

Chapter 3

Economic Politics and Company Culture: The Problem of Routinisation¹

Jeannette Madarász



Normalisation: Norms and Normality in a Socialist Dictatorship²

After the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, the situation in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) changed. East Germans of all political and social opinions were confronted with circumstances beyond their control, circumstances that had a massive impact on their personal and working lives. People had to adjust to these changed circumstances; they realised this quickly and adapted without much ado. Processes of adaptation could last a lifetime and led to ever-finer nuances of behaviour. Social norms emerged based both on traditional expectations and the socialist values propagated by the East German communist party, the SED. They affected most East Germans in one way or another. Political acquiescence does not describe the situation adequately: much more was going on in all sections of society. Particular patterns of behaviour developed: the avoidance of open confrontation by assessing accurately the political implications of any situation; distrust to-

1. This chapter summarises some of the arguments developed in the author's recent publication: Jeannette Madarász, *Working life in East Germany, 1961 to 1979. Arriving in the Everyday* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006).

2. The author was part of a research project entitled *The 'Normalisation of Rule'? State and Society in the GDR, 1961–1979*, based at the German Department of UCL. Many thanks are due to the AHRC for its continuous and generous financial support of this project.

wards anybody who was not a close friend or relative, although even this was no guarantee against surveillance by the Ministry of State Security (MfS or *Stasi*); careful positioning within political, professional, and social structures, depending on the individual's career aims; the use of a specific language to communicate effectively with governmental and party institutions; and so on. These methods allowed people to feel that they were shaping their own lives and those of their families despite an intrusive political system. They also learned to live with and exploit given circumstances because socialist values and the promises made by the SED became a part of the East German value system.³ In fact, attitudes began to prevail criticising those who felt unable or refused to comply with this value system for political reasons.

East German society was shaped by compromise. It included notions of collective life, basic ideals, and practical values, such as social fairness and guaranteed jobs, but largely excluded many of the SED's ideological tenets, such as socialist internationalism or hostility towards Western imperialism.⁴ In response to given circumstances, expectations, and popular reluctance to accept whole-scale re-socialisation, new norms and behaviour patterns formed slowly. The 1960s also marked the beginning of a process of standardisation and institutionalisation, which affected not only the education system, professional qualifications, and the economic sector, but also cultural activity, communication practices, and language. With time, norms became set in stagnating institutions, which distorted their original meaning. Both their rigidity and the notable difference between propaganda and everyday life motivated, at least in some parts of East German society, a backlash against both standardised biographies and unsatisfying realities. By the late 1970s, societal expectations of 'normality' that had been introduced at least partly by the SED were not fulfilled anymore, leading to widespread resignation, frustration, and a stronger focus on personal interests. Ensuing tendencies towards individualisation undermined East German society in the longer term.

Normalisation

Normalisation is a concept referring to various processes that contextualise societal evolution not just in a socialist dictatorship such as the GDR, but

3. Cf. also the patterns of opinion expressed in 2005, summarised in Chapter 13, below.

4. Harry Müller, *Jugend im Wandel ihrer Werte* (Leipzig: ZIJ, 1985), pp. 13–14. See also Dieter Geulen, *Politische Sozialisation in der DDR. Autobiographische Gruppengespräche mit Angehörigen der Intelligenz* (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 1998), p. 103. Ina Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis. Die Geschichte der Konsumkultur in der DDR* (Cologne et al.: Böhlau, 1999), p. 160. Felix Mühlberg, *Bürger, Bitten und Eingaben. Geschichte der Eingabe in der DDR* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 2004), p. 27.

almost any socio-political system.⁵ Stabilisation after political or social upheaval will be followed by routinisation that, if given enough time, will lead to the internalisation of at least some of the repeatedly propagated and experienced norms. In turn, these norms will define the popular perception of ‘normality’, especially when comparisons with other socio-political systems are restricted. It is particularly relevant that the normalisation concept refers to a variety of processes. It is not intended to announce the ‘arrival of normal life’, however this difficult concept may be defined, but rather to refer to the steps that lead towards a ‘perceived normality’, which always also includes a variety of difficulties and crises.

Furthermore, the normalisation concept does not assume the totality of these processes. Within any society, there will always be niches, subcultures, and behaviour that run counter to the mainstream. No state or party will ever be able to control entirely a country and its population. Rather, just as in parenthood, some latitude may go a long way towards acquiescence. Even this, however, will depend on issues such as social and cultural opportunities and an imperative economic success.

