were causing concern in Brooklyn and Wiesbaden in the early 1980s.[54] In some respects, the final quinquennium of SED rule was a period of hope for the Witnesses in the face of continuing discrimination. Missionary activities were stepped up and, sensitive to external criticism and pressure, the SED was less draconian in its treatment of those refusing to do military service. Developments elsewhere raised spirits in the GDR. In Poland, small congresses were allowed from the early 1980s onwards and the final legalisation of the Witnesses occurred in May 1989. Disturbed by these trends, the MfS attempted to prevent East German Witnesses from meeting their Polish brethren. This was not always successful: in the summer of 1989, 150 Witnesses from the Karl-Marx-Stadt region attended international congresses in Poland.[55] However, the sect was not legalised in the GDR until March 1990 as the Witnesses lacked the political leverage of the Jewish communities and in the eyes of the SED and MfS, the sect was still too much of an exotic outsider and too closely linked to foreign agencies for recognition to be granted.

[54] MfS ZA, HA XX/AKG, no. 5495, pp. 28–30. The organisation calculated that membership had dropped slightly from 21,450 in 1975 to 20,000 in 1983. In January 1989, the Stasi estimated membership at around 21,700, half of whom lived in the Dresden and Karl-Marx-Stadt areas. On the numerical strength of the Witnesses, see Hacke G. 2000: 84 and MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 3733, 17 January 1989, p. 5.

[55] Hacke G. 2000: 92–3.

Chapter 11

ALTERNATIVE SUB-CULTURES

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL CULTURE

Of greater concern to the Stasi than the small religious communities and sects was the emergence towards the close of the 1970s of what can broadly be described as an alternative political culture which managed to find a relatively safe haven in the Protestant churches. Many emerged from existing circles and they recruited heavily from among the so-called GDR generation which had grown up in the shadow of the Berlin Wall. Members of this generation had been influenced by emancipatory tendencies in the West since the mid-1960s and by the democratic socialism of the Prague Spring. The autonomous groups constituted an 'alternative political culture' in that they articulated outside official channels a series of peace, ecological, women's, human rights, gay and Second/Third World issues. Because of the severe restrictions imposed by the SED and implemented, among other bodies, by the Stasi, autonomous activities in the public sphere were largely confined to the protected space afforded by the Protestant churches.

The autonomous groups tended to have a collective rather than a power-political orientation, to be reactive rather than proactive and to favour grass-roots democracy over parliamentary forms.[1] The thrust of their activities and programmes was for a reform of the existing system, not its overthrow. They wanted a democratic socialism which respected civil liberties but, with the exception of individuals such as the Naumburg theologian Edelbert Richter, little attempt was made to develop a theoretical framework. The Naumburg peace circle around Richter was one of the few groups to thematise the German question. Others who did so were the East Berlin pastor Rainer Eppelmann and Robert Havemann. In 1982, they issued the Berlin Appeal, in which they proposed the overcoming of the division of Germany as a prerequisite to the safeguarding of peace. However, the opposition groups

[1] Knabe H. 1990: 23.

were circumspect with respect to the German question as many had had no direct experience of the other part of Germany and the division of Germany into two states was by no means perceived in negative terms. A Europe without frontiers and some form of reformed socialism rather than a capitalist Germany had a more positive ring.[2]

Central to the alternative political culture was the issue of peace. Since 1978, when the introduction of compulsory pre-military education in schools for pupils aged 14–16 triggered off widespread protests on the part of the clergy and parents, the autonomous peace groups became more outspoken and peace initiatives attracted considerable popular interest.[3] The growth in activities and interest can be attributed not only to GDR-specific conditions such as the growing militarisation of life at school and in mass organisations such as the Society for Sport and Technology but also to the advent of a new ice age in East–West relations. Among the most significant initiatives for peace were the annual Dresden Peace Forum, which since 1982 attracted several thousand people, Peace Weeks and Peace Workshops. These events were not confined to peace groups: the Peace Workshop held at East Berlin's Church of the Redeemer in July 1983 was attended by women's, gay and ecology groups. Conscription was another controversial issue. Although conscripts were entitled by law to serve in a construction unit instead of performing formal military service, in 1981 a group in Dresden proposed the more radical idea of a community peace service as a truly civilian alternative to military service. This envisaged employment in homes for children, old people and the physically handicapped. The idea of a community peace service was part of an attempt to thematise political conditions in the GDR and indicate how conflicts could be overcome through various mechanisms, including peace education and the responsibility of individuals for peace. Another development was the establishment of small women's peace groups in several cities, notably the Women for Peace Group in East Berlin. The decisive impetus to the women's peace movement was given by the 1982 Military Service Law which provided for the conscription of women aged 18–50 in the event of an emergency.

Issues of peace fed into the broader stream of the denial of human rights, which included the highly sensitive matter of popular discontent with restrictions on travel. From about the mid-1980s, human and civil rights issues came to occupy a more prominent place within the alternative political culture and to attain a dynamic quality lacked by the single issue movements. The accession to power of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union in 1985 and efforts in Hungary and Poland to establish the roots of a civil society encouraged human rights activists in the GDR. A key role was played by the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights (IFM). Formed in late 1985, it numbered no

[2] Meckel M. and Gutzeit M. 1994: 69.
[3] See Sandford J. 1983.

more than 30 participants before the autumn of 1989.[4] However, the IFM, like so many of the other autonomous groups, was both small and largely isolated from society. A Stasi report of June 1989, indicated that there were only about 350 so-called opposition groups associated with the Protestant churches and an additional ten groups, such as the Church from Below, which performed a coordinating function. The Stasi reckoned with about 2,500 activists in these groups, 60 of whom were described as the hard core 'fanatical enemies' of socialism. This is probably too low a figure. Insider calculations suggest that the number of activists may have been between 10,000 and 15,000 but that the total number of groups was lower, around 320.[5] The limited appeal of the groups may be attributed in part to their relatively underdeveloped institutional and communication networks. This remained a serious problem despite the boost to networking in the 1980s by the formation of the Church from Below, the ecological network *Arche* and the environmental libraries in East Berlin, Leipzig and elsewhere.

