988.

much easier to marry East Germans than citizens from other countries, leaving no doubt that Angolan and Mozambican workers encountered far greater levels of institutional racism than other workers.

Table 5. *Cumulative number of binational married couples residing in the GDR from 1980 to 1988 (including only countries with labour agreements with the GDR)*[87]

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Total (for all countries)	23913	25663	26676	26877	27714	27716	27960	28449	29254
Of which included a:									
Pole	6926	7297	7493	7549	7609	7711	7762	7737	7737
Hungarian	6069				(No details)				6466
Algerian	26	43	62	69	104	139	172	178	156
Vietnamese	17	21	27	31	47	70	140	215	323
Cuban	22	30	33	45	61	71	81	243	414
Mozambican			2			1	2	4	6
Angolan							1	3	2
Total (for seven countries above)	13060								15104

Again, these statistics are not representative of the extent of binational relationships and exclude unsuccessful applications as well as cases where the couple took up residence abroad. For example, although sixteen Vietnamese citizens were allowed take up residence in the GDR with their wives in 1984, in the first six weeks of that year alone, 38 marriage/residency applications had been submitted by Vietnamese citizens, six of which were granted.[88]

Just as East German women were victimised for their engagement with foreign men, women contract workers were subjected to far greater regulation in the sphere of relationships and reproduction. With the knowledge and support of the Cuban, Mozambican and Vietnamese governments, the GDR government excluded them from the many of the legal rights enjoyed by East German women. A supplementary agreement signed in June 1980 between the SAL and the Mozambican Labour Ministry was the first to enshrine this discrimination. In the document, the SAL agreed to repatriate immediately Mozambican contract workers found to be pregnant, a decision justified on the grounds they were not in a position to "fulfil the principles laid down" in the 1979 contract labour agreement in relation to work and training.[89] Some days

[87] BArch, DO 1/8.0/54483.
[88] SAL report, 17 Feb. 1984. Quoted in Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 119.
[89] Article 2 of the Jahresprotokoll 1981 zum Abkommen vom 24 Feb. 1979, signed on 26 June 1980. Reprinted in Andreas Müggenberg, *Die ausländischen Vertragsarbeitnehmer in der ehemaligen DDR*, Berlin, 1996, 99-102, 107f.

later, the 1980 SAL *Rahmenrichtlinie* or Guidelines extended this principle to all non-European women contract workers.[90]

Yet, the threat of deportation did not prevent sexual activity or pregnancy. Perhaps by concealing their pregnancies, a small but growing number of Vietnamese women managed to give birth in the GDR (Table 6). As Nguyen van Houng has claimed, living in the GDR liberated Vietnamese workers from the "taboo of extramarital affairs" prevalent in their morally conservative homeland.[91] In this regard, the experience of Vietnamese women in the GDR is analogous to what Riedel has identified for the male Algerian contract workers, namely that residency in the GDR allowed for the "free sampling of different lifestyles and leisure".[92] In July 1987, the SAL and its Vietnamese counterpart agreed that pregnant contract workers would be forced to decide between a free abortion or repatriation to Vietnam, while factory minders were instructed to issue workers with contraceptives, usually in the form of the pill.[93] According to Nguyen van Houng, the free and uncomplicated availability of abortion and contraception served to further "legitimise the extramarital sexual relationships among the Vietnamese, who out of necessity had previously exercised restraint in their sex lives".[94]

Table 6. *Number of births to Vietnamese women in the GDR, 1980-1988*[95]

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Births	2	1	6	6	9	12	28	50	52
(Total number of Vietnamese workers)	3508	5040	9600	10298	10641	10038	8459	20776	50998

This restrictive policy was officially relaxed somewhat in March 1989. In what was effectively a discretionary provision, the SAL instructed that pregnant Vietnamese women were no longer to be deported against their will or to be pressurised into having abortions. Rather they were to be advised on their options and allowed decide what was best for them. If they chose, they could remain in the GDR and were entitled to suitable accommodation and some of the benefits enjoyed by East German women, such as

[90] Section 6.17.3 (b) of the Rahmenrichtlinie [der SAL] zur Durchführung von Regierungsabkommen zwischen der DDR und anderen Staaten über die zeitweilige Beschäftigung ausländischer Werktätiger in Betrieben der DDR, 1 July 1980. Reproduced in: Elsner, Eva-Maria & Lothar, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus*, Rostock, 1994, 140-65.

[91] Nguyen van Houng, "Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Vietnam und den Vertragsarbeitern aus Vietnam sowie die Situation der Vietnamesen in Deutschland heute", in: Deutscher Bundestag (ed.), *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission*, Baden-Baden, 1999, 1301-1363, here 1334.

[92] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus", 77.

[93] Werner Schmidt (SAL) and Nguyen Trong Thuy (Vietnam), Vereinbarung über die Verfahrensweise bei Schwangerschaft vietnamesischer werktätiger Frauen in der DDR, 21 July 1987. Quoted in Hanns Thomä-Venske, "Notizen zur Situation der Ausländer in der DDR", in: *Zeitschrift für Ausländerrecht und Ausländerpolitik* 10:3 (1990), 125-131, 128.

[94] Nguyen van Houng, "Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Vietnam", 1334.

[95] BArch, DO 1/8.0/54483.

pregnancy benefit, short-term maternity benefit, crèches, and children's allowance as well as social security benefits in kind. However, they were not entitled to the paid *Babyjahr* leave.[96]

Although Marburger has suggested that the state intended the revision of the pregnancy regulations to complement the granting of the franchise to foreigners in the local elections of May 1989, the decision had already been made the previous October. At a meeting held between Wolfgang Beyreuther, state secretary at the SAL, and Vo Van Kiet, deputy chairman of the Vietnamese Council of Ministers, the former proposed three major changes in order to allow foreigners benefit from what he saw as the "realisation of the unity of economic and social policy" in the GDR. Firstly, East Germans and Vietnamese citizens were to be "freed from bureaucratic hurdles" in applying for marriage; secondly, it was to be made easier for Vietnamese workers to give up their Vietnamese citizenship in favour of GDR citizenship should they wish; and, thirdly, pregnant women were no longer to be repatriated against their will. Importantly, although the Vietnamese minister agreed to the changes, he warned that pregnancies were not to be "stimulated", thus expressing the deep social conservative mindset of Vietnamese officials that had contributed to the restrictive regulations in the first place.[97]

The change in policy had little to do with a process of liberalisation. Like the decision to enfranchise foreigners at local elections, it was nothing more than a window dressing exercise designed to deflect some of the criticisms of East German foreign labour policy. It can hardly be seen as an attempt to pacify the concerns of the contract workers as in the same month the government decided to impose export quotas on the amount of goods contract workers could take back with them to Vietnam. In practice, not all Vietnamese women workers were informed of their new rights.[98] Indeed, in late August 1989, a Vietnamese worker sent a petition to Erich Honecker after her factory threatened to deport after she became pregnant. After the SAL intervened, the women was told she could give birth in the GDR, could spend her maternity leave in Vietnam, and could return to work out her contract "according to plan" if she so wished.[99]

Importantly, the pressure on women contract workers to avoid binational relationships was not exerted solely by the state and embassy officials and there is some evidence to suggest that male contract workers sought to control the activities of their

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[96] Helga Marburger, cited in Hackert-Lemke & Unterbeck, "Betreuerinnen", 104, n. 37.
[97] Gesprächsvermerk, 6 Oct. 1988. Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter*, 113.
[98] As admitted by an SAL official. See Irene Runge, *Ausland DDR. Fremdenhaß*, Berlin, 1990, 117.
[99] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7265. 21 Aug. 1989, Ehrensperger to Büro Honecker.

female compatriots in this regard. Although they saw it as natural to have relationships with East Germans and to attend local discos, Cuban men at the Berlin Elektro-Apparate-Werke were initially very opposed to Cuban women doing the same. Yet, despite this pressure, the Cuban women won through, as recalled by Herr Ludwig, the workers' minder at the factory:

> During the first few years the Cuban girls didn't look at GDR [male] citizens, it was taboo for some reason. That changed though in the last few years. I've two or three Cuban girls who have got together with East German citizens. [...] The guys were all against it at first, but it caught on.[100]

Cuban men were far more likely to be in a relationship and Ludwig knew of twenty such marriages. The opposition of the Cuban men undoubtedly found the support of their government. Like the Mozambican government, it allowed the GDR deport pregnant workers, but unlike the Vietnamese, refused to allow their citizens have abortions in the GDR. Thus, pregnancy for Cuban workers invariably meant repatriation unless the women sought abortions without the knowledge of the embassy. In an effort to prevent unwanted pregnancies, Ludwig, like many other minders, organised sex education classes for his women workers. Given these conditions, Cuban women workers were extremely anxious with even the thought of becoming pregnant, and as an interview held during the summer of 1989 suggests, were resentful of the entitlements of their Vietnamese colleagues.[101]

The policy on binational marriage in the GDR had tragic consequences for some individual contract workers. In 1987, a 23-year-old Mozambican named Virgilio Nhanombe committed suicide three months before his partner, Johanna R. (37), was due to give birth to their child. In what is poignant testimony to the inhumanity of GDR policy, she claimed later in a letter to the Mozambican supervisor that Virgilio had taken the decision to kill himself after it had become clear that they would not be allowed marry and live together. She wrote:

> Both governments, our and your government, will have to consider that when young people come here to work, love will develop between people. Whether black or white, why can't we live together? Virgilio is a victim of the governments' measures. I'll do everything possible to help Virgilio's mother learn the truth so that she'll know who her son's murderers are.[102]

Characteristically, police rubbished her claims and purported that Virgilio killed himself after hearing that his partner had been giving some Cuban workers the "advantage" of late.

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[100] Runge, *Ausland DDR*, 71f.
[101] Ibid., 46.
[102] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/3/94. BDVP Karl-Marx-Stadt, Maßnamhen im Zusammenhang mit dem Suicid eines ausländischen Bürgers, 21 May 1987.

State policy was geared towards the prevention of binational relationships. In tearing apart relationships and families, it made little distinction between married and unmarried couples. It resulted in the deportation of husbands and partners, who in many cases were fathers, effectively leaving their partners to raise their binational children alone in the GDR. State policy effectively drove women into single motherhood, which given social mores and underlying racism among sections of society, served to stigmatise binational relationships and legitimise opposition towards "miscegenation" even further.

Chapter 7. Racism in the GDR

Some commentators have argued that the SED was a "party of xenophobia" whose policies nurtured xenophobic undercurrents in society while cynically appropriating the phrases of international solidarity and proletarian internationalism.[1] Another article has claimed that the SED administered a system of "actually-existing apartheid".[2] These claims are clearly exaggerated as the SED was not a party in the mould of Western European far-right parties nor was the GDR a European South Africa.

A massive body of more serious literature exists on the xenophobia and racism in the GDR and the new *Länder*. These are mostly written from a sociological or psychological rather than a historical perspective, arguing for example that the authoritarian educational and childcare system and paramilitary training of youth in the GDR contributed to the disproportionately high levels of xenophobia.[3] Undoubtedly, the stagnant and inadequate youth policy did lead to discontent, which was expressed in a variety of forms. Rightwing extremism was one of these, and as many studies demonstrate, the SED leadership stubbornly refused to recognise this growing phenomenon as a homemade one but sought rather to externalise its causes.[4]

In 2002, a ZZF research group produced a paper which argued that present-day xenophobia in eastern Germany had its roots in GDR developments and identified three contributing factors. Firstly, East Germans identified foreigners with the SED regime, which made them a convenient target for anti-regime resentment. Secondly, the GDR failed to devalue the exclusivist elements of its nationalist inheritance, and indeed encouraged these with its attempt to construct a homogenised socialist nation. Thirdly, societal tolerance could not develop given the absence of a public "culture of conflict" in the GDR.[5] Rejecting a singular focus on psychological or historical developments in

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[1] Freya Klier, "Ausländer rein! (Die DDR-Deutschen und die Fremden)", in: Manfred Heßler (ed.), *Zwischen Nationalstaat und multikultureller Gesellschaft. Einwanderung und Fremdenfeindlichkeit in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Berlin, 1993, 231-38, here 235.

[2] Carl Wechselberg, "VertragsarbeiterInnen – Rassimus in der DDR", in: *Perspektiven. Zeitschrift für sozialistische Theorie* 10 (1993/94), 26-34, here 30.

[3] An overview of debates is provided by Anna Saunders, "Ostdeutschland: Heimat einer xenophoben Tradition?", in: *Berliner Debatte Initial* 14:2 (2003), 50-59.

[4] See Walter Süß, *Zu Wahrnehmung und Interpretationen des Rechtsextremismus in der DDR durch das MfS*, Berlin, 1993, 33-39.

[5] Jan C. Behrends, Dennis Kuck and Patrice G. Poutrus, "Historische Ursachen der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in den Neuen Bundeslandern", in: Behrends et al. (eds), *Fremd und Fremd-Sein in der DDR. Zu historischen Ursachen der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Ostdeutschland*, Berlin, 2003, 327-333. The theses were not entirely original. The second thesis resembled Konrad Weiß' March 1989 argument that the

the GDR, Anna Saunders has argued that the political and social problems following on from unification were the catalyst for a radicalisation of processes that had already commenced in the GDR. The rapid arrival and imposition of the Western system left East German youths disorientated as their role models (family, neighbours, and friends) became unemployed or were exposed as Stasi agents.[6]

Yet, research on racism in the GDR has its deficits. Generally, it has viewed the issue solely from the perspective of the "host" society and focuses almost exclusively on the late 1980s. Furthermore, xenophobia has for too long been identified with youth and skinhead gangs, but not as a broad social phenomenon. Racism was not just a symptom of system collapse in the late 1980s nor was it the preserve of right-wing extremists. It was a much broader social phenomenon that featured throughout the history of the GDR. In this regard East Germany was arguably more part of the European mainstream than the SED suggested. This chapter seeks to outline the historical characteristics of East German racism. It shows that the ideological foundation on which the state was built prevented functionaries from accepting that a problem existed on the one hand, while on the other it served to cloak their own prejudices. Indeed, the SED could resort to national stereotyping when it felt its legitimacy was under threat. The inherent failure of the system to accept the existence of racism meant that it could never be effectively combated, leaving racist prejudice to fester among the East German public. The chapter concludes by surveying foreigners' own attitudes on racism, with particular attention given to historical and contemporary perceptions rather than the retrospective post-*Wende* views. Given that racism in the late 1980s has been extensively covered in the secondary literature, this chapter focuses on East German racism in the 1950s and 1960s and shows how the trends which emerged in this period continued into the following two decades.