This chapter applies the normalisation concept to company politics and company culture in East German state-owned concerns during the 1960s and 1970s. It will be argued that stabilisation during the 1960s relied to a large extent on finding common interests and the establishment of a limited interaction between central decision makers and the working population.

When talking of state-owned concerns or factories as acting entities, it is to be understood that a number of persons and groups with different interests and intentions influenced and prepared the actions that issued from any specific state-owned concern. To explain this further: the works director was the person directly responsible to superior institutions such as the *Vereinigung Volkseigener Betriebe* (VVB) and the appropriate ministry. However, the party secretary of the SED also had an impact on decisions, and in many cases this was not restricted to political issues. Furthermore, the works director was in a position in which one of his main tasks was to negotiate between his employees and central institutions. Administrative staff, economic functionaries, trade union functionaries, and functionaries representing other mass organisations such as the Free German Youth (FDJ)—all of these people and groups contributed to an internal exchange and shaped the dialogue with central institutions. Production workers and technical staff also had their own individual agendas, which they tried to defend within the context of ongoing interaction, often relying on seemingly suitable functionaries for the representation of their interests.

5. See also the discussion of this concept in Chapter One, above.

This complex constellation of interests furthered the mutual exchange of expectations, demands, and offers, which led to fine adjustments and shifts within original interest patterns at all levels. It is the interaction between different interest groups and individual personalities in state-owned concerns and also with central institutions, i.e., vertical relations within the East German economic system, which lies at the heart of this analysis. Horizontal relations, for example cooperation between state-owned concerns or with the local community, enriched this complex pattern further.

Interaction is delineated by the context in which it takes places, even more so in dictatorial societies.⁶ Therefore, the following three themes will be discussed: economic changes over time; differences between factories; and interaction between central authorities and the working population. Here, the influence of both central policy on individual factories and that of the workforce on central policy will be traced.

The East German Economy: Changes Over Time

The economy in the GDR was based on a planned system, which encountered crises repeatedly. It stood in constant competition with the West German economy and was dependent on supplies of raw materials, specifically oil, from the Soviet Union. Also, the East German economic system was hampered by its political context.⁷ In the GDR, workers were the most sought after social group, but also, after the upheaval on 17 June 1953, the most feared (potential) opponents of both state and party. Much was done to avoid open confrontation—a major problem in terms of economic effectiveness. Work in the GDR was a highly political issue.

The economic crisis of the late 1950s had manifestly contributed to the decision to build the Berlin Wall in 1961. In spite of Cold War polemics, one of the main motives at the central level had been to stabilise the workforce to allow for more substantiated economic planning. However, although the Berlin Wall effectively prevented the bleeding out of a skilled workforce, the economic difficulties were not resolved. Accordingly, Ulbricht introduced economic reforms in 1963. The New Economic System of Planning and Management (NES) was intended to improve the economic system structurally. However, its introduction was piecemeal and caused problems for many

6. Sandrine Kott, 'Pour une histoire sociale du pouvoir en Europe communiste', in Kott, ed., *Pour une histoire sociale du pouvoir en Europe communiste*, *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 49 (2002), pp. 5–23.

7. Jeffrey Kopstein, *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945–1989* (Chapel Hill, London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 2.

state-owned concerns as it undermined their often already precarious position further by, for example, introducing new and more realistic methods of bookkeeping.⁸ Although the NES did not offer immediate remedy to the crisis-shaken East German economy, it comprised some necessary reforms. For example, the influence of the SED's organisational units in factories changed clearly during the 1960s and 1970s. With the introduction of the NES, the party organisations within state-owned concerns were reduced in importance, especially regarding actual management decisions. The rise of technocratic thinking during this period, which was much encouraged by Ulbricht, and the economic reforms with their focus on providing management with more decision making power, together helped to strengthen the position of works directors and economic functionaries at an intermediate level.⁹ This forced party functionaries into retreat, at least in the short-term, although they never stopped trying to get involved.¹⁰ Already in 1967, this process was reversed and party influence started to grow again, arguably reflecting Honecker's increasing influence on domestic politics.¹¹

Towards the end of the 1960s, the GDR underwent another economic crisis, which was a crucial accessory to Ulbricht's replacement by Honecker. Honecker's concept of the 'unity of economic and social policy' (*Einheit der Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik*) defined the political priorities of the new leader. The unity of economic and social policy was based on debt-funded investment policy. In the long-term, it led to an immense increase in indebtedness as oil prices soared and finances were used to increase standards of living, particularly accommodating higher levels of consumption. Economic reproduction was not ensured by the new leadership. From the middle of the 1970s, the negative results of this policy became apparent in many state-owned concerns heralding the advent of another economic crisis in the late 1970s. Neither the introduction of massive savings measures, nor drastic rationalisation, nor the creation of *Kombinate* provided the necessary structural solutions required by a centrally planned economy that promised the right to work.