THE STASI INTERVENES

Another reason for the groups' lack of popular support was the unwillingness of most citizens to involve themselves in such highly politicised issues as civil rights because of the risks to themselves, family members and their careers. Coercion, too, played its part: the MfS subjected the 'unpalatable' dissidents to regular surveillance, occasional detainment and expulsion, sometimes forcibly, to the West. Even by its own standards, MfS penetration of the groups was extremely thorough. Of the many examples which could be given, the following are typical. About 50 per cent of the IFM's members were IMs who sought to provoke unrest and dissension within the group as part of the decomposition strategy. Various members suffered arrest and expulsion from the GDR. Ibrahim Böhme and Wolfgang Schnur, two of the leading figures in the citizens' movements which in the autumn of 1989 helped to sweep the SED from power, were unveiled in 1990 as long-standing Stasi informers. One tragic case was the revelation after the East German revolution that Vera Wollenberger's husband, Knud (IM 'Donald'), the son of a distinguished Jewish academic, had been reporting not only on her peace and ecological activities but also on the details of their private life. Ironically, other Stasi agents, not knowing that IM 'Donald' was one of them, were describing him to their superiors as a 'negative, hostile element'. As with the IFM, Stasi agents sought to undermine the effectiveness of the groups by, for example, inciting divisive internal discussions and conflicts and by encouraging radical activities in order to provoke counteraction by the state authorities. Many groups collapsed because members suspected that the Stasi was 'among them'.

[4] Templin W. and Weißhuhn R. 1991: 150–51.
[5] Deutscher Bundestag VII/I 1995: 690–91.

From the point of view of the regime and the Stasi, the autonomous groups constituted a particularly threatening form of hostile-negative activity as part of the so-called political underground. Mielke had no doubt that they were 'sworn enemies of socialism' and that political police measures were required to deal with them.[6] Although the major responsibility for combating the groups was assigned to Main Department XX and its various territorial organs, other units were also enlisted according to their specific areas of operation. Thus Main Department I was empowered to uncover and prevent the spread of 'pacifist and pseudo-pacifist' views among the armed forces.[7] The Stasi perceived the groups, whether peace, ecological or human rights, as forming a counterculture to that of the monistic SED system, enjoying close contacts with like-minded organisations in the West and abusing the space afforded by the churches for internal activities. Yet, given the small size of the groups, their fragile relations with the Church and the high level of infiltration by the Stasi, they hardly posed an immediate threat to SED rule even though Stasi reports abounded with references to their allegedly deep-seated hostility to the GDR state.

YOUTH AS A SOCIETAL PROBLEM

Although public statements by the SED on East German youth were usually full of praise for their commitment to the GDR and its socialist system, young people were nevertheless regarded as a major problem by both party and Stasi. A service instruction issued by Mielke in 1966, which remained in force for the following two decades, bears telling testimony to the deep-lying distrust and suspicion of youth as well as shedding light on the reasons behind the ministry's apprehension. According to the document,[8] the 'lack of experience of life, ignorance of the capitalist system, desire for adventure, being easily influenced, excessive self-confidence' and other characteristics of some young East Germans made them vulnerable to the machinations of the imperialist enemy. The latter sought to sow mistrust between young people and the state, undermine their belief in the future of socialist society and spread decadent ideas through the illegal distribution of Western literature, personal contacts and West German television and radio programmes. These 'focused' activities by the enemy promoted, according to the Stasi, flight from the GDR, arson in the factories, disturbances of the peace, 'alcohol abuse at so-called parties' and 'the adoption of certain forms of Western decadence, clothing and behaviour of a range of young people'.

6 Besier G. and Wolf S. 1992: 73.
7 See Mielke's service instruction of February 1985, printed in Fricke K. W. 1991: 146–63.
8 The following quotations in this paragraph are from Süß W. 1996: 55–8.

PUNKS – TURNING MIELKE'S HAIR WHITE

While Honecker's SED managed to keep the lid on the younger generation through a mixture of intensive political socialisation, the dense network of FDJ, GST and other state organisations, the enticement of apprenticeships and job opportunities as well as concessions in the pop music sphere, both the party and the Stasi looked aghast at the emergence in the early 1980s of unconventional fringe youth sub-cultures consisting of new romantics, poppers, punks, heavy metals, goths and skinheads. These developments in the GDR lagged slightly in time behind the Western fashions in dress, music and haircut which punks and skinheads sought to imitate. As one 15-year-old female punk stated in a 1982 interview: 'I got used to being a punk when I saw a few from over there [West Germany], I liked how they were dressed'.[9] The East German sub-cultures soon acquired typical characteristics: the 'no future' punks 'dropped out', goths dressed in black attire, engaged in the irrational, and shaven-head skinheads wore bomber jackets and combat boots. Whereas punks arrived on the scene shortly before the militant skinheads, the latter were more significant by the mid- to late 1980s and loathed the unkempt punks' life-style and alleged pacifism. In the early phase until about 1985–86, these sub-cultures, notably the punks, were essentially an unpolitical and uncoordinated form of protest against conformity, consumerism and restrictions on self-expression and individuality in a state which in the eyes of many of the younger generation was becoming increasingly anachronistic.[10]

According to a Stasi report in 1981, there were around 1,000 punks with about 10,000 sympathisers in the GDR. Three years later, the figure had dropped to about 900, of which 400 were to be found in East Berlin, 95 in Leipzig and 60 each in Magdeburg and Cottbus.[11] These are only estimates as the boundaries between punks, skinheads, heavy metals and others were fluid and turnover rapid. Many skinheads were recruited from among the punks and punk bands often used elements of ska music. Security officers intent on classifying punks must have scratched their heads at the diversity with which they were confronted: 'grimy' punks, Nazi punks and fashion punks as well as black eagles. The so-called 'grimy' punks recoiled against conventional standards of cleanliness and the black eagles were football fans who wore a black scarf to denote their anarchist inclinations. They attended the matches of BFC Dynamo and from about 1982–83 drifted into the violent elements associated with the rightist skinheads.[12] Punk began to lose its drive by the middle of the 1980s and in early 1989, the majority of Regional Administrations reported a continuing fall in numbers.[13]

9 Interview in Furian G. and Becker N. 2000: 11. Our translation.
10 Korfes G. 1990: 6; also Büscher W. and Wensierski P. 1984: 35–6.
11 Michael K. 1999: 74; MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 3326, 'Informationen', 1984, p. 4.
12 Horschig M. 1999: 21–2.
13 MfS Aussenstelle Halle, Abteilung XX, no. 774, 'Information', 1989, p. 20.