The opposition of the authorities towards unsupervised friendships and binational relationships was evidence of a more deep-seated racism and xenophobia in East German society. Despite its claim to be the embodiment of the best of German progressive traditions, the GDR as a German, a European, and a communist state inherited a mixed bag of racist and xenophobic traditions and mentalities. Unlike the landed estates, private industry and the old military, which the SED saw as the main contributors to fascism, popular expressions of racism proved difficult to abolish. The

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failed attempts of the SED to substitute internationalism for nationalism led to an identity void. Konrad Weiß, "Die neue alte Gefahr. Junge Faschisten in der DDR", in: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk (ed.), *Freiheit und Öffentlichkeit. Politischer Samisdat in der DDR 1985-1989*, Berlin, 2002, 392-404, here 401. Weiß' article was reproduced extensively in GDR, West Germany and Poland.

[6] Anna Saunders, "Ostdeutschland: Heimat einer xenophoben Tradition?", 53.

constitution, laws and regulations may have helped banish open and aggressive racism from public view but did little to combat its more subtle forms. Socialist construction did not root out prejudice and hate. Indeed, by blaming fascism on the capitalist class and other enemies, the SED absolved the public from any complicity in the evils of the Nazi regime. Furthermore, it also deluded many East Germans into believing that there was no objective reason for racism to exist in the GDR. Thus, the inevitable recurrence and persistence of racism among the population could not be recognised for what it was and became a taboo.

Anti-racism and internationalism were central planks of SED ideology and on the international stage the GDR was fond of parading itself as an anti-racist bastion in stark contrast to the West. In 1970, for example, the MfAA argued that:

> In agreement with the Potsdam Agreement and the UN Charter the GDR has from the very beginning condemned racism, colonialism and neo-colonialism in every form and has reflected this principle in its socialist constitution. The GDR, which gives the colonially and racially suppressed nations every possibly help, [...] demands that the West German Federal Republic [...] end its long-lasting and extensive support for racist slaveholders.[7]

When it came to its own internal problem with racism, the GDR was in denial. The SED reduced the issue of racism to simple misunderstandings and externalised its causes. At best, functionaries saw racism as the preserve of an incorrigible, home-grown minority of reactionaries and petit-bourgeois elements whose ideas were fuelled by the West rather than history. In this regard, the SED viewed racism no differently to a range of other unwanted social problems which it dismissed as West German imports. Even as the situation deteriorated in the late 1980s, officials were extremely hesitant to refer to racist incidents by name. In this regard, the aversion of officials towards even mentioning the word racism may have resulted from what Walter Süß has referred to as "mental blockages", by which functionaries avoided any serious analysis of problems by applying rigid explanatory models.[8] Denying that the GDR had a racist problem has continued in some quarters. Writing in 1993, a former leading functionary of the (East) German-African Friendship Society (DAFRIG) claimed that:

> The question of competition for jobs with Germans never arose. Rather the legacy of direct colonial rule in Africa was popularised to such an extent by the GDR media that individual Africans could always expect more sympathetic than disapproving attitudes wherever they went. They, particularly those Africans who graduated from the Herder Institute, spoke good German and could communicate with the public also. After all, some could speak excellent Saxon and could distinguish

[7] Quoted in: Komitee für die Kampfdekade gegen Rassismus und Rassendiskrimierung (ed.), *Gegen Rassismus, Apartheid und Kolonialismus. Dokumente der DDR 1949-1977*, Berlin, 1978, 167f.
[8] Walter Süß, *Zu Wahrnehmung und Interpretationen des Rechtsextremismus*, 46.

> Radeberger pilsner from other beers which is a small indication of the extent of the generally good relations with the GDR public in the 1950s and 60s.[9]

Yet, the experience of foreign students in the 1960s exposes the fallacy of such claims. While many students saw racism as an inevitable phenomenon of living in the West in general, the existence of racism in a socialist country came as a shock to most. One African student who left the GDR for West Germany told a US journalist in 1967:

> If we go to the United States we know we may meet discrimination. We don't like it, but it doesn't surprise us. But we are taught there is no discrimination under communism. When we find out differently, it hurts.

Indeed, of the foreign, predominantly African students who dropped out of their university studies in Eastern bloc countries and left for the West, between 20 and 30 percent claimed that racism had driven them to leave.[10] Clearly, the GDR and its Eastern partners were victims of their own propaganda. A 1959 draft prospectus for foreign students boasted that: "In the GDR all forms of racial discrimination are a punishable offence by law. The working population is proud to provide students from over fifty countries with an adopted country for their studies".[11] The reality was often different and on the evening of Mayday 1969 in Merseburg, two Sudanese students were attacked by three GDR assailants who screamed: "You black pigs. What are you doing here? You're just studying at our expense!"[12]

The abundant evidence of racism and xenophobia in the 1950s and 1960s does little to support the claim that racism first appeared after the arrival of Algerian workers in the 1970s or was a result of the consumer shortages of the 1980s.[13] The problems encountered by a Paris-based African troupe of performers, which toured the GDR in late 1951 and early 1952, provides an early example of the crude racism Africans could expect to encounter at the hands of the public and of the more subtle prejudices of functionaries. Demonstrating that Nazi propaganda still had currency in the early 1950s, the performers were attacked by small groups of 25 to 30-year-old students on more than one occasion in the prominent Berlin establishments of the Johannishof and Newa hotels. One student claimed he objected to the sight of "Jews" [sic] dancing with

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[9] Peter Sebald, "Völkerfreundschaft oder Auslandsinformation. Impressionen zum Wirken der Deutsch-Afrikanischen Gesellschaft", in: Hans-Georg and Ilona Schleicher and Ulrich van der Heyden (eds), *Die DDR und Afrika. Zwischen Klassenkampf und neuem Denken*, Hamburg, 1993, 79-94, here 81f.
[10] Harry B. Ellis, "African students vault Iron Curtain", in: *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 Feb. 1967, 9.
[11] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/610, fo.164 (reverse) and 164. Entwurf eines Informationsblattes für ausländische Studierenden in der DDR, n.d. [ca. Jan. 1959]. Although this was tacit admission that a problem existed in the GDR, the final version of the draft – Hans von Oettingen's *Studium bei Freunden*, n.p., n.d. [Berlin, 1959] – contained no reference to racism at all.
[12] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Störende und gegnerische Aktivitäten im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums der DDR, 2 June 1969, 8f. Four weeks later, Sudanese students were attacked by a group of Germans who drank in the same bar.
[13] Andrzej Stach & Saleh Hussain, *Ausländer in der DDR. Ein Rückblick*, Berlin, 1991, 18.

German women. Even the troupe's main guide and interpreter found it difficult to hide her own prejudices. In her opinion, the Africans failed to live up to communist projections of what Africans ought to be and were hypocritical, politically deceitful, materialistic, and ultimately to blame for the racist attacks committed against them. She remarked:

> Apart from our friends' unsatisfactory political consciousness and our failure to improve it, there was the Africans' own mentality. Their sense of racial inferiority, caused by colonial suppression, and their being spoiled in the GDR, fuelled their excessive self-confidence and hypersensitivity, which led to regular fights with the hotel staff and people on the street. Although the shows met with great applause and the friends were greeted wildly and were celebrated at receptions, compared to other groups the political consciousness of our black friends was sadly not what we are accustomed to and which is to be expected from freedom fighters.[14]

In early 1954, officials at the Leipzig ABF diplomatically observed that the relationships of the Nigerian students (the first foreign students in the GDR) with East German women "aroused the displeasure" of the population. Rather than deal with this public prejudice, college officials proposed better recreational supervision of the Nigerians was the only solution.[15]

Preparations for the first planned deployment of foreign labour in GDR factories in 1961 demonstrated that while some institutions were aware of the existence of racism among GDR workers, other bodies clearly opposed any reference being made to it on political grounds. The FDGB anticipated that the employment of foreign workers would not be without its problems:

> It will have to be made clear to our German workers in the factories that these workers are coming to us as class brothers, as friends, who are going to help us complete the construction of socialism. Therefore, it is our duty from day one to establish as a warm relationship that can only exist between friends and class brothers. There cannot be any reservations or 'secrets' at work. Even the smallest sign of arrogance or prejudice against our friends must be opposed vigorously.[16]

In a subsequent document, the FDGB proposed that it would develop counter-propaganda to combat the "possible nationalist manifestations of some GDR workers" as well as the "expected enemy rabble-rousing propaganda" which would attempt to make parallels with the "exploitation" of foreign workers in West Germany and revive the *Ostarbeiterideologie*. Interestingly, the FDGB wished to include its commitment in the agreements it expected to sign with its foreign counterparts in the event of the labour transfer occurring.[17] However, as some reports suggested, East German workers did not

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[14] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/20/53, fos. 2-14, here 14. Fido Paschenda, Meine Erfahrungen als Dolmetscherin beim Afrikanischen Ensemble, 15 Feb. 1952.
[15] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/639, fo. 14. Bericht über die Arbeit der ABF, Abt. Ausländerstudium, 27 Jan. 1954.
[16] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/1647. Maßnahmeplan zur Betreuung der Arbeiter, die aus den sozialistischen Brüderländern in die DDR kommen, 23 Oct. 1961.
[17] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/1647 Vorschläge für die Vereinbarungen zwischen den Zentralräten der sowjetischen und bulgarischen Gewerkschaften und dem BV der FDGB – Anlage B, 7 Nov. 1961.

need the West to remind them of the past, as one old worker and veteran communist demonstrated. Upon hearing about the plans to send foreign workers to the Leipzig engineering factory where he worked, he commented that: "It will be fine as we have some experience with *Fremdarbeiter* after all."[18] Yet, despite the concerns of the FDGB, the SED Central Committee's International Department was against the proposed trade union agreements making any reference to these problems.[19] While no reason was given, it may be assumed that the FDGB proposals went too far in admitting the existence of particular problems that the GDR officially denied.

When foreign workers eventually arrived – in July 1965 the first Polish *Pendler* women began employment in factories in Görlitz and Oppach (*Bezirk* Dresden) – it became clear that the socialist system of full employment did not preclude the expression of hostility of indigenous workers towards migrant workers. As factory FDGB officials noted, East German women workers initially believed that the arrival of foreign labour inevitably spelt out the loss of their jobs and the ending of the recruitment of new German workers.[20]

Similarly, other ministries were aware of hostility towards foreigners but chose to do nothing. In 1960, the SHF admitted in an internal report that foreign students, particularly "coloured students" [sic], had voiced concerns about the "isolated cases of nationalist arrogance and discriminatory conduct" of East Germans towards them.[21] In March 1961, an Algerian worker employed at the electrochemical combine in Bitterfeld was attacked in the local cultural centre and later found police unresponsive when he tried to press charges.[22] In April 1963 in Halle, Algerian students were so frustrated at local officials incessantly ignoring the commonplace attacks on them by East Germans that they considered sending a delegation to the SHF in Berlin in protest.[23] Later that year, the HI cavalierly and euphemistically referred to the "thoughtless conduct of German citizens towards foreigners" as one of many "side effects of the construction of

[18] BArch, DE 1/9408, fo. 78. Böttger (Sonderbeauftragter) to SPK, 25 Nov. 1961.
[19] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/1647 Vorschläge für die Vereinbarungen zwischen den Zentralräten der sowjetischen und bulgarischen Gewerkschaften und dem BV der FDGB – Anlage B, 7 Nov. 1961.
[20] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8418. Information über die in unserem Bezirk beschäftigten polnischen Bürger in den VEB Elektroschaltgerätewerken Oppach und Görlitz, 30 Nov. 1965, 4.
[21] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/638, fos. 104 and 106 (rev). SHF, Die weitere Entwicklung des Ausländerstudiums in der DDR bis 1965, n.d. [1960].
[22] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/1647. Aktennotiz über eine Aussprache zwischen dem Koll. Kroun (UGTA), Deubner (FDGB) and Fischer (HAPM), 11 Jan. 1961.
[23] College officials had little to say on the claims, noting merely that the majority of the students supported the Ben Bela government and the creation of the United Arab Republic. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/469. Anruf des Gen. Kropitz, UPL Halle, 30 Apr. 1963.

socialism", fuelled by "temporary difficulties with the supply of certain goods".[24] Interpretations such as these could not solve the problem, nor could they allay the legitimate concerns of foreign students.

The academic years of 1964/65 and 1965/66 were marked by a significant increase in racist incidents in Leipzig, Rostock, Leuna-Merseburg, Halle, and Mittweida. Below is a list of the known racist incidents that occurred in and around Leipzig (unless otherwise indicated) from April 1964 to February 1965. A general pattern is discernible: the attacks took place in public and were unprovoked, the perpetrators were GDR males, usually drunk, and from a variety of walks of life (students, restaurant staff, policemen and soldiers), while the victims were primarily black African students:

In April 1964 an Algerian student was insulted and assaulted by a GDR citizen. The following month, the owner of the Baumgarten restaurant refused to seat two students on the grounds that his guests disliked Africans. Later in the same month, two Syrian students were assaulted by a GDR citizen, while on the same night at the HOG Parkgaststätte restaurant, a Nigerian student suffered an unprovoked verbal and physical attack at the hands of GDR citizens. In June, a Ghanaian student was subjected to the same treatment by an inebriated GDR citizen who punched him in the face. In July, a student from the Congo was insulted by a GDR citizen on a tram. In September a Malawian student was beaten up by three GDR veterinary students in an unprovoked attack. Later that month, a Nigerian was attacked by three GDR citizens. In October, a Congolese student was insulted by a member of the riot police in the Carola Casino. In late December in Wendisch-Rietz, a Moroccan apprentice was almost stabbed to death in an unprovoked attack while making his way home one night by two drunken assailants with previous convictions. Later that month in the Mitropa restaurant in Friedrichsstraße in Berlin, a Malian customer was insulted and beaten by two intoxicated GDR guests who poured beer and spat on his plate. When he complained to management, the waiter tried to throw him out. He was later arrested by the transport police who tried unsuccessfully to force him to sign a statement claiming responsibility, which he refused. On New Year's Eve, two South African students and their East German girlfriends were subjected to a torrent of racist abuse in a bar in Mittweida. After being deliberately ignored by the waiting staff and the bar manager, the four were insulted with the terms "nigger", "back to the bush", and "niggers' sluts". (Indeed, only some weeks previously one of the South African's girlfriends was told in public that:

[24] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/467. Über die Erziehungsarbeit am Herder-Institut der KMU, 5 Oct. 1963, 15.