8. See for example LAB, C Rep. 409–01 Nr. 54, Parteileitungssitzung 18.1.1965, p. 13.

9. André Steiner, *Die DDR-Wirtschaftsreform der sechziger Jahre—Konflikt zwischen Effizienz- und Machtkalkül* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999), p. 65. See also Steiner, 'Betriebe im DDR-Wirtschaftssystem', pp. 55 and 59, in Renate Hürtgen, Thomas Reichel, eds., *Der Schein der Stabilität—DDR-Betriebsalltag in der Ära Honecker* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2001), pp. 53–67.

10. Wolfgang Biermann, *Demokratisierung in der DDR? Ökonomische Notwendigkeiten, Herrschaftsstrukturen, Rolle der Gewerkschaften 1961–1977* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1978), p. 56.

11. For a more detailed account, see also Madarász, 'Normalisation in East German enterprises, 1961–79', in *Debatte* 1/2005, pp. 45–63. See also Peter C. Caldwell, *Dictatorship, State Planning, and Social Theory in the GDR* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 185.

Changes at the central level had an impact on company culture in terms of management style, socio-political relations, and behaviour patterns. For example, the status of a factory could change dramatically in the context of changing central policy, which then affected many other aspects such as working and living conditions, recruitment, the supply of materials, and hence, economic performance. However, beyond large-scale changes there could be many other reasons for such internal developments.

The general trend was divided into many different instances, events, and processes that were influenced by both central policy and developments at the grassroots level. Neither ever progressed in a straight line or was applicable to every social group or section of society across-the-board. For example, central policy favoured specific industrial sectors, but these priorities changed over time. Also, company culture differed widely according to the history of an individual factory, its location, size, the gender ratio of its workforce, and its status. Accordingly, within different factories different problems occurred, were prioritised or ignored. Furthermore, central policy in some cases took years to reach a specific factory and its workforce. As a result, the situation within one economic unit may have differed greatly from the experience of another in the same area, of similar size or part of the same industrial sector. Therefore, the differences between state-owned concerns must be considered meticulously when trying to describe company culture in the wider context of central policy.

Differentiation Between Enterprises

The differences between state-owned concerns is an issue worth studying in detail, particularly in response to totalitarian approaches to GDR history that assume general applicability of central intention to the everyday life of most people. Even some of those historians who recognise the 'limits' of control with which central authorities were continuously confronted tend to neglect specific experience in favour of general trends. This approach, however, bears the danger of writing local history whilst claiming to describe a country's experience, discussing policy-making at the highest level whilst ignoring influences from below, or the other way round. Even in the centrally planned economic system, problems differed and various methods were applied to deal with difficulties.

Of course, all state-owned concerns were confronted more or less by the same basic problems. Working conditions were dire and social relations could be tense. André Steiner has stressed the economy's dependence on political decisions that undermined efficiency throughout the GDR's

existence.¹² One aspect of this political context was the right to work, which limited the economy's flexibility.¹³ Also, almost every workforce had to deal with unreliable supplies of materials and prefabricated parts, a lack of qualified staff, and insufficient investment and capacities. However, even with regard to these very basic issues, the real situation in different factories could vary dramatically. A comparative approach seems needed to paint a nuanced picture of life and work in the GDR that allows for both general trends and distinct experiences.

Sources are a problem in this context, as it seems that, at least generally, archives for large, state-owned, and centrally administered concerns that were part of the capital goods industry are the most easily accessible. However, the least a historian can do is to select factories that existed prior to the war to compare their position to those that were founded during GDR times; to choose enterprises in diverse locations, with workforces of varying gender ratios and, crucially, of dissimilar status within the economic system; and, to pay attention to the impact of individual personalities.¹⁴

Many excellent studies have already given some indication of the relevance of specific themes within the East German economic system. Sandrine Kott, for example, has traced general structures and the experiences of the workforce in five Berlin factories.¹⁵ Petra Clemens has written on a traditional factory employing primarily women, and Leonore Ansorg has written on a state-owned concern that also employed mostly women, but was built from scratch in a previously agricultural area.¹⁶ Francesca Weil compared two Leipzig factories and came to the conclusion that both size and composition were central to their individual company culture. Weil also noted the importance of the works director's networks for the economic performance of a state-owned concern.¹⁷ Furthermore, within the East German economic

12. Steiner, *DDR-Wirtschaftsreform*, p. 556.

13. Heike Knortz, *Innovationsmanagement in der DDR 1973/79–1989. Der sozialistische Manager zwischen ökonomischen Herausforderungen und Systemblockaden* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004), p. 186.