The MfS looked with revulsion on all punks. In MfS reports, they are usually associated with 'degeneracy' in their external appearance, with safety pins through noses, 'scruffy, sometimes torn, dirty or greasy clothes – conspicuous, usually dyed hair, conspicuous haircuts (Mohican cut, hair sticking out) and with an aggressive, provocative manner'.[14] A Mohican hairstyle was often sufficient for a punk to be hauled into custody by the police. The MfS also believed that Western political-ideological diversion had managed to turn many punks against the political and social order of the GDR, as allegedly exemplified by the punks' identification with bourgeois concepts of freedom and 'pseudo-pacifist' and left-radical ideas.[15] A further source of Stasi antipathy was punks' disdain for regular employment and their withdrawal from the Free German Youth and the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions (FDGB), thereby infringing the socialist work ethic as well as undermining the effectiveness of the workplace and the youth organisation as instruments of political control. Thomas Bautzer, a former punk, reckons that frustration with life and work was why he became a punk:

> I had to go to work, get up at 4.30 every day. 6 o'clock at the docks, every day the same idiots . . . and repulsive old men who I had to spend the whole day with. It made me feel sick.[16]

The punks were contemptuous of the aridity of GDR rock music and turned to the anti-dancing pogo and primitive unmelodic lines. They saw no future in either capitalism or, unlike many peace and human rights activists, any form of reformed socialism.[17] Lines like 'Observed, denounced, controlled. What has he done?' by the Dresden band *Letzte Diagnose* were a political provocation to the Stasi 'pigs'.[18] All of this does not mean, however, that punks were necessarily apathetic and resigned. Punks as outsiders and as provocateurs are fondly remembered by a former GDR punk, Mario Schulz:

> It started with me liking the music. I didn't understand the English lyrics but living the life of an outsider, the in-your-face existence – I liked that. I had always been a stroppy little yob. That's why I became a punk.[19]

Commenting on the politicisation of punk in the mid-1980s, for instance into left- and fasco-punks, he asserted:

> That did not mean anything. We would have stuck a picture of Adolf Hitler or Lenin on our jackets but only to shock people, not because we were outsiders, we were in the business of shocking people . . .[20]

[14] MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 3366, 'Information', 1986, p. 8. Our translation.
[15] MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 3366, 'Information', 1986, p. 5.
[16] Written statement in Furian G. and Becker N. 2000: 88. Our translation.
[17] Michael K. 1999: 72–3.
[18] MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 3366, 'Information', 1986, p. 30.
[19] 1999 interview in Furian G. and Becker N. 2000: 85. Our translation.
[20] Ibid., 85. Our translation.

Until the skinhead problem became critical towards the end of the 1980s, Western political-ideological diversion provided the standard explanation – and alibi – for the troublesome youth sub-cultures. Accordingly, the MfS tracked with its usual diligence the links with the Operation Area, above all the impact of the electronic media and individual contacts between Eastern and Western punks in restaurants, clubs, parks and private apartments. Operational cases carried out by the Regional Administrations in Potsdam, Dresden and Leipzig in 1985 detected personal links between GDR punk bands such as *Paranoia*, *Schleim-keim* and *L'Attentat* and punks from West Germany. Records, cassettes and fanzines were exchanged.[21]

REPRESSION

The state authorities moved with alacrity against the punks. In 1981, a campaign of repression was launched by the Criminal Police, which failed, however, to stem their appeal. The campaign involved arrests, interrogations and harsh prison sentences.[22] One former punk describes a raid on an apartment in East Berlin, which was a meeting place for punks:

> The police stormed in, they locked us all in a room, then chose one and took him into the kitchen where he was beaten up by several pigs. They grabbed the next one and dragged him into the kitchen. By the time it was over they had beaten up and taken away everybody, including the girls. During the journey to the police station they were beaten on the back seats of the huge numbers of police vans that had turned up and then for half the night in the police station they were threatened and beaten. I came home late that day and found the flat in a catastrophic state. The whole kitchen, cupboards, curtains, cooker, walls, and even the ceilings, were spattered with blood . . . The people who had been beaten up were between 15 and 18 years of age. Taking legal proceedings against the police would have been a mockery.[23]

As part of the general offensive, the MfS, police and other state institutions were authorised in 1984 to keep a detailed record of the situation among negative-decadent young people; two years later, this brief was extended to include unregistered punk bands.[24] The MfS also began to ban those punk groups which it judged to be hostile to the Constitution and the social and political order of the GDR. Six bands were closed down in 1983, including the East Berlin band *namenlos*, which had been the target of an operational case. Its members were arrested in August 1983 and sentenced to between 12 and 18 months' imprisonment for disparaging the state.[25] Contacts with the Western

[21] MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 3366, 'Information', 1986, pp. 15, 19.
[22] Horschig M. 1999: 23–4.
[23] Ibid., 24–5. Our translation.
[24] Michael K. 1999: 77.
[25] Ibid., 78.

media were severely punished. In his study of punks in the GDR, Klaus Michael has shown that punks were more likely to be punished according to the GDR's penal code than were members of the political opposition and the basic groups, mainly because the punks' plight received less attention in the Western media or support from the Protestant churches.[26] Relations between punks and the churches as well as with the peace and ecological groups ran far from smoothly. Punks were too strikingly different in appearance, attitude, language and behaviour, even though opposition to the state sometimes paved the way for joint actions like the laying of wreaths.[27] Towards the end of the 1980s, as punks came increasingly under attack from extremist skinheads, some punks became involved in the activities of the Church from Below and the alternative peace groups.[28] Much to the annoyance of the Stasi, punk bands like *Rosa Extra* and *L'Attentat* were allowed to perform on church premises and the Protestant churches provided some help for punks who were victimised by the state. However, many church officials, to say nothing of members of the congregation, were less than enthusiastic about having punks in their midst.[29]