"Under Hitler we'd have shorn your head.") In mid-January 1965, a student from Mozambique was attacked by two drunken GDR citizens. Some days later, two Sudanese students and their East German girlfriends were insulted by two NVA soldiers (a NCO and a lieutenant) who had "rudely demanded" the two women to dance with them. A fight broke out and other patrons encouraged the soldiers with one patron shouting "throw the blacks out!" while another took photographs.

While this racism clearly targeted African students, other groups also noted a rise in hostility. In early 1965 in Leipzig, for example, a Greek woman, whose husband had just entered a shop, was accosted and threatened by a number of GDR youths who warned her to keep away from foreigners. Around the same time, a Columbian professor who had spent a number of years researching in Leipzig noted how racism among the public had intensified. He had suffered the indignity of a German grasping his face to see if his colour was "real". In addition, he noted that in restaurants it was becoming a frequent occurrence for GDR guests to vacate their tables when foreigners were seated near them.[25]

The above list of incidents was a damning indictment of the GDR's claim to have rid itself of racism and discrimination, hence its "strictly confidential" designation. Foreigners, especially Africans, were being subjected to racist attacks by East Germans from a variety of social classes and in the most public of places.

The "ever growing tensions" in Leipzig were the subject of a detailed memorandum written in early 1965 by Sheku S. Magona, the Sierra Leonean president of the Union of African Workers and Students in the GDR (UASA) and sent to a number of state and party officials.[26] While composed in parts of standard SED terminology and analysis – typified by Magona's warning that an escalation of the problem would only serve to fuel the anti-communist agenda of the "imperialist press" – the document referred to the problem as one of racism, unlike GDR analyses which persistently avoided referring to this word directly.

While Magona believed (like the SED) that racism was bound to disappear with the development of socialism, he suggested that it was far more widespread in East German public society than any SED account dared to claim. Racism was expressed not only by those still loyal to the "notorious Hitlerism", he argued, but also by a much larger community imprisoned by a "historical and psychological" legacy. He complained of

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[25] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Informationsbericht über die Situation unter den ausländischen Studenten, insbesondere in Auswertung von Vorfällen in der Öffentlichkeit, 4 Feb. 1965, 1-4. For the Wendisch-Rietz case, see: SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/7286. Bericht über den Angriff auf den Marokkaner Abdellatif B. in Storkow am 29 Dez. 1964.

[26] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41383. Abschrift eines Schreibens der UASA, n.d. [ca. Feb. 1965], *passim.*

the daily "unfriendly behaviour" of certain workers (such as sales staff, conductors, waiters, and postal workers) and in particular the "arrogance and envy if not also hate" of the members of the taxi union, many of whom refused to carry Africans if they were accompanied by German women. Singling out the DVP for particular mention, he argued that the "bias and brutality" of the police towards Africans had destroyed their trust in the GDR legal system. German "racial arrogance" took a number of forms, he continued. Firstly, there were those whose "feeling of superiority rooted in a bias of racial arrogance" led them to amuse themselves "at the expense of Africans". Secondly, there were the "state-hostile elements" that targeted foreigners in an effort to discredit the GDR. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, there were the ostentatious "party comrades or good citizens", who as he put it, "provoke us intentionally in order, firstly, to make us doubt highly-respected party morals and, secondly, to find support for their anti-foreigner rabble-rousing in a more refined way".

Magona argued that East German perceptions were fuelled by the persistence of colonial stereotypes in the GDR media. He decried DEFA's singular focus on the "evil of colonial barbarism" which presented German viewers with an antiquated picture of the continent and its people and which ignored developments since independence. Thus, it was not unusual for Africans to be confronted with questions such as: "So tell us, do you still live in trees at home?" or "do you eat people?" He proposed that a modern representation of Africa, contrasting for example the "miserable conditions" in Angola with university life in Ghana or Nigeria, "could show our German friends that Africans too do not live beyond the dialectical world".[27]

Yet, Magona's analysis did not spare some African students from criticism and in doing so, demonstrated how foreigners too could play down racism for political and ideological reasons. He claimed that many of his members suffered from the "historical and psychological" effects of colonialism which resulted in deep "suspicion mixed with petulance", adding that: "Regretfully, jokes touch on the sensibilities of some." In addition, there was a minority of "black sheep" unable and unwilling to adjust to the German way of life. Their ignorance of German "customs and traditions" as well as of political developments in the East since 1945 meant they were unable to view the current class struggle with the necessary objectivity, leaving them "ideologically

[27] Incidentally, at the celebrations to mark that year's 'international day of youth and student struggle against colonialism', African students at the IS Kraftfahrzeugtechnik Zwickau pointed out that the "Attitudes of the public are being nurtured by the false lead given by radio and television. When a singer or a band of people of black colour are introduced, for example, then it's just the 'negro singer' or the 'negro band' are playing or performing." BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/2836. Schreiben der IS Kfz-Technik Zwickau an die SHF, 10 May 1965.

unclear [...] which in turn leads them to be victims of provocation and other asocial occurrences". An even smaller group of reactionaries provoked East Germans in order to vent their anti-socialism, he concluded.

The reaction of the authorities to the racist attacks demonstrated the inherent inability of the state to comprehend the problem. The SHF, for example, stated mildly that the incidents did "not testify to a healthy relationship between parts of our population and foreign students, in particular Africans".[28] The reaction of the SED Central Committee's International Department to Magona's memorandum displayed the two main characteristics of official GDR approaches to racism: racist incidents were treated as the product of "misunderstandings" and invariably blamed on the foreign students themselves or on Western machinations. Thus, while the Department admitted that the party needed to suppress the "remaining streaks of national arrogance and prejudice of our citizens", it was adamant that the dissatisfaction of the Africans was encouraged by the "persistent attempts of the enemy to stir up trouble especially among these citizens and to misuse them for political campaigns".[29]

Ideally, the GDR hoped that the presence of foreign students, especially Africans, would help underpin its claims to have eradicated of racism and discrimination as the result of political and economic transformation. Thus, foreign students were paraded at political meetings and in factories in support of SED policy, such as at a preparation meeting held in advance of the 1963 Volkskammer elections.

> Speaking at a meeting in Dresden a student from Black Africa [sic] explained how at the start of the century members of his people were displayed as exhibits in Dresden Zoo and compared this to the current situation where numerous black students study with the same rights as their German friends. That was an enduring demonstration of the great changes made in an issue as important as the racial problem [sic] that have been achieved under the leadership of the working class and made a big impression on the conference participants.[30]

Away from the public gaze, however, foreign students who attempted to discuss the existence of racism in the GDR were met with a less enthusiastic response. An African studying at the Humboldt University who wrote about racial discrimination in the GDR

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[28] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Einschätzung der politisch-ideologischen Situation im Ausländerstudium, n.d. [ca. Summer 1966], 8.

[29] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Informationsbericht über die Situation unter den ausländischen Studenten, insbesondere in Auswertung von Vorfällen in der Öffentlichkeit, 4 Feb. 1965. Also: SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Information zu einigen Problemen der politischen Arbeit mit ausländischen Bürgern, 9 Mar. 1965. It is highly likely that the UASA letter led to the first MfS thesis on foreigners, see: BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Paulsen, *Einige Probleme der Verhütung von Staatsverbrechen*, 5 Dec. 1965.

[30] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/467. Inhalt, Formen und Methoden der Propagierung der marxistisch-leninistischen Theorie unter den ausländischen Studenten und ihre Heranführung an die sozialistische Wirklichkeit, n.d. [ca. Oct. 1963], 9.

in a college wall news-sheet in 1961, was expelled and deported by incensed officials.[31] As one South African student claimed in a conversation with an FDGB functionary later in the same year, Africans, who tried to make "critical reference to the attitudes of several people" towards them, found the conversation broken off by angry functionaries on the grounds that "such discussions undermined the reputation of the GDR".[32] Similarly, when the foreign students of the engineering college in Karl-Marx-Stadt highlighted their own experiences of "nationalism and racial hatred" in the GDR on the occasion of the international day of struggle of youth and students against colonialism, the college director dismissed them as leftwing radicals who were simply over-reacting to "disagreements" with GDR citizens.[33] Indeed, as the legitimacy of the GDR was intrinsically linked to the idea of anti-racism, this precluded any discussion on racism in the GDR. Anti-racism was central in the SED's attempts to legitimise its rule, demonstrated by the following statement published to mark the tenth anniversary of the Bandung Conference:

> The GDR developed from the anti-imperialist struggle. It eliminated the political and economic power of imperialism in a part of Germany and forever destroyed the roots of colonialism and neo-colonialism and their manifestations – racial hatred and the master race ideology [*Herrenmenschentum*] – in its territory. For the first time there is a German state which has broken irrevocably with an imperialist policy based on the hatred of nations and which has made the principle of friendship with the nations of Africa and Asia its diplomatic policy and thus continues the good traditions of the German working class and of German humanism.[34]

Thus, whenever problems emerged between foreigners and GDR citizens, the causes had to be external and most likely the fault of the foreigners themselves. Indeed, the first MfS thesis written on foreigners believed they suffered from a "very pronounced sense of justice". Newly-arrived young African students were most problematic, the thesis continued, arguing that they often got involved in "fist-fights and hooligan offences" with the indigenous population owing to "disagreements" which it did not believe were "deliberately hostile". For the author, Africans were far more likely to be racists. He argued that Africans' acculturation to GDR standards was only "skin deep" and could simply "melt away" when exposed to the occasional heavy-handed and forceful tone of the police. All that remained after such encounters was the "age old, almost innate causal chain" which dictated that "the white man is the enemy of blacks, the white police is the enemy of blacks, [and] the police is the enemy of blacks". More

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[31] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/638, fos. 118-128, here 121 (reverse). Informationsbericht, 28 Oct. 1961.
[32] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/2123. Aktennotiz über die Aussprache mit dem Koll. H. (Rep. Südafrika) am 25 Nov. 1961.
[33] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/2836. IS Werkzeugmaschinenbau Karl-Marx-Stadt to the SHF, 27 Apr. 1965.
[34] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/8418. 10 Jahre Bandung. 10 Jahre an der Seite der Völker Asiens und Afrikas, n.d. [ca. 18 Apr. 1965].

absurdly, the same thesis argued that African students who spoke out against racism were lacking in intelligence. The author wrote of the "less intelligent and political unclear or negative foreigners" who were often prepared to stage protests in response to the "rash reactions" of the DVP. Their behaviour contrasted with the "politically clearer and intelligent" Africans who were more willing accept the inappropriateness of their behaviour following incidents and who were willing to apologise to the GDR citizens and police officers involved.[35]

The second MfS thesis on foreigners, written the following year, made similar arguments. It contended that most foreigners from non-socialist states were "alien" to the "norms of social cohabitation" owing to the fact that their "mental development [...] has been influenced in a sociological direction defined by the ruling capitalist mode of production".[36] In support of this argument, the author quoted Marx's third thesis on Feuerbach, which stated that: "The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself."[37] The need to accommodate cultural difference was thus perceived as the duty of foreigners, who had to make an effort to abandon their "previous ways" upon arriving in the GDR on the grounds that most East Germans expressed "a lack of understanding if not objection on principle" towards such behaviour. This proved too much for many foreigners, the thesis continued, leaving them confused and leading them into criminal activity. They "glorified the western way of living" by constantly listening to Western radio channels, by making regular trips to West Berlin, and by circulating "junk and filth literature of western provenance" in the GDR, habits which guaranteed their appeal to the most anti-socialist elements of the East German population, the thesis concluded.[38]

Perhaps more than any other documents, these theses demonstrate how functionaries could weave racist thinking into the political language of the day. Political acquiescence (and the preparedness to submit to the political and social order as envisaged by the SED) was equated with intelligence, whereas autonomous, refractory, and stubborn actions were seen as evidence of substandard mental ability. Thus, college officials in Ilmenau linked one Ghanaian student's oversensitivity ("he always thinks in terms of discrimination") with the fact that he was a former missionary school pupil and pious Catholic. This contrasted with his more political compatriot, who was chair of the

[35] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Werner Paulsen, *Einige Probleme*, 5 Dec. 1965, 32-35.
[36] BStU, JHS, MF, 540. Theo Dudek, *Einige Besonderheiten bei der Werbung von operativ geeigneten Ausländern ... für die Abwehrarbeit des MfS*, n.d. [ca. 1966/67], 14, 19-21.
[37] Ibid., 19. English translation from: Marx/Engels. *Selected Works*, vol. I, Moscow, 1969, 13-15.
[38] BStU, JHS, MF, 540. Dudek, *Einige Besonderheiten*, 19-21.

Ghanaian students' association in East Germany. He was a popular guest at Jugendweihe preparation classes and ceremonies, and by implication, happier and more content with the GDR.[39]

Clearly, the onus was on foreigners to adapt to the "social conditions" in the GDR which also entailed accepting their treatment at the hands of the police and public. The attitudes of the majority population were not for up for discussion, as a 1962 TU Dresden report on students from sub-Saharan Africa indicated:

> We have heard no complaints of their behaviour in public. Some spent far too much time on friendships with girls and women. While their attitudes to the population of our republic are cordial, they are easily suspicious and in particular they cannot stand it when they are stared at on account of their dark skin colour.[40]

Similarly, in its assessment of crime involving foreigners in the Suhl region in 1981, the regional criminal police bureau bemoaned that many public disorder incidents involving Mozambican workers resulted from them reacting "violently towards even the slightest or smallest derogatory comments made by GDR citizens".[41] When foreigners were attacked, officials tended to blame them for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. A Sudanese student enrolled at Merseburg, who was involved in a fight in 1961 in which college officials believed he was "not entirely innocent", was simply told to "avoid certain restaurants".[42] The message from the authorities was clear: foreigners had to get to know their place and to avoid conflict by physically steering clear of trouble spots. Officials and the public were keen to jump on the slightest misdemeanours of foreigners as an incitement to racial hatred. In September 1989, for example, an MfS report ingeniously argued that the "deviant lifestyle" of contract workers and their "glorification of capitalist conditions" fuelled the xenophobic resentment of the East German population.[43]

The SHF's reaction to the Magona letter not only listed incidents where foreigners were victims of attacks, but it also referred to ten incidents in which foreigners had caused "considerable moral damage" owing to their "improper behaviour in public", thus insinuating they were in some way responsible for their own misfortune. The inclusion of three incidents involving fights among foreigners was more of this approach. As the list suggests, the majority of the cases involved the actions of drunken students, with little evidence of a racist motivation. In stark contrast to the factual and

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[39] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Bericht der TH Ilmenau über die ghanaische Studierende im Studienjahr 1964/65, n.d.
[40] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/2. Studenten aus Schwarz-Afrika (außer Ghana), n.d. [ca. 1962], 3.
[41] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46778. BDVP Suhl, Bericht, 30 Dec. 1981, 2.
[42] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1935/3. Analyse ausländischer Studenten per 15 Aug. 1962.
[43] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fos. 22-26. HA XVIII/4 an ZAIG, Jahreseinschätzung zur politisch-operativen Lage unter den ausländischen Werktätigen, 7 Sept. 1989.