14. See Thomas Reichel, Die 'durchherrschte Arbeitsgesellschaft'—Zu den Herrschaftsstrukturen und Machtverhältnissen in DDR-Betrieben, p. 91, in Hürtgen, Reichel, *Der Schein der Stabilität*, pp. 85–110.

15. Sandrine Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien. Les Entreprises d'Etat dans la société est-allemande. Edition Belin* (Paris, 2001).

16. Leonore Ansorg, "Ick hab immer von unten Druck gekriegt und von oben". Weibliche Leitungskader und Arbeiterinnen in einem DDR-Textilbetrieb. Eine Studie zum Innenleben der DDR-Industrie', in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 39 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1999), pp. 123–65. Petra Clemens, *Die aus der Tuchbude—Alltag und Lebensgeschichten Forster Textilarbeiterinnen* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 1998).

17. Francesca Weil, *Herrschaftsanspruch und Wirklichkeit. Zwei Sächsische Betriebe in der DDR während der Honecker-Ära* (Cologne et al.: Böhlau Verlag, 2000).

system, the status of a factory requires consideration, as has been pointed out by Ingrid Deich specifically with regard to a company's social efforts.¹⁸ However, despite many insightful individual analyses, a comparative approach is still missing. The individuality of state-owned concerns needs to be stressed with reference to a variety of themes in the context of the centrally planned economic system. An older factory employing mostly women, with a long tradition, faced a different situation to one that employed mostly men; and both were in an entirely different position from a factory newly built in the countryside.

Significantly, such differences need to be discussed as essential characteristics rather than picking and choosing from the various state-owned concerns to put together a general picture, discerning major trends rather than exploring what in my opinion is the most definitive aspect of economic units in the GDR: their distinctiveness. To highlight this point, in the following the experiences of five selected factories will be compared.

Both the *Berliner Glühlampenwerk* (BGW) and the *Transformatorenwerk* in Berlin (TRO) were factories that had existed prior to the Second World War. Both were principal suppliers for their products within the GDR and both exported worldwide. They both employed large workforces of about four to five thousand people in the 1960s and 1970s. However, whilst the TRO employed mostly men, the bulk of the BGW's employees—about 65 percent—was female. Accordingly, they were confronted with different problems.

In the 1960s, the need to employ women wherever possible to compensate for labour shortages was growing within the East German economy. Part of this effort was the provision of suitable places of work and childcare facilities to get mothers into employment. It is no surprise, then, that the BGW was at the forefront of the new drive to improve working and living conditions, discussed in more detail below. Already in 1965, a suitable programme had been devised for the BGW; TRO, which employed mostly men, had to wait until 1967 for a similarly extensive package. A major contributory factor to the BGW's early success at expanding its social efforts, however, had been the activities of its works director Rudi Rubbel.¹⁹

The influence of the works director was crucial. In the GDR, the principle of individual responsibility (*Einzelleitung*) applied. It meant that works directors were held responsible for the economic performance of a factory

18. See Ingrid Deich, Wolfhard Kohte, *Betriebliche Sozialeinrichtungen* (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 1997).

19. Rudi Rubbel (1920–71) had been active in the *Neuerer* (innovator)-movement during the 1950s, member of the *Bundesvorstand* of the FDGB (East Germany's trade union), and of the SED's Berlin district organisation before becoming works director at the BGW in 1964.

by both central authorities and the workforce. Success was measured by the plan, working and living conditions, wages and bonuses. It has been rightly argued that the works director and his management team were in a difficult position between the plan and the workforce as a result of this constellation.²⁰ It is crucial to show how this constellation worked on the ground and how it was dealt with by central authorities, the works director, and the various layers of the workforce.

In many cases, a power struggle ensued between the works director and the party secretary as a result of an opposition of economic and political interests. Often enough, it was decided by personality traits or an individual's length of service and, thereby, social standing. In the *Chemiefaserwerk Premnitz* (CFW), for example, relations between the party secretary and the works director Hermann Danz, who came to Premnitz in 1967, were tense right from the outset. The party secretary had been in his position for many years before the arrival of Danz, and former employees of the CFW remember him as an authoritarian personality with little by way of interpersonal skills. To say the least, he made it difficult for the new works director to establish his authority.²¹ In other cases, however, such a power struggle never came to fruition. The works director of the *Erdölverarbeitungswerk Schwedt* (EVW), for example, automatically became a member of the SED's central committee and therefore had a direct link to the centre of the communist party, which no party secretary would have been able to rival.