The MfS actively sought to subvert the punks.[30] Not only were they hounded into leaving the country and frequently called up to serve in the NVA reserves but they were also recruited as IMs to report on other punks and the alternative cultural scene in general. Although the MfS appreciated that enlisting punks as informers was difficult on account of what the ministry described as their relatively close feeling of solidarity, it was able to catch two big fish, Frank Zappe and Iman Abdul-Majid. They collaborated with the MfS for several years during the 1980s. Abdul-Majid, the son of an Iraqi resident in Leipzig, was a key figure in the Leipzig punk bands *Wutanfall* and *L'Attentat* and was recruited in 1982 as a Criminal Police informer before registering as IM 'Dominique' four years later. By doing so, he hoped to speed up his application to leave the GDR. Although not a punk himself, Sören Naumann, the manager of the Dresden punk bands *Dresdner Musikbrigade* and *Fabrik*, was deployed as an IM in the city's alternative cultural scene. As was the case with some of the small human rights groups, one punk band in Jena consisted almost entirely of IMs. Taking advantage of help from the youth pastor, Ulrich Kasparick, who allowed them to use church rooms, they undermined his work with Dresden's peace and human rights groups. Their noise, drunkenness and damage to property led to so many complaints from the public that an exhausted Kasparick gave up his post.

While several punk bands were able to re-establish themselves after being banned, springing up like 'mushrooms from the ground'[31] and some East

[26] Michael K. 1999: 78–9.
[27] Horschig M. 1999: 28–9.
[28] Wagner B. 1995: 46.
[29] Horschig M. 1999: 30–32.
[30] On the Stasi's methods, see Michael K. 1999: 80–83.
[31] Interview in Furian G. and Becker N. 2000: 22.

German punk music found its way to the West on cassettes and records, by the mid-1980s punk was losing many of its innovative and subversive impulses. This can be attributed in part to MfS coercion. One former member of the punk band *namenlos*, Jana Schloßer, recalls that when she came out of prison in 1984 things had already changed as the Stasi had just about managed to smash punk.[32] But clashes over the direction of the punk 'movement' also contributed to the decline. Whereas some groups were tempted by new opportunities, albeit very limited, for officially tolerated but relatively harmless punk music, others adhered to Bert Papenfuß's insistence on maintaining their artistic autonomy and aggressive lyrics.[33]

SKINHEADS IN THE GDR

At the beginning of the 1980s, Western skinhead music, dress and militancy began to appeal to young East Germans among punks, heavy metal fans and soccer hooligans in East Berlin, Potsdam and some other cities. As with the punks, this was, at first, a cultural, not a conscious political tendency. GDR skinheads soon adopted the attire of their British and West German contemporaries: tight-fitting jeans, braces, a black, green or orange bomber jacket, a shaven head and highly polished Doc Marten boots. As many of the standard accessories could only be acquired via personal contacts in the West, youngsters often had to content themselves with more conventional sporting attire. Clashes between skinheads and what they denigrated as the smelly, dirty, lazy and pacifist punks were often fierce contests over hegemony in the alternative sub-cultures. By the later 1980s, the skinheads had undoubtedly gained the upper hand not only over the punks but also more easy targets such as the goths. The macho aggressiveness of the violent skinheads was encapsulated in the phrase 'Where words don't help, the fist will'.[34] Extremist incidents were not confined to the GDR's final decade. Ross and Waibel have also unearthed a wide range of offences which occurred in the first three decades of the GDR, albeit on a minor scale. These included the daubing of swastika graffiti on school and factory walls and the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in Potsdam, Dresden and East Berlin.[35] Nor were the NVA and the MfS right-extremist free zones. Between 1965 and 1980, over 700 right-extremist incidents were registered in the ranks of the Stasi and the army.[36] Some militants were imprisoned and several were deported to the West. In 1968, the West German government bought the 20-year-old Arnulf Winfried Priem

[32] Interview in Furian G. and Becker N. 2000: 106.
[33] Michael K. 1999: 90.
[34] Hockenos P. 1993: 74–5.
[35] Ross G. C. 2000: 86.
[36] Madloch N. 2000: 69–70.

out of his GDR prison. He would become one of Germany's most notorious militant extremists.[37]

During the 1980s, the incidence of right extremist violence and crime increased sharply. According to statistics of the Criminal Police, such offences rose five-fold between 1983 and 1987.[38] Another significant development was the evolution of a rudimentary organisational structure.[39] Relatively tightly organised and small militant groups such as the Lichtenberg Front, founded in 1986, were far less common, however, than the informal groupings and cliques which gathered in pubs, youth clubs and at discos and football grounds. The Lichtenberg Front, which was named after a working-class district in East Berlin, was constituted as a *Kameradschaft* or clandestine brotherhood. Later, in 1988, two prominent right-extremists, Ingo Hasselbach and André Riechert, founded 'The 30 January Movement', which, according to the former, was the first neo-Nazi party in the GDR. It was dissolved by the MfS in March 1989.

At the end of December 1987, the Stasi's Regional Administration in East Berlin reported that 17 IMs, together with informers attached to the Criminal Police, were involved in operations against skinheads and that, through closer cooperation between the Stasi and the police, the number of incidents had fallen at football matches in the capital during the 1987–88 season.[40] Eleven skinhead groupings were deemed to be operationally significant, ranging in size from a very loosely organised group of eight in Hellersdorf to the 17 members of the 'Sandow' group in the Lichtenberg district.[41] The skinheads' feeling of solidarity was reinforced by their distinctive attire and music as well as by their macho behaviour. Acts of violence were usually committed in a group where the pressure to conform was intense. Pumped up by alcohol, the skinheads chanted their battle cry 'Oi, Oi, Oi' and fascist-type slogans such as 'Heil Hitler!' and 'Germany Awake!'. One skinhead informer – IMS 'Diana Wolf' – told her controller in September 1986 that she became a skinhead in Hennigsdorf after her release from Bautzen prison in April because:

> . . . being a skin[head] means respect and recognition for me but also power and strength. I am respected in the group and I have a good feeling . . . Previously no one took the slightest notice of me, but now that I've got a bald head and the clothes they all look at me. That's brilliant and exciting.[42]

The MfS classified the skinheads as a 'negative-decadent force' and regarded them as 'under control' and, initially at least, as a less serious threat than the

[37] Schmidt M. 1993: 61–2.
[38] Ross G. C. 2000: 89.
[39] Ibid., 76–8; Wagner B. 1995: 71–2; Süß W. 1996: 24–5.
[40] MfS ZA, HA XXII, no. 17625, 'Einschätzung', 1987, pp. 120–21.
[41] Ibid., 125–6.
[42] MfS ZA, JHS, no. 21598, 1989, p. 78. Our translation.

punks. The greater tolerance afforded the skinheads was determined in part by the overlap between the martial and authoritarian values of ministry staff and many of the skinheads. In a letter of 7 July 1986 to the leaders of service units, Mittig stressed that political-operational measures against negative-decadent young people should focus on punks.[43] Given the rudimentary organisation and the low number of skinheads – about 38 groupings and approximately 800 skinheads in December 1987[44] – the MfS and the Criminal Police were not unduly concerned about the skinhead problem. In an assessment of youth crime between 1984 and 1986, the Criminal Police reported little evidence of the spread of neo-Nazi ideas and the glorification of fascism.[45]

THE ZIONSKIRCHE INCIDENTS

The security forces' complacency would be shaken by the growing politicisation of sections of the skinhead scene and then shattered by the Zionskirche incidents on the night of 30 October 1987. About 30 well-inebriated skinhead extremists, after attending the FC Union and Lok Leipzig football match and the birthday celebrations of one of the GDR's most militant extremists, Ronny Busse, attacked visitors at an evening rock and punk concert at the run-down church in the Prenzlauer Berg district of East Berlin. One of their goals was to exact revenge on the punks for alleged insults on the previous day at a youth centre in the capital. Screaming 'Sieg Heil!', 'Jewish pigs!', 'Stasi bastards!' and 'skinhead power!' and singing the Horst Wessel song, the yobs attacked members of the audience with bottles and bicycle chains before, outnumbered, they were repulsed by punks. The police did not respond until several emergency calls alerted local police stations to the brawl. By the time the patrol cars arrived, the violence had ended and it was not deemed necessary for the police to take further action. Among the skinheads from West Berlin was André Riechert, whose father was a Stasi officer with responsibility for combating right extremism.[46] The clash at the Zionskirche was not an isolated incident. A few days later, skinheads from Veltin and Oranienburg demolished a restaurant in Veltin and beat up guests.[47] While the Stasi had been taking a keener interest in skinheads since 1986, their brutal behaviour at the Zionskirche finally prompted SED and Stasi leaders into a concerted campaign against skinheads. The authorities were most

[43] The letter is printed in Süß W. 1996: 69.
[44] MfS ZA, HA XXII, no. 17625, 'Einschätzung', 1987, p. 139. The Stasi estimated that there were 350 skinheads and 200 sympathisers in East Berlin in 1987 compared to 80 persons in 1986 and 50 in 1985.
[45] MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 772, 'Information', p. 89.
[46] See MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1588, 'Urteil. In Namen des Volkes!', pp. 29–49; also Hockenos P. 1993: 79–80; Waibel H. 1996: 56–7.
[47] Madloch N. 2000: 74.

anxious, however, that the right extremist character of the militants was concealed under the cloak of charges of excessive hooliganism.

SMASHING THE SKINHEADS

The files of the MfS, the Criminal Police, the Ministry of the Interior and the SED amply demonstrate the authorities' determination to erase the skinhead problem. On 11 November 1987, all MfS Regional Administrations were instructed by Kienberg, the head of Main Department XX, to compile comprehensive reports on all known skinheads.[48] Main Departments IX and XX played a key role in coordinating the plethora of countermeasures: the identification of the ring leaders and the militant skins; the initiation of preliminary criminal proceedings; the deportation of skinheads to the West; and tighter restrictions on the entry into the GDR of Western skinheads and well-known neo-Nazis. Some of the main Zionskirche offenders were brought to trial before an invited audience in order to demonstrate the state's determination to deal with 'trouble-making yobs' and as a warning to others. In the case of the first four offenders tried before the district court in East Berlin, the original sentences of between one and two years imposed in December 1987 were increased to between one-and-a-half and four years' imprisonment. The decision to increase the sentences, especially that against Busse, was influenced by public indignation,[49] and was agreed between Krenz and the State Prosecutor, Günter Wendland. Permission to publish details of the harsher sentences in a press release was secured from Honecker.[50] A subsequent trial in January 1988 of a further eight perpetrators brought sentences of between one year and three months and three years.

The crackdown was tightened several notches with the Politbüro decision on 2 February 1988 to tackle 'anti-socialist manifestations' among the country's youth.[51] This was underlined by Mittig's highly confidential letter of the same day concerning further measures to suppress 'rowdiness' among young people with neo-fascist views.[52] The determination to stamp out skinhead violence and expressions of right extremism quickly led to the arrest of skinheads for the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in East Berlin and elsewhere, for assaults on African contract workers in Dresden and Halle and for painting graffiti on the walls of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Between late November 1987 and July 1988, 49 skinheads were sentenced in nine separate trials.[53]

[48] Kienberg's circular is printed in Süß W. 1996: 74 7.
[49] MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1588, 1987, p. 12.
[50] See Wendland's letter to Krenz on 4 December 1987 in MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 9875, pp. 3, 5–6.
[51] MfS ZA, JHS, no. 21433, 1989, p. 13.
[52] Süß W. 1996: 87.
[53] Hockenos P. 1993: 84; Waibel H. 1996: 56–8; Ross G. C. 2000: 137–8.