uncritical listing of incidents involving attacks by Germans on foreigners, the report wrote of the "brazen" und often "impertinent" attitudes of many foreigners, expressed by refusing to follow police orders and by resisting arrest as well as in the tendency to lambaste East Germans as "Nazis or fascists".[44]

In June 1964, a GDR woman was punched by a Tanganyikan student in a tram. She had been sitting behind him and was reading a children's picture book with her child. He took offence after hearing her say "Look, there's a teddy". The following month, three eastern African students started a fight among themselves on the tram. Other passengers got involved and the conductor was punched in the chin. The same month, a drunken Somali student put his head through a tram window at Leipzig central station. In August, two Kenyan students started a fight in a café after two girls whom they met earlier "went over to" two GDR citizens. The same month, a Guinean student insulted other guests at the Orionbar by calling them "Nazis and fascists" and later resisted arrest. In September, in the Schauspielhaus bar, a student from Zanzibar punched a GDR woman repeatedly in the face after she refused to accompany him to another bar. In October, a Ugandan student kicked up a racket in the Tivoli cabaret after he was refused entry because he was wearing studded jeans. In November, an African student punched a waitress in the state-run restaurant Am Zoo because she had repeatedly requested him not to place used teabags on the table cloth. In early 1965, the leading dermatologist of the Leipzig outpatients' clinics, Dr. Seiler, informed the HI that numerous doctors had been complaining lately of the "impertinent" attitudes of foreigners, many of whom were refusing to undergo compulsory examinations. In early February 1965, two Africans caused a seven minute delay on the Leipzig-Berlin express train. They had not bought the correct fare and refused to buy new tickets when requested to do so by the conductor, necessitating an unexpected stop in Bitterfeld where the two were arrested.[45]

Yet, the SHF's attempt to legitimise the rise in attacks against foreigners by referring to foreigners' transgressions was spurious. Statistics for the period show that foreigners were a negligible quantity in the crime figures: in 1964, for example, full-time foreign residents were responsible for only 0.2 percent (a mere 140 incidents) of all crime in the GDR, with over a third of all such incidents concentrated in Berlin.[46]

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[44] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Informationsbericht über die Situation unter den ausländischen Studenten, insbesondere in Auswertung von Vorfällen in der Öffentlichkeit, 4 Feb. 1965, 4 and 7.
[45] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Informationsbericht über die Situation unter den ausländischen Studenten, insbesondere in Auswertung von Vorfällen in der Öffentlichkeit, 4 Feb. 1965, 4ff.
[46] BArch, DO 1/8.0/27730. Konzeption zum Referat – Ausländerkontrolle, 24 Mar. 1966.

Very often, it was the reaction of foreign students to racist incidents rather than the incidents themselves that became the issue for officials. For example, on Christmas Eve 1960, two Congolese students of the HSDG in Bernau were insulted and thrown out of an East Berlin café by a number of youths and the manager on the grounds that they were not wearing ties. Adamant that this was a racist incident, in a letter to the FDGB the Africans questioned how citizens in a communist country could act in such as way:

> We can understand very well that certain Germans in the East think they are superior in a way to us black people. In any case, the brazen and brutal way in which we were treated is enough evidence that Germans have an arrogance complex towards Africans [and] that the majority in the GDR are followers of the ideas of the famous Hitler despite the socialism that is constantly preached.

In its response, the FDGB criticised what it saw as the generalisations made by the two complainants, and in typical denial style, suggested that the offending German youths may have been West Berliners.[47]

In the main, officials found it much easier to refer to racism when discussing problems and tensions among the foreign students. As there were no "objective" reasons for the existence of racism in the GDR, its occurrence could only be explained owing to the "subjective" failings of foreigners, or politically-wayward East Germans. In 1960, an SED Central Committee seminar on foreign students noted the existence of "racial conflict" among the various students' associations.[48] This widespread tendency to view political disputes and problems between groups of foreigners as nothing more than tribal or racist quarrels easily fitted in with Marxist-Leninist jargon. Officials blamed the fight that broke out at the 1964 Christmas party at the Herder Institute on the "deep hatred" of many Africans (especially Zambians) towards Arab students.[49] Indeed, in 1969 the HI claimed that:

> The ability to think in a historical-dialectical manner is barely developed among the majority of foreign students (Africans, Arabs). A class standpoint is often lacking completely with a tribal or racist viewpoint in its place.

Thus, officials liked to believe that a period of study in the GDR enabled the anti-racist development of foreign students. It allowed for a "development of awareness" which weakened the "nationalist ideas" of Arab students towards the "Jews of Israel" und the "racist reservations" of Africans towards "whites", for example.[50]

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[47] SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/2123. Schreiben der kongolesischen Bürger M. und B. an den BV der FDGB, 25 Dec. 1960, und Aktennotiz über den Besuch an der HSDG am 18 Jan. 1961.
[48] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41383. Aktennotiz über eine Beratung im ZK am 17 Jun. 1960.
[49] BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1937. Informationsbericht über die Situation unter den ausländischen Studenten, insbesondere in Auswertung von Vorfällen in der Öffentlichkeit, 4 Feb. 1965.
[50] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Bericht über die Situation am Herder-Institut Leipzig, n.d. [ca. 5 Feb. 1969], 3, and Analyse der Arbeit im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen der DDR im Studienjahr 1968/69, 15 Oct. 1969, 4.

Marxism-Leninism, upheld as a universal truth with universal validity, served to cloak older traits of German arrogance. As socialist society represented the pinnacle of development, all problems were caused by external factors. Foreign students, particularly Africans, repeatedly found their opinions and perceptions on a wide range of issues dismissed by GDR functionaries. In 1969, for example, the KAS complained that African students exaggerated the distinctness of African society by arguing that any political developments there needed to be attuned to local conditions and needs.[51] Similarly, at the TU Dresden, the ideological commission of the university party branch argued that while most African students sympathised with GDR socialism, their interpretation did not correspond to that of "scientific socialism".[52]

While the above examples demonstrate that racism primarily targeted sub-Saharan African students, students from fellow socialist states in Europe and beyond were also described in similar chauvinistic tones in internal reports. The political upheaval of late 1956 in Eastern Europe impacted on the lives of Polish students studying in the GDR, for example, and at the expressed request of Kurt Hager, they were placed under special surveillance. Many reports on the Polish students reverted to older, xenophobic discourse and they were described invariably as nationalistic, anti-Soviet, pro-American, politically immature, arrogant, somewhat treacherous, and at times, morally reproachable. In October 1957, the SHF concluded that the Polish students in the GDR were "still very weak politically". The head Polish student at the TH Dresden seemed to personify so many German anti-Polish stereotypes:

> We suspect that he (like other students of the Technical College Dresden) travels regularly to West Berlin. C. is known by the students in Dresden for his extensive speculative dealings. It has been proved that he borrowed 1,500 marks for these deals and runs a thriving business in sunglasses, watches, typewriters, sowing machines, stamps, etc. These 'trading activities' enabled him to reconcile his debts and to purchase items unaffordable to the normal foreign student (for example, he bought a motorbike for himself). His academic discipline is poor. He travels home regularly, wastes a lot of time hanging around with women, and loves alcohol.

(Only a few months previously, C. participated fully in the political activities of the foreign students in Dresden. On the Day of Foreign Students on 18 May, 1957, he signed two appeals (one of which was published in *ND*) along with representatives of the Chinese, Soviet, Iranian and North Korean students' associations calling for support

[51] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/513. Analyse der Arbeit im Bereich des Ausländerstudiums an Hoch- und Fachschulen der DDR im Studienjahr 1968/69, 15 Oct. 1969, 17.
[52] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466. Bericht über das Ausländerstudium an der TU Dresden, 27 Jan. 1966, 8.

for the national reconstruction programme and condemning the activities of Western secret service agencies in the GDR.[53])

When other Poles claimed that conditions in their country were better than in the GDR, or made demands that were seen to be above their standing, they earned the particular wrath of officials. The electrical engineering college in Ilmenau complained that three Polish women students were "very arrogant and immature". Furthermore: "In their daily behaviour, some of these Polish students could lead to the subversion of the student body of the college. They are making extraordinary and exquisite demands such as for the provision of single rooms with a bath and running water." In addition, they were known to associate with members of the *Junge Gemeinde*. Also of concern for officials at the KMU was the "fraternisation" of Polish and Hungarian students.[54]

The Polish example shows that in times of political crisis, older resentment long obscured by ideological exigencies could make a political comeback. The GDR justified the decision to seal the border with Poland in October 1980 as a measure necessary to protect the economy from "speculators and smugglers" in goods, while the shortages in Poland were blamed on the Poles themselves rather than on socialism.[55] In November 1989, the Modrow government pursued a similar agenda by banning non-resident foreigners from purchasing certain goods in the collapsing state.[56] This mixing and indeed deliberate confusing of political and economic problems with immigration increased in the final years of the GDR and reached a highpoint after the *Wende*.

The failure of the GDR authorities to deal effectively with racism in the first two decades did not augur well for the 1970s and 1980s, which saw the same mistakes repeated again and again. Racism was denied, was dismissed as resulting simple misunderstandings, was equated with political deviancy or delinquency, or was blamed on the actions of foreigners themselves.

The state did deal with racist attackers but its heavy-handed approach did little in overcoming racism. Rather than attempt to devise programmes to deal with racist prejudice among youth, the authorities simply dismissed the phenomenon as yet another characteristic of "rowdy" behaviour. The authorities took no time in apprehending and

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[53] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/639, fos. 99f. Wir bauen mit! and Erklärung der ausländischen Studenten.
[54] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/640, fos. 6, 13, 18, and 41f. Report of Abt. Organisation of the ZK to Ulbricht, Neumann and Matern, 28 Mar. 1957; Arbeit der polnischen Studenten an der HS für Elektrotechnik Ilmenau, 12 July 1957; Bericht über die polnische Studentendelegation, 26 Aug. 1957; and report from Hartmann, SHF, 11 Oct. 1957.
[55] Harry Waibel, *Rechtsextremismus in der DDR bis 1989*, Köln, 1996, 124. As Stefan Wolle points out, with the removal of Polish competitors, there was no real long term improvement in the supply of consumer goods. *Die heile Welt der Diktatur*, Bonn, 1999, 94f,
[56] *ND*, 23 Nov. 1989.

jailing the "rowdy youths" who attacked Algerian contract workers shortly after they began working in the gas combine "Schwarze Pumpe" in Bernburg.[57] Reacting to a rise in violence and disorder among "negative-decadent, criminally-endangered persons with previous convictions" at discos and other public events, in early 1978 Mielke ordered MfS and police units to focus on factories where large numbers of GDR youths "come into contact with foreign workers, in particular those from the non-socialist bloc".[58] The latter reference could only mean the Algerians, but it is not clear whether Mielke was calling for greater protection to be afforded to the contract workers or was suggesting that they were influencing GDR youth negatively.

Racism remained a taboo for the police, whose reports studiously avoided mentioning the word. In 1977, the criminal police department in the *Bezirk* Frankfurt claimed that it was the "inappropriate behaviour" of GDR citizens that elicited violent reactions from foreigners.[59] The BDVP Karl-Marx-Stadt reported on the "unmotivated brawls, in which GDR citizens occasionally act provocatively, but which are also caused by communication difficulties". Their colleagues in Suhl came to the exact same conclusion.[60] Although the terms surfaced repeatedly in these and other police reports, no details were given to the nature of the provocative or unbecoming behaviour of the East Germans or the comprehension difficulties with foreigners.

As in the 1960s, the authorities found it much easier to identify racist or nationalist behaviour in the actions of foreigners than among their own citizens. For example, in the mid-1970s the Magdeburg MfS claimed that a gang of Polish workers, which was responsible for a number attacks on East Germans and Algerians, had "obvious nationalistic motives" which in turn fuelled the rise of anti-Polish feeling.[61] In Suhl, police claimed in 1977 that innocent GDR citizens were falling victim to the "violent pugnacity" of drunken Poles.[62] Similarly, at a time when the MfS was blind to the racism of the GDR public, a 1984 study from Karl-Marx-Stadt identified the children of Soviet "German" repatriates as particularly beholden to nationalist ideas which was expressed in violent attacks on the city's foreign workers.[63]

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[57] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Bericht [des SAL] über Ergebnisse des probeweisen Einsatzes von 500 algerischen Werktätigen im Jahre 1974, 13 Dec. 1974, 5.
[58] BStU, ZA, BdL, 5581. Mielke to the heads of all departments, 14 Jan. 1978.
[59] SAPMO-BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Frankfurt, Per Informationen, 15 June 1977, 3.
[60] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Gera, Bericht zu Ermittlungsverfahren, 16 June 1977, and Bericht, 20 Dec. 1977.
[61] BStU, ASt Magdeburg, Abt. XX, 4140. Abt XV to Abt XX, VII and XV, Information, 29 Jan. 1976.
[62] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47842. BDVP Suhl. Bericht, 20 June 1977.
[63] BStU, JHS, 20131, fos. 23f. Steffen Rüdiger, *Die politisch-operative Bearbeitung von übersiedlungsersuchenden Ausländern/Staatenlosen*, 30 Mar. 1984.

Racism was not just a problem in provincial areas nor did it exclusively target foreign workers and students. In 1975, for example, enraged Algerian diplomats in Berlin were refused entry to the prominent Café Moskau and a number of similar establishments.[64] Three years later in the same city, a drunken GDR citizen "went on the rampage and shouted racist comments" at a delegation of local politicians from Guinea-Bissau who were dining at the HOG Jägerklasse. While the report uncharacteristically acknowledged the racist nature of the incident, it typically claimed that it was evidence of "enemy activity".[65]

Crucially, the police and courts rarely classified such attacks as being racially motivated. While the media may have made reference to particular incidents, there was a systematic attempt to disguise their real nature. One example was an attack on six Mozambican workers at the spring festival in Dresden in May 1985. The workers, who were employed in a factory in Heidenau and aged between 23 and 27, had travelled into Dresden to take part in the festivities. Later in the evening, they were attacked by a dozen East German men after they tried to make conversation with some East German women. Although the East German men were responsible for the attack, when the police arrived they also arrested the Mozambicans for refusing to leave the scene. They were only released the following morning when the police established that they had been unable to understand their order. The dozen East German men involved were charged with riotous behaviour. Police information sheds some light on the social profile of the attackers, all of whom, bar one, came from Dresden. While the oldest was 28, seven were younger than their Mozambican victims, the youngest being 16. Most were single, although two were married and one was separated. Four had previous convictions for a multiple of offences, which ranged from rowdy behaviour, handling stolen goods, assault and resisting police authority. Half worked in the construction and energy industries in low positions, four in computer companies, one was a butcher while the youngest was in his tenth year at school.[66] While the incident was reported in the *Sächsische Zeitung* some days later, the paper gave no indication as to the real nature of the incident, referring only to a "fight among *citizens*, some of whom were under the influence of alcohol" which led to four "persons" receiving slight injuries.[67]

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[64] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41617. Vermerk über ein Gespräch mit der Attache der Botschaft der DVRA, Herren Fodil Ali Khodja, im MfAA, 27 June 1975.
[65] SAPMO-BArch, DY 13/3331. Bericht über das Seminar mit Kommunalpolitikern aus der Republik Guinea-Bissau und der VR Mocambique, 26 July 1978.
[66] For the police account, see DO 1/8.0/51099. BDVP Dresden to MdI and MfS, 17 May 1985.
[67] My emphasis. *Sächsische Zeitung*, 18-19 May 1985, p. 2.

Although paragraph 140 of the state criminal code (StGB) made it an offence to cause "insult on the basis of membership of another nation or race" (a conviction could result in a jail sentence of up to two years, probation, a fine, or public censure), it was rarely availed of by the police and the courts.[68] This research has come across only one mention in the archives of a prosecution under paragraph 140. It involved a GDR citizen found guilty of insulting two staff members of the Egyptian embassy in Glauchau's Hotel Lindenhof in 1979. He received a seven month jail sentence under paragraphs 140 and 220 (covering public vilification) of the StGB.[69] In addition, one of Scherzer's interviewees, Fredi, claimed he received an 18-month jail term in 1984 for "racism" after he allegedly got in a row with a Mozambican worker in Suhl. Speaking in 2002, Fredi protested his innocence and claimed he had been victimised by the MfS.[70]

The legal and constitutional prohibitions of racism may have served to suppress the open expression of racist sentiment in particular public arenas but did little to deconstruct racism as a social phenomenon. Rather, the public became aware of what could be said and when. Indeed, as Lindenberger has claimed, the "extensive and basic distrust of outsiders in present day [eastern Germany], regardless of whether they are from neighbouring towns, tourists or foreigners" is possibly a sequel to this specific configuration of power in the GDR, in which the lowest tiers of society were empowered with chances for action owing to the ability to recognise the extent of state authority.[71] Once the state collapsed, these ideas could be expressed openly and loudly with little fear of state intervention.

The reluctance of the police to classify certain incidents as racist was certainly a product of the opinions of ordinary officers. As a number of reports compiled by senior police officers suggest, the lower echelons of the police were often biased and brutal in dealing with foreigners. In some cases, the offending officers were taken to account, while in others, the police and political authorities colluded to cover up some crass examples of institutional police racism.

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[68] For example, a study of neo-fascist activity in the GDR compiled by a criminal police task force in November 1989 only studied transgressions of paragraphs 215/216 (hooliganism) and 220 (3) (public vilification) of the state criminal code. This suggests that there were no paragraph 140 incidents to study. For the report, see Klaus Kinner, *Rechtsextremismus und Antifaschismus*, Berlin, 2000, 273-293.

[69] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/47843. BDVP Karl-Marx-Stadt, Periodische Berichterstattung, 17 July 1979, 3.

[70] Landolf Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, Berlin, 2002, 72 and 131ff. His Mozambican friend Manuel agreed. The two had been friends and drinking partners since 1982. One night, Fredi decided to call on his ex-girlfriend Rita. She had left him and was dating a Mozambican named Augusto. When Fredi reached her flat, Augusto was waiting with a knife and a fight broke out. The DVP were called, and as there had been no bloodshed, decided not to press charges. Yet, Fredi claims the case only made it to court as Rita's father was an MfS officer. There were no witnesses at his trial as Augusto had been deported home.

[71] Thomas Lindenberger, "Die Diktatur der Grenzen. Zur Einleitung" in his edited volume *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR*, Köln, 1999, 13-44, here 32.

As has been shown, the African students in Leipzig made particular reference to police brutality in their 1965 memorandum on racism. Indeed, the relations between police and foreign students had deteriorated to such a degree in Leipzig that some senior police officers proposed in 1965 that only non-uniformed officers should intervene in rows and violent incidents involving foreigners.[72] Foreigners complained persistently about police partiality, which was exacerbated in rural areas where it was common for local men to serve as part-time "police assistants". In the village of Zielitz (*Bezirk* Magdeburg) in March 1969, for example, a row broke out at a dance between a local resident Gerhard D. and a Polish worker. D. happened to be a police assistant and member of the village council, and later that night, along with Horst E. (a fellow police assistant and village councillor) and two regular policemen (an ABV and a transport policeman), he went to the Polish workers' hostel. The two drunken police assistants harassed and insulted the residents of the hostel, beating three of them with batons. In this case, the reaction of the police authorities was swift. The ABV was fired while charges were pressed against the two police assistants. The SED *Kreisleitung* was also mobilised to monitor the political situation in the village, while the GDR and Polish supervisors pledged that they would ensure that the incident would not affect the "friendly relations already in existence".[73]

In 1972 foreign students (particularly from Palestine and Guinea-Bissau) studying at the Nordhausen agricultural college found local police so heavy handed that they compared them to the "colonial" police in their own countries. Although college authorities had complained repeatedly to the local police chief about the "huge bias" of police towards foreign students, no action was taken. In one case, an African, who had been involved in a brawl, was arrested with the help of a chain twister even though he had not resisted arrest. In another incident, a policeman refused to follow up a third-year Nigerian student's claim that he had been discriminated and insulted in a local bar, where bar staff refused to serve him on the grounds that he was "too loud". Later that day, the policeman fired a warning shot with his pistol after the Nigerian met him on the street and tried once again to have his complaint registered. In a subsequent investigation, a major of the criminal police of the BDVP Erfurt reported that he was "impressed" by the testimony of the students and promised to investigate all charges against local colleagues.[74]

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[72] BStU, JHS, MF, 528. Paulsen, *Einige Probleme*, 5 Dec. 1965, 35.
[73] BArch, DO 1/8.0/41383. VPKA Wolmirstedt, Vorkommnis mit polnischen Bürgern, 31 Mar. 1969.
[74] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV B 2/9.04/136. KAS, Information über ein besonderes Vorkommnis an der IS für Landtechnik Nordhausen, 15 Dec. 1972.

In other cases, police officers colluded to cover up racism in the force, in one case with the knowledge and assistance of the MfAA. In a restaurant in Gotha in November 1979, four Cuban workers complained to the restaurant manager after a waitress had told them that the table they had taken was reserved. The police were called because, in the words of the manager, "one of [the Cubans] had such black skin that I didn't dare have a go at him". When the police arrived, they assaulted and arrested the Cubans with the help of batons, dogs and drawn pistols. Down at the police station, the Cubans were beaten and kicked after refusing to stand spread-eagled against the wall and were referred to as "black pigs" and "shit made in Cuba". When the Cubans sought to defend themselves, the members of the local fire brigade were summoned and joined in on the beatings. (The Cubans later equated the DVP with the American and Brazilian police). Although an internal inquiry into the incident found that the police in Gotha had overstepped their powers and violated the "socialist legal order", none of the police officers involved were dismissed. In addition, the deputy minister for external affairs, Herbert Krolikowski, ordered that a sanitised report claiming that the workers were solely responsible be presented to the Cuban embassy.[75]

Similarly, in March 1982, an Algerian contract worker was arrested, beaten, detained, and robbed by transport police in Dresden central train station after he tried to report a GDR citizen for insulting him. Although a subsequent BDVP report established that the police had acted improperly, the MdI sent a whitewashed report to the MfAA, which claimed the Algerian had injured himself by tripping in the police station.[76] In a more serious incident in Rostock, three Algerians were arrested and badly beaten, one to the point of unconsciousness.[77] These and other similar incidents enraged the Algerian embassy, which in April 1982 issued the MfAA with a verbal note protesting at the "rough maltreatment" of its citizens. In addition, the embassy claimed it could "no longer tolerate the DVP walking all over the dignity and rights of Algerian citizens", adding that it would advise its government to "draw the necessary conclusions" should another case arise.[78]

The above cases demonstrate the difficulty foreigners had in reporting incidents to the police. Generally unable to express themselves in German and faced with the blunt

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[75] DO 1/0.5.0/47851 and 47852. The incident occurred on 24 Nov. 1979, which is covered extensively by these files.
[76] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46780, fos. 397-401. BDVP Dresden, Überprüfung zum Vorkommnis mit einem Bürger der DVRA, 4 June 1982.
[77] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46780, fos. 390-395. Bericht über die durchgeführte Untersuchung zum Sachverhalt der Note der Botschaft der DVRA, 14 May 1982.
[78] DO 1/0.5.0/46780, fos. 383-85. Algerian embassy to Abt. Nord- und Westafrika, MfAA, 12 Apr. 1982.

arrogance of minor police officers, the fact that there were often no interpreters available compounded an already serious problem. In 1982, for example, there was only one Portuguese-language interpreter available in the whole of the *Bezirk* Leipzig, which at the time had 550 Mozambicans employed in 14 factories. This failure of state bodies and in particular the police to uphold the "legitimate entitlement" of Mozambican workers to "justice and security", according to a senior police officer, pushed contract workers into self-defence and vigilantism, expressed by random retaliatory beatings of Germans in revenge for random racist attacks.[79]

It is important to note that the authorities could collude to cover up crimes committed by foreigners if they deemed this necessary for political reasons. In one shocking case, three Kuwaiti trade union functionaries on a GDR holiday sponsored by the FDGB evaded prosecution for a terrible crime. In 1983, they abducted and anally raped a 17-year-old East German woman and fellow guest of the FDGB holiday complex Pierre Semard in Potsdam. Although the police were in favour of pressing charges, the international department of the FDGB in Berlin requested the case be closed on political grounds as it feared that a conviction could lead to "complications between the Kuwaiti progressive trade union congress and the FDGB".[80] Although this and other incidents never made it to the courts, it is not beyond possibility that news of them spread by word of mouth, thus fuelling a false perception that foreigners could act with impunity in the GDR.

While the files can illustrate clearly how police and functionaries perceived foreigners, it is more difficult to assess the views of ordinary East Germans. Arguably, there was little difference, especially at the lower tiers of society. Scherzer's interviews in and around the Suhl Fajas factory in 1982 provide a rare insight into the more subtle forms of racist thinking among the public. Of his 13 East German interviewees, seven expressed attitudes that were generally favourable towards foreign workers. The remaining five (four men and a woman) were more negative, if not racist, in their outlook. While the men attributed the negative traits of the Mozambican workers either implicitly or explicitly to their "race", the woman's reserve was based on personal experience and the result of relationships with a number of Mozambican men that had all failed, she claimed, as a result of their infidelity.

As the example of one interviewee showed, normative interaction did not necessarily lead to the deconstruction of racist stereotypes and prejudice but could

[79] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/ 46778. BDVP Leipzig, Berichterstattungen zu eingeleiteten Ermittlungsverfahren, 9 Feb. 1982, 7 and 12.
[80] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/48451. BDVP Potsdam, Information, 31 Aug. 1983.

rather serve to confirm these. Herr Mauer (b. 1936), a fitter, was in daily contact with the Mozambicans as he lived next door to their hostel. He got to know many by name and even regularly invited two workers to his home, where they partook in birthday and Christmas celebrations and exchanged presents. With a strong trace of jealousy, he recalled that they once presented his wife with flowers and perfume, something he never thought of doing. His wife in turn knitted jumpers for them (albeit for payment). On one occasion he found himself comforting a young worker whose brother had died in Mozambique, and another who was suffering from homesickness. This interaction, however, did little to challenge Mauer's racist prejudices, which had been forged years earlier. He believed that Mozambicans lay at the bottom of a racial hierarchy, below the "civilised" Vietnamese and Algerians, who had benefited from their colonial contact with France and European values. His sister once told him that black people were unable to work without the supervision of whites – she had been told this by a white Namibian farmer. Indeed, he expressed his surprise at how quickly the Mozambicans "lost their fear of whites" upon arriving in the GDR. His observations over his garden gate led him to the conclusion that the "half-casts" among the Mozambicans were more adaptable and better behaved than their "black native" compatriots and that cultural salvation was only possible for those who could be successfully isolated from the pack. In an indication of where his cultural and racial boundaries lay, Mauer argued that it would have been far better had the Mozambicans been sent to Bulgaria where he believed the people were similar in character. As regards relationships with German women, his stance was "every tribe for itself". Demonstrating that racism and paternalism are intrinsically linked, he expressed his contempt for women who sought such contact with the Mozambicans by remarking that one woman, who was "no oil painting", had got "divorced especially" for a Mozambican. While it is impossible to surmise how representative Mauer's views were, they show that fear and suspicion of the other were not easily overcome by interaction. In addition, they were contradictory. While in 1982, he felt that the hostels ought to have been situated in non-residential areas, far away from East German citizens, twenty years later he claimed to miss the workers.[81]

The personnel director of the Fajas factory, Seiler (b. 1922), was openly hypocritical in his views of the Mozambicans. During his interview with Scherzer, he recited the SED jargon of proletarian internationalism and solidarity, yet off the record he said that he would throw out his own daughter if she dared date a Mozambican. Yet,

[81] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 22.

at the same time he claimed he was active in challenging many of the stereotypes circulating in the factory. He dismissed the claim that the Mozambicans were rapists by arguing that their alleged victims were partly to blame for such incidents and rubbished the assertion that their hostel was particularly dirty by pointing out that German workers treated their hostels just as badly if not worse. Indeed, as a former NVA officer, he was at pains to mention the pride the contract workers took in their rooms. Neither was it true that they drank excessively, he believed, but it was rather the ban on alcohol consumption in the hostels that led to drinking in public places, an insight he had learned as an officer trying to impose similar orders in NVA barracks.[82]

Strangely, Scherzer's book contains no interviews with any young East German men. However one female interviewee, Carmen, related the views of some of them. She related that many men believed that the Mozambicans had a "particularly large sexual organ" which is how they explained the relative ease at which they managed to find East German girlfriends. Her fiancé, Thomas, was hostile towards them, she pointed out: "He just can't stand them. Why? He couldn't tell you that himself. [...] Only Germans matter for him." He was also against the USSR and refused to take holidays abroad. Yet, she claimed that after he recently bought and shared a bottle of schnapps with a Mozambican, he swore that he'd nothing against them.[83] Regardless of how representative this young man was, his example shows how opinions could swing from the extremes. There was no middle ground and inebriated avowals of friendship were as hollow as the state's maxims of proletarian internationalism and solidarity.