The 'show trials' were accompanied by a media campaign, which the MfS had belatedly concluded was essential for combating right extremism. For example, the *Neue Berliner Illustrierte* magazine ran a lengthy feature on five teenagers who, between January and March 1988, had damaged 222 gravestones in the Jewish cemetery in East Berlin's Schönhauser Allee. They were sentenced to between two-and-a-half and six-and-a-half years' imprisonment. Following the regime's standard interpretation, their distorted ideology with its fascist-like elements was attributed to West German TV and radio programmes.[54] Despite the recognition of the need for an improved coverage in the media of the problem of skinhead militancy, this kind of reporting highlights the SED's reluctance to allow a frank public debate on the causes of right extremism. The party's preferred line was to depict it as a form of serious rowdiness committed by anti-social elements. The Stasi, too, adhered to this line. In an appendix to Mittig's letter of 2 February 1988 reference is made to the need for public campaigns, like the show trials, to demonstrate that: 'instances of neo-fascism and nationalism are alien to socialism and the causes are rooted in the imperialist system and it is the influence on individuals of neo-fascist elements from the FRG that give rise to these phenomena in the GDR'.[55] The sooner the militant skinheads were knocked out, so the MfS and the SED calculated, the less would be the damage to the GDR's reputation as a socialist society where the preconditions for the revival of the swastika had been eliminated.

IMs were integral to the battle against right extremism. In December 1987, the MfS East Berlin Regional Administration used 17 agents in operations against skinheads; 60 per cent had been recruited in 1986 and 1987.[56] Their tasks were to identify right extremists and to provide information relating to their links with like-minded persons in the West, their meeting places as well as their organisational structure, goals and actions. Youthful extremists provided the main source of IMs, although the Stasi was averse to recruiting those with firm neo-fascist views. Several dissertations written by Stasi officers as part of their programme of studies at the Stasi Law School in Potsdam provide an invaluable insight into MfS thinking on the recruitment and deployment of 'negative-decadent' IMs.[57] Experience had shown that the young IMs, preferably aged 17 to 25 years, could be recruited by playing on their sense of adventure, expectations of material advantage and the ministry's intervention on their behalf in the courts of law or at work. Commitment to the socialist cause was not expected to be a significant motive, although an appeal to what skinheads regarded as typical German virtues, such as a sense

[54] *Neue Berliner Illustrierte*, no. 29, 1988, pp. 28–9.
[55] Süß W. 1996: 96. Our translation.
[56] MfS ZA, HA XXII, no. 17625, 'Einschätzung', 1987, p. 147.
[57] See, for example, MfS ZA, VVS JHS, no. 689/70, 1979, pp. 7–9, 21–2 and MfS ZA, VVS 001/105/79, 1979, p. 21.

of duty, steadfastness and loyalty, was seen as an effective lever. Although some 'negative-decadent' IMs were recruited while in prison, the Stasi was not keen on this route as many terminated the contact after their release. As 'negative-decadent' IMs were regarded as highly unstable and often lacking in self-confidence, good work was to be praised and every effort made to ensure that the IM trusted and respected the authority of the controller. In addition to the danger of the informers' cover being broken by indiscretions on the part of the IMs, the Stasi was also concerned about them becoming involved in violent actions. The IMs, it was appreciated, might be unable to withdraw from scenes of violence as it would attract suspicion and put them at risk. However, they were not expected to initiate violence and they could not be guaranteed blanket immunity from prosecution for certain types of acts, particularly if other members of the group were also imprisoned.

THE SKINHEADS AND RIGHT EXTREMISM

The right extremist potential was a cause for great concern, not only in terms of the rising numbers but also because the embryonic right-extremist ideology threatened to undermine the GDR's self-legitimation as an anti-fascist state. With the quickening of the authorities' interest in skinheads, studies were conducted in the later 1980s by sociologists, the MfS and the Criminal Police which, together with records of interrogations and personal recollections, document the extremists' values and attitudes. By the time of the Zionskirche events, a hybrid of xenophobia, nationalism and anti-communism had begun to take shape. A Stasi internal report of February 1988 points to the centrality of a pronounced German nationalism among skinheads as an antidote to Communism. Germanness (*Deutschtum*) was associated with being strong as well as being productive and disciplined at work. In parenthesis, it should be noted that in East Berlin Germanness sometimes manifested itself in the form of a Prussianism which targeted not only foreigners but Saxons and Mecklenburgers too. Skinheads were highly critical of the poor work discipline and wastage in the state socialist economy as can be seen in the statement by one skinhead that: 'I go to work regularly and am of the opinion that I am industrious and do good work. That is the thing which marks out a genuine skin[head]. I belong to a group where every member acts just like that. On the whole, we are industrious and cannot stand shirkers and parasites at work'.[58] On the other hand, not all skinheads were dedicated workers. The report of the Criminal Police in the Cottbus region noted, as part of a preliminary criminal investigation involving eight skinheads, that most missed shifts and performed badly at work and in their apprentice collectives.[59] As one skinhead stated:

[58] Cited in Kinner K. and Richter R. 2000: 280–81.
[59] MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1278, 'Auswertungsbericht', 6 May 1988, p. 2.

> I didn't like going to work. In November/December 1987 I didn't turn up for work for about two weeks. I usually slept at [name blacked out]'s house and he didn't have an alarm clock and didn't go to work either. So I stayed in bed like him.[60]

While some skinheads acknowleged that life in the GDR was relatively secure, the Stasi realised that most of them supported German unification and the restoration of a powerful German Reich within the borders of 1937. They admired the discipline, order and national pride allegedly prevalent in the Third Reich as well as the heroism of German soldiers during the Second World War. The skinheads' views were by no means uniform: whereas some glorified fascism and the concentration camps, others rejected the crimes of fascism and the launching of world war.[61] One 21-year-old skinhead hailed Hitler and Goebbels as 'great personalities' but criticised the Second World War as 'senseless'.[62]

The militant skinheads' feverish nationalism was combined with a visceral dislike of foreigners, who were accused of bringing AIDS into the GDR, living comfortably at the expense of East Germans, treating German women as prostitutes and depriving the local people of consumer items. The escalation of the number of contract workers from 1986 onwards fuelled the extremists' prejudices and prompted brutal attacks like that on a Mozambican in Halle, for which five youths were sentenced in April 1988.[63] One skinhead told the Cottbus police that:

> There is a whole housing complex with negroes and a house full of Poles in Hoyerswerda. If these people weren't there everybody in Hoyerswerda would have a flat, which is not the case just now. I am in favour of violence against foreigners. Somebody has just got to chuck them out. We skinheads feel it is our job to do it.[64]

An apprentice at the lignite works in Jänschwalde was equally extreme in his views: 'And what's more, negroes rape our girls and women and the Poles buy everything there is in our shops'.[65] Homosexuals and Jews were rejected as 'non-German'. Under police cross-examination, one skinhead claimed that during the Third Reich communists and socialists should have been gassed or shot like the Jews.[66] However, while not all skinheads approved of the mass

[60] MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1278, 'Vernehmungsprotokoll', 18 February 1988, p. 78. Our translation.
[61] MfS ZA, HA XXII, no. 17625, 'Einschätzung', 1987, p. 142 and MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1278, 'Auswertungsbericht', 1988, p. 3.
[62] MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1278, 'Befragungsprotokoll', 30 December 1987, p. 83.
[63] Madloch N. 2000: 86.
[64] MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1278, 'Befragungsprotokoll', 7 April 1988, p. 118. Our translation.
[65] MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1278, 'Befragungsprotokoll', 3 March 1988, p. 106. Our translation.
[66] MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1278, 'Auswertung', 6 May 1988, p. 4.

murder and persecution of Jews, the antipathy towards homosexuals was widespread among the eight Cottbus skinheads interrogated by the police. Prejudices abounded: 'cannot stand such people', 'an affront to the honour of a German', and 'make little attempt to practise normal sexuality and have female mannerisms'.[67]

A SOCIAL PROFILE

Who were the right extremists? As skinhead violence escalated from the mid-1980s onwards, the SED, the MfS and other authorities drew on a variety of sources, including materials emanating from the Criminal Police, the Central Institute for Youth Research and the Humboldt University, in order to obtain a differentiated social profile of the skinheads, punks and other negative groups. Of particular importance are the reports drawn up by two sociologists at the Humboldt University, Loni Niederländer and Gunhild Korfes. The reports were commissioned by the head of the Main Department of the Criminal Police, Nedwig, with the knowledge of the Stasi.[68] Although the findings were not GDR representative, they do at least provide some indications of the age, gender, educational attainment, occupation and family background of the extremists. Gordon Ross's judgement that the right-wing groups largely consisted of 'children of the regime' and that they did not come from a deprived family background[69] seems to be borne out by the Criminal Police and Humboldt data.

The project for the Criminal Police and the Stasi was based on 596 persons who had been involved in criminal proceedings as well as almost 2,000 transcripts of the questioning of the accused and witnesses in the period October 1987 to November 1989.[70] Based on data from several regions, the social profile of the militants reads (in per cent): pupils 4, apprentices 24, partly qualified skilled workers 4, skilled workers 50, technical college students 2, and those without an occupation 14. The conclusion reached by the researchers in 1989 was that all strata and classes in society were represented and that the level of qualification, family status and general circumstances corresponded to a cross-section of society. If it also recalled that the skinheads were usually held in high regard by their work collectives, advocated a 'German' work ethic and believed that service in the National People's Army was integral to 'Germanness',[71] then the thesis that they were children of the GDR has much to commend it.

[67] See the various documents in MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 1278, March–April 1988, pp. 106, 138, 149.
[68] See Süß W. 1996: 34, 52 and MfS ZA, HA XXII, no. 18438, p. 52.
[69] Ross G. C. 2000: 106.
[70] Kinner K. and Richter R. 2000: 273, 279–80.
[71] Süß W. 1996: 24.

The Stasi and the SED were unhappy with the notion of 'normality'. After all, what should not exist in an anti-fascist state could not exist. This is apparent from a report compiled by an officer of Main Department XXII shortly after the Zionskirche incident: 'The occurrence of skinheads in the GDR is the result of the increased attention given to their behaviour in the Western media. This is done mainly with the aim of turning young people against socialist society'.[72] MfS materials – Law School theses, transcripts of interrogations, operational case records and situation analyses – searched for a scapegoat in the lack of positive parental influence. An assessment in 1989 by Main Department IX referred to the break-up of families and inadequate upbringing at home as one of the main factors behind a 'flawed development'.[73] Indeed, if the empirical data on the biographies of skinheads who came into conflict with the authorities and were subject to a Stasi preliminary enquiry are taken into account, there is reason to qualify the 'our children' thesis which emerges from the Niederländer and Korfes data. Likewise, the Stasi assessment mentioned above asserted that many skinheads stayed in a job in order to avoid possible penal measures regarding unsocial behaviour and that therefore they were merely keeping up the pretence of working.[74]

THE STASI FRUSTRATED

The repression launched after the Zionskirche events was only a partial success. Militants were forced to go underground and into the security of their own apartments.[75] However, this was only a tactical retreat and numbers began to rise once more. In October 1988, the MfS estimated that there were 1,067 skinheads. Of these, 42.7 per cent were located in East Berlin, 11.5 per cent in Potsdam and 8.4 per cent in Leipzig.[76] The militants devised their own countertactics. They placed more of their followers in organisations like the Society for Sport and Technology and a radicalisation of the scene was marked by the emergence of the fascos, a term first coined in 1986.[77] The fascos, a strand of the more extremists skinheads, operated in small, highly disciplined clandestine groups of between six and twelve members, imposed strict membership criteria and met several times per week to discuss aims and beliefs. As their name suggests, they were committed to National Socialist ideology. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was one of their main texts and for some, like Hasselbach, prison constituted a training ground in fascist ideology under the

[72] MfS ZA, HA XXII, no. 17625, 'Referat', 1987, p. 16. Our translation.
[73] MfS ZA, HA IX, no. 10712, 'Thesen', 1989, p. 19.
[74] MfS ZA, HA XXII, no. 17625, 'Referat', 1987, p. 17.
[75] Süß W. 1996: 100.
[76] Kinner K. and Richter R. 2000: 78.
[77] On the fascos, see Hasselbach I. 1996: 60; Wagner B. 1995: 65–6; Ross G. C. 2000: 122; Madloch N. 2000: 76; Siegler B. 1991: 619; Hockenos P. 1993: 89.