One of Scherzer's interviewees perhaps articulated the essence of East German xenophobia like no other. Angered that a social gap had developed between those Mozambican workers who allegedly had access to hard currency and those who had not, in a revealing outburst the Mozambican workers' supervisor at Fajas, Georg Mantel, argued that:

> They have become our mirror image. They imitate our lifestyle, especially the negative aspects. We see ourselves in them, find this difficult to accept, and criticise them for what *they* allow themselves to do. It's easier to complain about them than about ourselves.[84]

Like East Germans, the Mozambican workers failed to live according to officially-prescribed ideals. They served to highlight the inherent shortcomings and contradictions of East German society and at the same time became a convenient scapegoat for East Germans frustrated at their society and their role in it.

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[82] Ibid., 43.
[83] Ibid., 115f.
[84] Ibid., 91. Emphasis in the original.

Historical accounts of how foreigners perceived racism are few and far between. Foreigners' views on the matter were never consulted (nor welcome) in the GDR. Yet, the available testimony of foreigners indicates that while they may have encountered racism, it was not the dominant feature of daily life. Rather, racism was seen as an inevitable part of living abroad. Batra, in his otherwise bitter attack on the GDR, claimed he never "experienced any racist prejudices anywhere in the Zone, not even discrimination in this regard, excepting of course from those individuals who have certain sympathies and aversions".[85] Similarly, the interviews carried out by Runge and others in late 1989 and early 1990 produced similar statements. H., a Vietnamese worker in Brandenburg, mentioned racism only as a peripheral occurrence, which is perhaps more of an indication of the intimidating effect on its victims than on its prevalence. While he claimed he was "called something" on a tram once, he felt most people, especially the elderly, were friendly towards him.[86] Another Vietnamese man, who had lived in the GDR for fifteen years, trivialised racist taunts as an inevitable part of living abroad:

> Nothing happened to me apart from being called a 'jungle negro' [*Buschneger*] or 'Chinese' on the street. It did annoy me. But what am I supposed to do? Cry? You have to expect that when you live abroad.[87]

Cuban worker Os. was more critical and claimed that both black and white Cuban workers had encountered racism in discos, trams, and shops.[88] Evidently less prepared to tolerate discriminatory treatment in the GDR were the foreign third-level graduates interviewed in Runge's book. One, a Hungarian teacher who came to the GDR in the mid-1970s, recalled how a neighbour used to place rubbish in her pram and vandalise her letterbox. In the late 1980s, she felt a rise in anti-Polish and anti-Hungarian resentment, attributing this to the SED's opposition to the political changes taking place in those countries. Iraqi Salah Hussain, a graduate of German and drama studies, criticised the "mothering" of adult foreigners by the state and many GDR citizens. His was a bitter-sweet experience: on the one hand he got to know some people really well but felt there was a "wall" between foreigners and the majority of the East German public. While only a minority openly articulated racist views, he felt most East Germans made no attempt to make contact with foreigners.[89] That the majority of East Germans were outwardly indifferent to the presence of foreigners in the GDR is largely supported

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[85] Batra, *Studium bei Freunden?*, 10.
[86] Irene Runge, *Ausland DDR. Fremdenhaß*, Berlin, 1990, 31.
[87] Quoted in ibid., 98. Interestingly, his East German wife spoke out more on the types of verbal and physical racism she and her child and contract workers in general experienced.
[88] Ibid, 48.
[89] Andrzej Stach & Saleh Hussain, *Ausländer in der DDR*, 62f.

by the findings of a 1990 postal survey which found that only five percent of foreign respondents (mostly long-term residents from Eastern Europe married to East Germans) believed that East Germans were hostile towards them in the GDR, while 42 percent felt that they were generally positive. Of the German respondents, only 13.8 percent claimed they had intensive contact with foreigners in GDR times.[90]

Almut Riedel's research with former Algerian contract workers, carried out in the mid-1990s, made an interesting finding regarding their reception of racism in the GDR. In their narratives, they rarely recalled racism and focussed instead on positive memories of experiences in the social and recreational sphere. Indeed, the Algerians saw themselves as the perpetrators rather than as the victims of violence, meting out retribution on East German citizens who insulted their sense of honour with taunts. She also found that they made little reference to institutionalised racism, mentioning in this context the ban on the Schwarze Pumpe Algerian soccer team from taking part in official leagues, the partiality of the police, and the difficulty in marrying East German women.[91]

As has been documented in detail in the secondary literature, the situation for foreigners deteriorated rapidly from 1987 onwards. The brief overview of developments provided below demonstrates the inability of the authorities to deal with the worsening situation on the one hand and they key role played by church circles in highlighting the problem on the other. In September 1987, two GDR church magazines spoke out on racism and the discrimination of foreigners in the state.[92] The following month, a group of neo-Nazis stormed a peace concert at the Zionskirche in Berlin. Although publicly the authorities claimed the attackers were from the West, internally the MfS admitted for the first time that a rightwing extremist skinhead scene had been in existence since the early 1980s, characterised by an "exaggerated national consciousness as Germans", and "racial hate and xenophobia".[93] The following February, the *Politbüro* for the first time addressed the problem of skinhead groups and their "brutality, violence, neo-fascism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia" but attributed their origins to the "class

[90] The postal sample involved 327 respondents. See Siegfried Grundmann et al., "Ausländer in Ostdeutschland", in: *BISS public*, 1:3 (1991), 5-75, here 55f.
[91] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus, späte Adoleszenz und Protest. Algerische Vertragsarbeiter in der DDR", in: *KZSS*, 53:5 (2001), 76-95, here 88f.
[92] The publications and authors were *epd-Landesdienst*, Berlin (Christfried Berger) and *Glaube und Heimat*, Thüringen (Heino Falcke). See Marianne Krüger-Potratz, *Anderssein gab es nicht: Ausländer und Minderheiten in der DDR*, Münster, 1991, 52f. and 199. These articles were possibly in response to an attack by skinheads on a Mozambican citizen in Dresden, which was registered by the MfS, Walter Süß, *Zu Wahrnehmung und Interpretationen des Rechtsextremismus*, 1993, 91.
[93] Ibid. (Süß), 19f.

enemy".[94] In July 1988, the Vietnamese embassy claimed that it had received numerous petitions from GDR citizens calling on it to "increase the discipline" of its workers.[95] In February 1989, an internal study on rightwing extremism by the East German sociologist Loni Niederländer and which had been commissioned by the main criminal police department of the MdI, dismissed the thesis that neo-fascism was a Western import. In addition, the study came to the conclusion that the perpetrators were mainly working class and from the social mainstream. The extremists saw foreigners as their prime target, believing that they deprived Germans of "living space" (*Wohnraum*), engaged in "speculative" trading, spread AIDS, "treated women like cheap prostitutes" and played "the big guys with their convertible currency". Shocked at these findings, the MdI withdrew funding for the project, the results of which only came to light after the *Wende*.[96] In March 1989 the Volkskammer heard Egon Krenz praise contract workers as "creative partners for the common good,"[97] while the independent *Umweltblätter* reported on the racist verbal abuse hurled at Africans on Leipzig's trams.[98] At the GDR church congress in July 1989 in Leipzig, physicist Hilde Golde summed up the type of comments being made by the East German public on foreigners: "What are the foreigners doing here? They're living in flats that we're entitled to. They're buying up everything to send back home. And they've hard currency."[99] In August, the GDR State Press Office instructed the bloc party newspapers not to report on xenophobic incidents,[100] while the FDGB newspaper *Tribüne* dismissed racism as a Western import.[101] Yet, in one of its final analyses of the problem, the MfS reported in September 1989 that not only was "xenophobia" on the increase, but that it was longer the preserve of "politically negative" youths. GDR workers believed that they were "paying for the negative effects" of the contract worker programme, which had spun out of control. The population, it added, rejected foreigners on the grounds of their deviant lifestyle, criminality, laziness, eagerness to strike, arrogance, materialism, and support of capitalist conditions. Furthermore, it added ominously that the "hardening negative

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[94] Ibid., 20.
[95] Minutes of a meeting between MfS HA XVIII and Vietnamese security officers in the GDR, 28 July 1988, quoted in Michael Feige, *Vietnamesische Studenten und Arbeiter in der DDR und ihre Beobachtung durch das MfS*, Magdeburg, 1999, 76.
[96] See Walter Süß, *Zu Wahrnehmung und Interpretationen des Rechtsextremismus*, 33-39.
[97] Quoted in *ND*, 4-5 Mar. 1989.
[98] *Umweltblätter*, Mar. 1989, quoted in Annegret Schüle, "Vertragsarbeiterinnen und -arbeiter in der DDR", in: *1999* 17:1 (2002), 80-100, 95.
[99] Quoted in ibid., 84.
[100] *Neue Zeit*, 19 Jan. 1990, quoted in Gunter Holzweißig, *Die schärfste Waffe der Partei*, Köln, 2002, 243.
[101] *Tribüne*, 8 Aug. 1989, 3. Quoted in Annegret Schüle, "Vertragsarbeiterinnen und -arbeiter in der DDR", 84.

attitudes" were not only directed against foreigners but "but also against those responsible", which could only mean the political leadership at the time.[102]

Thus, the crisis period of 1987 to 1989 exacerbated the problem of racism which had always been a feature in East German society. The economy was in decline, as was the strength of the regime's legitimacy. The ideological bedrock of the SED was discredited given Gorbachev's reform impulse and East German youth and other parts of the population grew increasingly disillusioned. On top of this, the number of contract workers increased rapidly in the period, a growth which was not matched by commensurate growth in the necessary infrastructure. Ironically, the rapid rise in the numbers of contract workers was a symptom of an economic crisis but not its cause. Yet, as in Western societies, foreigners were increasingly made scapegoats for the failings of the economy. However, the rise in xenophobia in the late 1980s was not simply a result of consumer shortages as the workers with the least resources available to engage in the struggle for consumer goods – black workers – suffered the brunt of the East German public's anger. As chapter five has shown, owing to their low net wages, Mozambican workers were not in a position to engage in the same levels of consumer activity as other workers and, although their work record was generally positive, the MfS noted that the public were only too ready to jump on the smallest fault of the Mozambicans.[103]

A report complied in September 1989 by the chief of the MfS in Erfurt, major general Josef Schwarz, described the deteriorating situation. Although the content of his report clearly indicated that racism lay at the root of the East German public's discontent with foreigners and that black workers were the main target, the report like many others typically refused to refer to the root problem by name. According to Schwarz, factory supervisors were reporting an increase in "muted xenophobia" which was beginning to express itself openly and violently. In one factory, a racist leaflet was in circulation. In Eisenach and Weimar, restaurants, cultural centres, and youth clubs had imposed bans on Mozambican customers on the grounds that they did not have the space to accommodate them. The swimming pool in Weimar barred Mozambican workers after rumours began circulating that they had worms. Racism was also finding violent expression in Erfurt in the form of attacks on Mozambicans, some of whom refused to work night shifts after being ambushed by a "motorbike gang" a number of

[102] BStU, ZA, ZAIG, 20646, fos. 22-26. HA XVIII/4, Jahreseinschätzung zur politisch-operativen Lage unter den ausländischen Werktätigen, 7 Sept. 1989.
[103] Ibid., fo. 30 and BStU, ASt Erfurt, BdL-S, 227, fo. 2. Generalmajor Schwarz, Information über aktuelle Probleme beim Einsatz ausländischer Arbeitskräfte, 11 Sept. 1989.

times on their way to work. The Mozambicans could expect little support from the police, who as the MfS pointed out critically, persistently sided with GDR citizens in disputes involving contract workers. Indeed, the Erfurt police favoured segregating the Mozambican workers in a single hostel (as opposed to three different buildings) in order to reduce their "public impact" in the city. Despite all the evidence that suggested that the Mozambicans were the victims of a rising climate of racism, rows were attributed to mutual "misunderstandings" which resulted from linguistic incompetence and ignorance of the customs, traditions and the social norms of the other. Although the report went further than many others in addressing the problem, it still sought to apologise for the hostility of the GDR public by claiming that this was not "generally directed at the foreigners [*per se*] but at their illegal dealings and negative forms of behaviour" before adding that "people often generalise".[104]

Schwarz' report proves without a doubt that racism was on the rise before the collapse of the Wall and German reunification. Yet he was unable to accept this. His inability to do so is characteristic for many East Germans, particularly from the communist elite, who sincerely believed that the GDR was anti-fascist. Like many others, Schwarz has since advanced the view that rightwing extremism was exclusively a product of the *Wende*. This of course was in complete contradiction to his own observances made as head of the MfS in Erfurt. His memoirs, published in 1994, show how his understanding of the phenomenon of rightwing extremism was political. "Neo-fascism" was for him an affront to the memory of his father and other communists who died fighting the Nazis and for which there was no "social basis in the GDR". He went on to state that articles on the problem published in the GDR before the *Wende* were really about attacking the GDR. Indeed, he blatantly misrepresents Konrad Weiß by purporting that he published an article in an East German church magazine claiming that 500 skinheads held training camps in forests in Erfurt. Although Weiß wrote two powerful and widely-circulated articles on racism in the GDR in 1988 (which was banned) and 1989, they contained no such claim.[105]

Racial violence in the GDR occasionally resulted in deaths. What follows is not a comprehensive list, but presents the cases uncovered during the course of this research. As many of the cases were never investigated openly or fully, they undoubtedly remained the subject of innuendo and gossip among East Germans and foreigners alike.

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[104] Ibid. (Information), fo. 10.

[105] Josef Schwarz, *Bis zum bitteren Ende. 35 Jahre im Dienste des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit. Eine DDR-Biographie*, Schkeuditz, 1994, 113. Weiß did write some articles for church magazines on racism in the GDR (see fn. 5) but these made no mention to mass training camps for skinheads.

In October 1978 in Gera, an off-duty Soviet soldier randomly stabbed and killed 29-year-old Mohamed Bokefoussau, purportedly in revenge for an attack carried out by other Algerians a fortnight previously.[106] In August 1979, two Cuban contract workers, Andres Garcia (21) and Delfin Guerra (19), drowned in the river Saale in Merseburg during a confrontation between GDR and Cuban youths. In January 1981, the Algerian worker Rabah Dahoumane was murdered by a GDR citizen in what police claimed was a sex attack.[107] In March of the same year in Jena, an off-duty NVA soldier was stabbed to death in an after-disco row between GDR youths and Mongolian apprentices.[108] In October in Altenburg, an Algerian stabbed a 17-year-old East German dead who had earlier insulted him in a bar and who had repeatedly challenged him to a fight.[109] In August 1984, a Yemeni army officer was killed in a fight between Northern Yemeni and NVA officers in a Rostock bar. In addition to the above, secondary sources refer to four further fatal incidents, which have not been substantiated by archival evidence. According to one such claim, an Angolan was hanged in a beer tent at the beginning of the 1980s.[110] Another book has suggested that 19 people were stabbed in a huge fracas between Algerians and East Germans in Rostock. It also refers to another incident near Erfurt which ended with the death of an Algerian in broad daylight.[111] A recent but unconfirmed claim refers to an incident on a train in late 1982 in which four Mozambican workers killed a NVA soldier.[112]

Racism was a feature of life for foreigners throughout the history of the GDR. For ideological reasons, functionaries of the party and mass organisations were unable or unwilling to accept the fact, and tended instead to blame foreigners for the "misunderstandings" with the East German public or the West for exporting racist ideas. The dominant ideology prevented any meaningful debate (internal or otherwise) on the issue and served to cloak older stereotypes. Most problematic was the partial approach of ordinary officers of the DVP, whose hostility towards foreigners was particularly acute. Although there were cases where regional police officers criticised the behaviour of lower-tiered police, there were also attempts at collusion to cover up racist incidents.

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[106] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/42630 contains a file entitled: Körperverletzung mit Todesfolge am 7-8 Okt. 1978 in Gera.
[107] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. Information zum Ableben des algerischen Werktätigen am 2 Jan. 1981.
[108] BArch, DO 1/0.5.0/46778. Bericht zu den eingeleiteten Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Bürger anderer Staaten und Einwohner, 1 Feb. 1982, 3.
[109] SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/7029. SAL to Mittag, 30 Oct. 1981.
[110] Antifaschistisches Broschürenkollektiv, 1995, 4-5. Quoted in Gordon Charles Ross, *The Swastika in Socialism. Right-Wing Extremism in the GDR*, Hamburg, 2000, 92.
[111] Almut Riedel, "Doppelter Sozialstatus", 89. This author found no evidence of the mass stabbing incident, but did come across a street fight where an Algerian was fatally stabbed by a member of the GSSD in Gera on 8 Oct. 1978.
[112] Scherzer, *Die Fremden*, 74.

Towards the late 1980s, the approach of the DVP came under criticism from some regional MfS chiefs. The attitudes of functionaries provide an insight into the largely undocumented attitudes of the East German public towards foreigners. Radical and violent racism was a minority phenomenon, while passivity and indifference towards foreigners was the norm. As the GDR slipped into political and economic crisis, racism and xenophobia increased. Yet, it was the massive social upheaval that followed the *Wende* that transformed these tendencies into a murderous force.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

This thesis offers a wide-ranging examination of the experiences of migrants in socialism, a topic grossly neglected in studies on migration and on the socialist states in general. The focus has been on the GDR and the two most prominent groups of foreigners who came to that state for defined periods of time, namely international students and contract workers. Their everyday experiences were characterised by far more complexity and diversity than has been suggested by previous studies and involved more than the sweat and toil in menial positions and isolated residency in communal housing blocks. Moving beyond the dichotomous totalitarian model implicit in much of the existing literature on the topic, it has approached the subject matter in a more nuanced way, exploring the variety of experiences encountered by the hundreds of thousands of foreigners who studied and worked in the self-styled German workers' and peasants' state. It has also sought to look at the interaction between foreigners, the state and the wider East German public. In doing so, it does not deny that foreigners were a particularly vulnerable social group in East German society. The party and state remained the ultimate arbiters over immigration and residency, meaning foreigners generally had to make greater reference (than East Germans) to authority in their everyday lives. In addition, they had to take into account the violent and passive racism of many East Germans. While these factors – state attempts at control on the one hand and racism and xenophobia among East Germans on the other – have been the key thematic focus in much of the existing literature, this work has attempted to place these aspects within the overall historical context and to line them up with other features of foreigners' everyday experience. International students and contract workers were not simply the objects of state-inspired systems of control and surveillance, nor were their everyday existences dominated by racism and xenophobia.

In addition, the thesis has attempted to move away from an analysis which views immigration primarily from the perspective of the "host" society and has attempted to view foreigners as "subjects of social action" (Weber) in their own right, who were capable of reacting to and interacting with the particular social, political, and economic conditions prevalent in the GDR in their own personal and collective ways. Although diplomatic and economic self-interest fuelled East German policy, there were numerous push factors in the migrants' home countries which made the idea of spending a number

of years in the GDR very attractive. There was intense competition in many countries for the free third-level education provided in East Germany. In addition, there is no evidence to suggest that contract workers were coerced into going to the GDR. On the contrary, there was a high demand for places with prospective workers in some cases going to considerable financial lengths to ensure they were included on the labour exchange programmes. For many migrants, the GDR represented a rare opportunity to work and to gain experience abroad, to sample different lifestyles, and a chance to effect social and material advancement. Even though the objective conditions in the GDR were not always of the migrants' choosing, their lives in East German society could nevertheless be endowed with subjective meaning. In order to capture the complexity of these experiences, the thesis avoided focusing on any one nationality of workers or students and, in doing so, has observed that the otherwise very heterogeneous (in social, geographical, and political terms) groups of foreigners reacted in similar ways to the problems presented by life in the GDR. In addition, some (but not all) of the experiences of international students in the 1950s and 1960s were repeated by contract workers in the 1970s and 1980s.

Broadly speaking, foreigners encountered the GDR in two major realms. The first was in the campus or factory environment where everyday life orbited around the pre-determined mundane routines of study and work. In East German colleges and factories, foreigners faced many of the typical difficulties encountered by migrants in other countries. These included the challenges of acquiring a new language and of adjusting to different cultural, educational and industrial ways and rhythms. Clear differences existed between students and workers, broadly reflecting the differences between these two social groups in any society but also the intentions of the SED. It envisaged international studies as having a long term function, representing an investment in diplomatic and export capital, with its beneficiaries expected to serve the propagation of a positive image of East Germany after graduation and subsequent return home. This applied particularly to those students coming from countries beyond the socialist bloc. On the other hand, contract labour served the short term needs of the East German economy. In addition, workers were exclusively recruited from communist countries (with the exception of Algeria). Thus, contract workers were more easily dispensable, and faced greater levels of exploitation and discrimination than international students in the workplace, their field of vocational activity. International students occupied a higher status, achieved greater linguistic competence, and enjoyed more privileges than contract workers, who increasingly represented a form of sub-proletariat in the factories.

International students and contract workers also interacted within the wider realm of East German society, beyond the confines of campus and factory. Recreation, interpreted here broadly to incorporate all the types of activities pursued by foreigners in their free time, is shown to have been far more complex than depicted in much of the existing literature. In their avocational time, students and workers sought out and indulged in a wide variety of free-time activities. These included pastimes already familiar to the workers and students from their native countries, such as sports, games, and cultural pursuits. Political activity, mainly concerned with events abroad, also featured in the free-time repertoire of foreigners, particularly students. But in addition to the activities already familiar to foreign students and workers from home, there was considerable interest in activities not so freely available or possible in their native countries. These ranged from the sampling of particular lifestyles and trends, consumerism and trading activities, as well as personal relationships. And setting them apart from the majority of their classmates, foreign students bearing valid passports had the "freedom" to visit the West.

The types of free-time activity engaged in by international students and contract workers reflected their own interests and needs and could provide their time in the GDR with an additional sense of purpose. This was particularly evident in the consumerist interests of workers. For many, a period of work in the GDR offered a rare chance to acquire particular material goods and, in some cases, to ascend the social ladder upon their return home. This was acutely apparent in the case of the Vietnamese contract workers, which suggests that despite all the problems involved in living in the GDR, such as overcrowded accommodation, difficult working conditions, racism, and attempts at control, workers sought to take advantage of the positive sides of what it had to offer. In their pursuit of their own agendas, contract workers challenged the perceptions shared by the SED and many parts of the population that they were to serve the East German economy rather than benefit materially from it. Although these activities were not always invested with political meaning by their participants, they took on particular political significance in the East German context.

Interaction with the East German population also featured in the recreational repertoire of foreign workers and students. Contact was more likely to develop beyond the college or factory context and as such took place outside of the supervised forms envisaged by the authorities. Reflecting the gender composition of international students and contract workers, binational relationships in the GDR generally involved foreign men and East German women. Those involved saw them as legitimate and genuine

relationships, a view not generally shared by the authorities and sections of the public. Indeed, various arms of the state and party attempted to disrupt relationships and prevent marriages between East German citizens and foreigners. In pursuing this task, which was never explicitly justified on grounds of race, the authorities made little distinction between married and unmarried couples. The policy, which oversaw the deportation of husbands, partners, and fathers, effectively drove East German women into single motherhood and deprived children of a parent. In strangling the few examples of actually-existing multiculturalism, the policies of the state conferred legitimacy to racist attitudes already festering among the population by stigmatising binational relationships and "miscegenation" even further.

A number of historical and ideological influences shaped East German immigration policy. Extremely restrictive in character, official attitudes towards immigration were informed by traditional communist paranoia towards outsiders but also, particularly in legal and bureaucratic terms, by older German police practice, which was carried over into the new police force almost in its entirety. Behind the façade of proletarian internationalism and solidarity, a system of registration and surveillance of foreigners, unashamedly referred to as *Ausländerkontrolle* by its overseers, was institutionalised and systemised in the GDR. The East German authorities, at times with the connivance of their counterparts in other countries, decided when foreigners arrived and left the state, where they lived, worked, and studied, and whether they could marry or have children in the GDR. Students and workers who challenged or questioned the fundamentals of East German immigration policy faced summary deportation. Thus, from the earliest years of the state, foreigners were subjected to greater levels of controls and surveillance at the hands of the state, particularly the police, than the East German population.

Yet, while no genuine study on foreigners' experiences in the GDR can avoid considering the attempts of the state to control foreigners, an exclusive focus on this aspect – only too evident in much of the secondary literature – paints a misleading picture of what life was like in the GDR for migrants. As Mary Fulbrook has pointed out in the context of general GDR historiography, "the selective casting and the one-way narrative structure" of approaches framed exclusively within the paradigm of totalitarianism theory "cumulatively serve to distort the way lives were actually lived, power experienced and enacted, characters formed and transformed, over forty years of

history".[1] Another reason why a singular focus on party or state authority is misleading is the fact that migrants in the GDR also had to deal with the everyday racism of "normal" East Germans in a day-to-day context. Without being requested to do by those in authority, many "normal" East Germans saw it as their duty to ensure that foreigners behaved in a particular way. Migrants were not only subjected to violent and verbal abuse from these quarters but faced more subtle attempts to enforce control and submission. These East German citizens opposed binational relationships, reported on the "moral transgressions" of migrants, challenged their right to purchase particular goods, or refused to sit next to them in restaurants. Indeed these challenges may have proved more immediate and problematic on a day-to-day basis than those exerted by the authorities, whose actions may have been easier for migrants to anticipate.

Notwithstanding these pressures from above (and also from their own embassies and governments in some cases) and from wider society, migrants were not subjected to total control, especially in the day-to-day contexts of the workplace, university, and hostel. The extent of authority was very often mitigated by those entrusted with its daily administration. Reports of varying provenance repeatedly bemoaned the inefficient application of laws, rules, and regulations by police, state security, trade union and factory officials, down to the wardens in the students' and workers' hostels and college and workplace "minders". Indeed, at this level officials were confronted with an array of social phenomena involving foreigners, for which they were not always equipped to deal with or prepared to counteract. In addition, there were always East German citizens prepared to engage socially with foreigners beyond the controlled spheres envisaged by the authorities. However, total control of migrants was ultimately frustrated by the actions and reactions of its intended objects, the international students and contract workers themselves. Regardless of restrictions and regulations, they formed friendships and relationships with East Germans, articulated a broad spectrum of political and religious opinion, engaged in refusals, protests, and strikes of varying intensity, practised the self-defence and self-regulation of justice, and pursued consumer interests. Arguably, the function of international studies and contract labour served to protect foreigners to some degree from any arbitrary actions of officials. As international students were expected to become future "multipliers" of a positive GDR image (especially in countries where such an image was lacking), the authorities had to take care that they did not graduate and leave hating it, a factor recognised and taken

[1] Mary Fulbrook, "Approaches to German contemporary history since 1945: Politics and paradigms", in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, online edition, 1:1 (2004), [www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Fulbrook-1-2004], 1-18, here 13.

advantage of by many students. Similarly, contract workers could use their collective economic and productive power to their own advantage, especially in the factories where they formed a significant portion of the workforce and where some production lines relied almost exclusively on their labour. While international students and contract workers could not force a fundamental renegotiation of authority, they could successfully challenge aspects of the everyday administration of authority and attempts at social control by "normal" East Germans.

The history of migrants in the GDR needs to be incorporated into wider social, economic and diplomatic history. Although the numbers of international students and contract workers were relatively low in the overall East German context, they were a significant and visible feature in particular sectors, especially in third-level educational institutions, making up a tenth of the student population in some cases, and particular industries, forming the majority of the workforce in several factories by the late 1980s. As foreign workers were deployed in the less-attractive and less-skilled positions, thus forming a new underclass, this had profound socio-economic implications for German workers, allowing for upward social mobility regardless of individual effort or ability. The injection of foreign labour into a system that had been perennially plagued by labour shortages also enabled German workers to leave unpopular shift work. Therefore, contract labour allowed for a significant adjustment in the daily working rhythms of German workers. In addition, contract labour was essential in maintaining the production of consumer goods destined for the East German and export markets and was thus vital in keeping Honecker's increasingly insolvent system of "consumer socialism" on its feet, which Corey Ross points out "had made living standards and social spending the fundamental basis of the regime's claim to legitimacy".[2] In an effort to ensure that the majority population and not the contract workers benefited from the productive output of contract labour, the SED leadership attempted to restrict the spending power of foreign workers and their access to infrastructural resources, in particular housing. In a way, therefore, the rapid increases in the numbers of contract workers in the late 1980s may be seen as symptomatic (but certainly not the cause) of East Germany's overall economic crisis and the desperate attempts of the SED to shore up its legitimacy. As the system slipped deeper into economic and ideological crisis, foreigners, especially contract workers, represented a convenient, local and easily-identifiable scapegoat for those in authority as well as the mass of East Germans. Thus,

[2] Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR*, London, 2002, 96.

months before the *Wende* racism and xenophobia were well on the way to becoming mainstream.