guidance of fellow prisoners with National Socialist leanings. More ideologically focused than the skinheads, they advocated the establishment of Germany as a world power, the use of concentration camps for leftists, homosexuals, anti-social and subversive elements in general, punishment for sexual relations with 'non-Aryans', and the destruction of the 'unworthy life' of the physically and mentally 'handicapped'. Although they often aped Hitler by wearing their hair with a parting down the side, they were less conspicuous in outward appearance than the skinheads. The fascos were dedicated to the violent overthrow of the GDR and did not hesitate to impose harsh disciplinary measures against recalcitrant members.[78]

The MfS lamented that its societal partners, especially the schools and the Free German Youth organisation, had palpably failed to implement measures to stem the extremist problem,[79] a failure which was linked to the alienation of so many young people in the later 1980s. The Stasi, as a secret police and agent of coercion, was hardly in a position to act as an educator, and it could not compensate for deficiencies among the other agents of social control. This frustration was expressed by one MfS officer in East Berlin who was responsible for preliminary criminal proceedings: 'Combating this phenomenon cannot be the sole task of the investigative organisations. It is a task that can only be tackled by the whole of society and with the involvement of all education providers'.[80]

Why then did right extremism manifest itself in a state which claimed through the deNazification measures of the late 1940s and the early 1950s and through the establishment of a new socialist order to have removed the preconditions for fascism? The Stasi clung doggedly to the thesis that right extremism was inspired by the political-diversionary strategy of the Western adversary, especially among East Germany's negative and decadent elements. The Western mass media, together with personal contacts at major sports events in towns like East Berlin and Potsdam, were regarded as important channels of Nazi ideas. In accordance with this perception, the MfS kept a careful watch on actual and potential links between East German extremists and West German neo-Nazis, including groups like the Nationalist Front and the Viking Youth. It calculated that in 1987 131 skinheads paid visits to the GDR from West Berlin and mixed with their East German counterparts at football matches and in pubs.[81] However, by the beginning of 1988, the MfS had been unable to uncover anything other than loose contacts between East and West. One officer, Torsten Roß, in a detailed analysis of the activities of Western neo-Nazi and groups, such as the Viking Youth and the National Democratic Party, in 1986 and 1987, failed to find any elaborate network of

[78] Siegler B. 1991: 619; Hockenos P. 1993: 89.
[79] Süß W. 1996: 29–30.
[80] Cited in ibid., 49–50. Our translation.
[81] Madloch N. 2000: 81.

group and personal contacts in the GDR. Acts of militancy in the GDR, he concluded, stemmed primarily from imitating West German neo-Nazis via the Western mass media.[82]

The 'import' thesis – as applied to skinheads, punks and heavy metals – had already been undermined in the sociological report compiled by Niederländer. In her opinion, the thesis 'encourages the inclination to feel powerless in the face of the problem. It reduces the readiness to invest energy in tackling the problem'.[83] The Stasi made some minor amendments to the standard interpretation, in particular by developing the notion of 'negative-decadent' individuals whose chequered family, educational and occupational biographies made them responsive to Western political-ideological diversion. The sources of maladjustment of the socially 'deformed' youth were identified as 'relics' from Germany's imperialist past, deficiencies in the upbringing of children and the negative influence of peers.[84] Some Stasi officers expressed reservations about aspects of official paradigms. Torsten Gruhn, for example, regretted the failure to analyse the social and political character of the skinhead problem and drew attention in his dissertation to the failures of parents, teachers and police. Schools and parents were too passive, the Free German Youth was insensitive to the special needs of young people, the police were baffled as regards appropriate countermeasures, and the population at large was becoming increasingly fearful.[85]

But the MfS, too, was part of the problem for not only did the ministry's hostility to the alien and 'exotic other' feed prejudices but its own authoritarian structures and mentalities provided a normative underpinning for the very extremists it sought to destroy. As Süß has pointed out, while the approach developed by scholars such as Heitmeyer, which seeks to locate right extremism in the problems and risks associated with modernisation and individualisation, may not be salient for the less developed GDR, nevertheless his emphasis on an unscrupulous willingness to use force and the ideology of inequality as constituent elements of right extremism does seem to have some purchase.[86] Intolerance, repression, intimidation and force were part and parcel of the socialisation of young people in the GDR, as expressed in the paramilitary Society for Sport and Technology, the use of military toys, the friend–foe dichotomy and the segregation of foreign contract workers. Military service was also proclaimed as a duty and, as one skinhead stated, 'I was able to improve my physical fitness because during military service sport is one of the most important activities'.[87] Furthermore, while it cannot be denied that punitive deNazification measures in East Germany were

[82] MfS ZA, JHS, no. 21169, 1988, pp. 24–5, 76, 101.
[83] MfS ZA, HA XXII, no. 17625, 'Information', p. 62. Our translation.
[84] MfS ZA, HA IX no. 1278, 'Befragungsprotokoll', 30 December 1987, p. 82.
[85] MfS ZA, JHS, no. 21463, 1989, pp. 52–3; also Ross G. C. 2000: 27, footnote 3.
[86] Süß W. 1996: 5–7, 40–42.
[87] MfS ZA, HA IX, 'Befragungsprotokoll', 27 April 1988, p. 101. Our translation.

comprehensive and that the GDR's self-portrayal as an anti-fascist state enjoyed considerable popular resonance, the 'reckoning' with Nazism and nationalism remained highly flawed. The SED still clung to the 1935 Comintern's outmoded and economistic definition of fascism as 'the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialistic elements of finance capital'. And likewise the straitjacket of Marxism-Leninism impeded a searching analysis and open discussion of nationalism and nationality. The SED's propagation in the late 1980s of a 'socialism in the colours of the GDR' merely compounded the problem as it was primarily designed to ward off the reformist impulses emanating from the Soviet Union and Poland and was totally inadequate in its efforts to persuade East Germans of the superiority of GDR-style socialism over the capitalism of its West German sibling. In addition, as members of a relatively closed society, GDR citizens enjoyed limited opportunities to acquaint themselves with other nationalities and cultures and to develop a mutual tolerance and understanding.

Part VI

WOLF'S ESPIONAGE EMPIRE