Understanding the wider historical context in which study and labour migration to the GDR took place is crucial. In a convincing appeal to end what they refer to as the provincialism of much of the historical research on the GDR, Lindenberger and Sabrow have argued that: "Just as the case with West German history, at no stage since 1945 was East German history self-explanatory. Its development was always the product of overlapping national and international developments and decisions."[3] The GDR was not the only European or Warsaw Pact state to employ contract labour or matriculate international students. Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Poland employed foreign labour and universities across the Eastern bloc (particularly in Prague, Sofia and Moscow) hosted foreign students. While a detailed comparative analysis was not possible in this work – owing to pressures of space as well as the paucity of research on immigration to other Eastern bloc countries – the East German experience of immigration needs to be viewed within the broader European historical context in order to identify its unique and common features. Despite all the attempts of the SED to present its system of foreign labour as something radically unique in the German context, the characteristics of contract labour greatly resembled the early stages of the West German *Gastarbeiter* programme in that workers were recruited on the basis of bilateral agreements, had little say in where they worked or lived, and were expected to return home after completing their contracts. Indeed, the terms "contract worker" and the references to training in the labour agreements were deliberately designed to conceal the primary reason behind the labour exchange programmes, which was East Germany's economic self-interest. The exploitation of some workers was arguably far greater than in the West, as shown by the example of Mozambican contract workers, who unknown to themselves, were working to reconcile their country's debt with the GDR. East German policy was also extremely resistant to change or reform and a defining characteristic of the GDR's policy on foreign labour was the steadfast refusal to abandon the rotation principle or to consider long-term or open-ended labour immigration. Such a move would have made economic sense, as employers in West Germany learned in the 1950s and 1960s. Labour rotation was costly and disruptive but the security and ideological principles upon which the East German state was built could never have envisaged or coped with any fundamental liberalisation of immigration policy.

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[3] Thomas Lindenberger and Martin Sabrow, "Das Findelkind der Zeitgeschichte", in: *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12 Nov. 2003.

The existence of racism in the GDR also places it within the mainstream of European history. Despite the SED's repeated but erroneous proclamations that racism had been expunged from the GDR, East Germany was not unique in this regard in the broader European context. Of particular interest are the complex forms in which racism was denied and expressed throughout the forty year history of the state. At one extreme were the public and violent attacks on foreigners, at the other the covert institutional racism of bureaucrats at various levels. In between these two poles was the passive racist prejudice of wide sections of the population. Although officials rarely made use of explicit racist terminology in written correspondence, chauvinism was widespread and expressed within the parameters of discourse acceptable to the party. Thus, racism was often concealed behind "culturalist" arguments which essentialised cultural differences. Yet, unlike its modern variant, this "culturalism" in the GDR was not couched in religious terms but rather in the political and ideological language of the SED. Given the party's tendency to equate the concept of socialism with concepts of the nation, national "traits", patriotism and the "positive" inheritance of German (and Prussian) history, alleged anti-socialist behaviour on the part of foreigners could easily be construed as "un-German" conduct and vice versa.

This thesis has tried to make a small contribution to a deepened understanding of the history of migration in post-war Europe, taking East Germany as its focus. That the system of contract labour died with the GDR is a good thing. Yet, it is important to stress that the *Wende* impacted massively and disproportionately on the contract workers who remained in eastern Germany. Contract workers were the first to lose their jobs in the inevitable restructuring of the economy, and they became the targets of unprecedented levels of racial hatred as East Germans recovered from the honeymoon of unification. Greatly adding to their sense of vulnerability was the determination of the federal government to repatriate all remaining former contract workers. Many were deported and only after years of uncertainty did the remaining Vietnamese receive long-term residency permits.

The experience of migrants was a varied one, mirroring the complexities of GDR history in its totality. Foreigners were a feature of daily life in the GDR but restrictive state immigration policy, in particular the austere application of the rotation principle, prevented the emergence of stable and long-term migrant communities, frustrated the formation of binational friendships and relationships, and retarded the development of greater multicultural understanding. The SED never intended migration to be anything more than a temporary phenomenon and wide sections of the population adapted

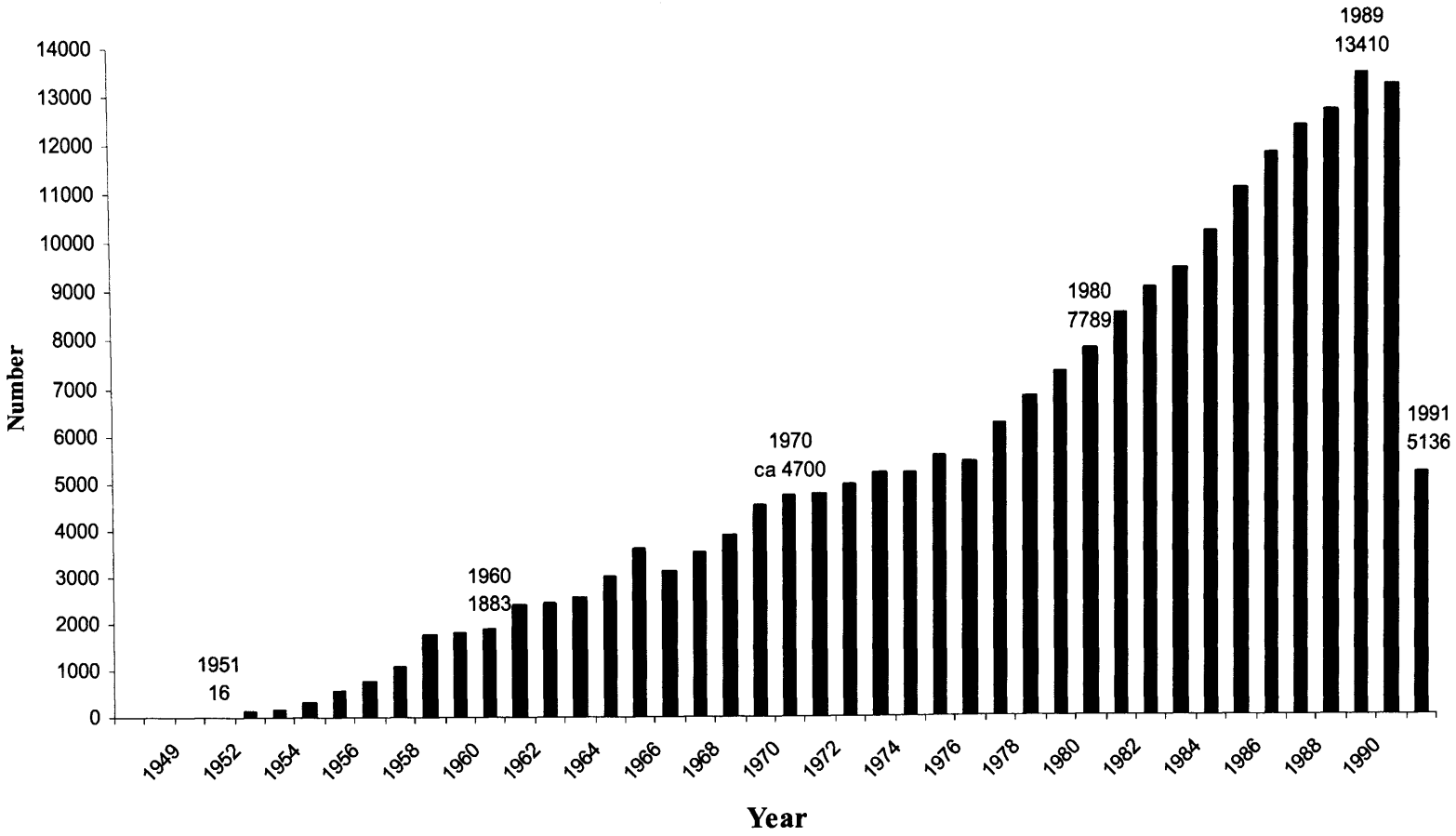
themselves to this reality. Yet, life in the GDR had its positive and negative aspects for international students and contract workers. Ideally, this work could have relied more on primary historical material produced by the migrants themselves but this material does not exist, however. Undoubtedly, an oral history project, particularly involving the students and workers who left the GDR before 1989, would provide a whole range of insights and views on life in the GDR that cannot be found in East German archival material. Yet, oral history is of limited value unless couched within a broader historical framework, which this study provides.

Diagram 1. Statistical overview of the transit and contract workers in the GDR, 1966-1989

	Poland (transit)	Hungary (contract)	Poland (contract)	Algeria (contract)	Cuba (contract)	Mozambique (contract)	Vietnam (contract)	Angola (contract)	N. Korea (contract)	China (contract)
	1966-1991	1967-1983	1971-1991	1974-1984	1978-1989	1979-1990	1980-1990	1985-1990	1986-1989	1986-1989
1966										
1967		2.447								
1968										
1969	4.000	7.100								
1970		9.841								
1971			3.318							
1972	3.890	9.234	6.961							
1973			6.506							
1974			7.006	560						
1975			7.270	3.820						
1976		6.432	6.318	3.980						
1977				3.980						
1978				4.740	1.196					
1979	3.287	3.593	6.900	3.300	4.112	447				
1980	3.200		6.100	3.190	5.553	2.723	1.540			
1981	3.200		5.200	3.539	5.725	5.707	5.040			
1982				2.760	6.846	5.000	9.600			
1983				2.060	6.586	5.349	10.298			
1984	4.091		7.480	890	6.700	5.584	10.000			
1985					9.557	4.742	10.038	312		
1986					11.858	7.687	8.459			
1987	3.330		7.478		12.492	10.300	20.776	500		
1988			5.519		9.977	16.000	50.998	1.240		905
1989	2.500		3.500		8.317	15.495	59.686	1.656	870	905
Cumulative total: 218,841 (est.)	***5,000***	**42,443**	***55,000***	**7,991**	***18,318***	**22,188**	**69,690**	**1,426**	**870**	**905**

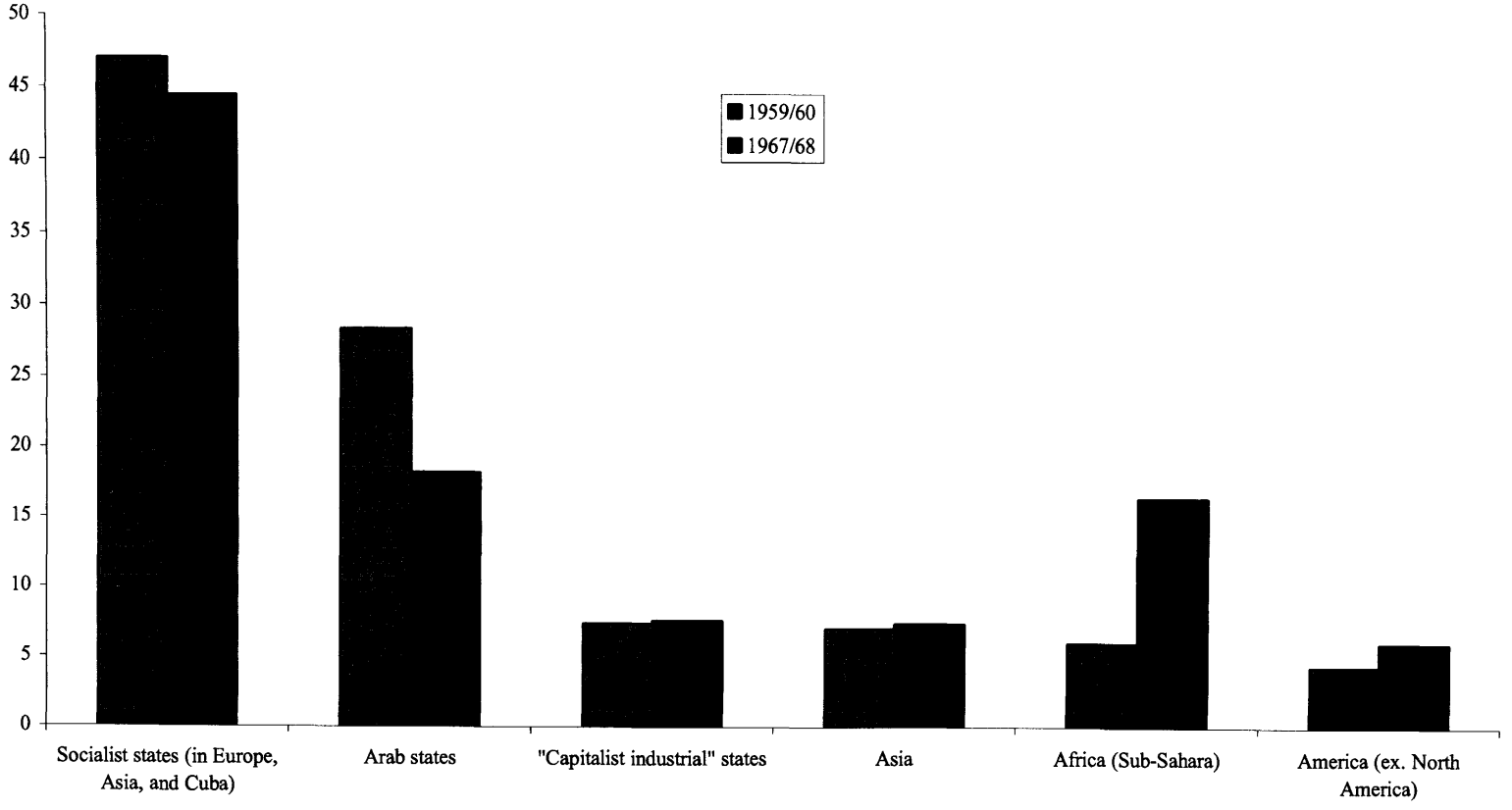
Note: The figures in italics are estimates of the total number of workers from the corresponding country to have worked in the GDR. These statistics have been compiled using numerous archival and secondary sources.

Diagram 2. International students in the GDR (1951-1991) and in eastern Germany (1991)



Source: Compiled using GDR statistical material from BArch DR 3/1. Schicht/151, /1484, /1847, /1936/1, /2836; DR 3/2. Schicht/4067, 4068; and SAPMO BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/466.

Diagram 3. Comparative geographical breakdown of international students in the GDR in percentages (academic years 1959/60 and 1967/68)



Source: BArch, DR 3/1. Schicht/1847 and 2836. Statistik der Studierenden, Stand vom 1 Jun. 1960 (1883 students) und 10 Dec. 1967 (3867 students).

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/34.0/ Hauptabteilung Innere Angelegenheiten (HAIA)

DR 3. Staatsekretariat/Ministerium für Hoch- und Fachschulwesen
/1. Schicht/ SHF
/2. Schicht/ MHF

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