The authority of any works director, and his success, also depended on his or her connections. Top functionaries such as Rudi Rubbel at the BGW, Helmut Wunderlich at TRO, or Werner Frohn at the EVW could rely on strong and continuous backing from central authorities. Rubbel maintained good relations with Paul Verner, who was a member of the Politburo, and with the executive board of the FDGB. Wunderlich, as a former Minister for General Mechanical Engineering, and vice chairman in both the State Planning Commission (SPK) and the Peoples' Economic Council (VWR), was well connected to central state authorities; and Frohn was a member of the SED's central committee and had close connections to the Minister of the Chemical Industry, Günther Wyschofsky. Although there were limits to their powers, these people, more than less elevated functionaries, could move things; they were motivated, hard-working and insisted on good relations with the workforce. Their arrival at a state-owned concern almost guaranteed success.

20. Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien*, p. 177.

21. See the oral history interviews with the works director Hermann Danz, the technical director, and other former employees of the CFW (transcripts in possession of the author).

Quite apart from such crucial aspects having to do with internal power structures, factories outside of Berlin and any of the other larger cities were in an entirely different situation again from both the BGW and TRO. The CFW had also had a long company tradition, but it was not only removed from the capital of the GDR, it also had a lower status within East German industry than, for example, the EVW, which was also located in the countryside. Chemical fibres and textiles were less important to the East German economy than aggregates, bulbs, and products of raw oil that could be sold on the world market for hard currency. However, the CFW was of immense importance for the surrounding territory for which it was the main employer. People came not only from Premnitz, but from surrounding villages and small towns such as Rathenow to work at the CFW. To enable sufficient provision of childcare facilities, schools, accommodation, and other services necessary for everyday life, the CFW supported local authorities by offering financial assistance, technical expertise, and labour.²²

This type of cooperation was vital to the establishment of a reliable work force, especially in small towns or in agricultural areas, still more so for new economic units such as the EVW in Schwedt and the *Halbleiterwerk* in Frankfurt/Oder (HFO). Both were founded in the early 1960s and had to put much effort into recruiting their workforce. Almost every East German factory had difficulties recruiting suitably qualified employees. Here, it was even more important to work with local authorities to build up a suitable environment where young families might see a future for themselves and their children. When trying to encourage people to move into an area or seek employment at a specific factory removed from the usual amenities offered by larger towns, management and local authorities had to work together to improve surroundings. In this context, cooperation was based on a mutual interest and benefited both sides. Local patriotism (*Ortspatriotismus*), in contrast to a state-owned concern's egoism (*Betriebsegoismus*), which carried much more negative connotations as similar efforts were concentrated solely on the factory and its workforce, was welcomed and encouraged by central authorities.

It has been argued that central authorities forced state-owned concerns to share their resources with the local community.²³ It is certainly correct that, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, laws and decrees centralised coopera-

22. BLHA Rep. 503 CFW 5236, 15.3.1970, *Grundkonzeption des VEB Chemiefaserkombinat Schwarza 'W.Pieck'-Chemiefaserwerk 'Friedrich Engels' Premnitz zur Verbesserung der Arbeits- und Lebensbedingungen für den Zeitraum 1970–75*, p. 13. See also BLHA Rep. 503 CFW 5654, *Bericht über den Stand der Erfüllung der Massnahmen aus den abgeschlossenen Kommunalverträgen des CFW*, 15.10.1971.

23. See Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien*, p. 88.

tion efforts, thereby in effect ordering all factories to support their localities. The motivation behind these efforts was the state's growing difficulty in financing and realising the necessary investments. State-owned concerns were supposed to help out a desperate economy that was encountering problems in the late 1960s, and they simply had more resources than local communities. In September 1964, Honecker had stated in the Politburo that it would be much better to leave responsibility for childcare facilities and accommodation with the individual factories. Honecker expected them to have greater financial clout than regional bodies, and also feared constant fights with local authorities.²⁴

However, to some extent at least, this sharing of resources was also in the interest of the factory, which could expect valuable concessions concerning social and cultural provisions in return for resources such as material, workers, and specialists.²⁵ There was a notable difference between factories that were located in large towns and cities, where they were not the only employers, and those in small towns or out in the countryside, where a single firm provided all of the jobs and resources: in the latter, *Orts patriotism* was essential to the area, and managers recognised local influence as significant to their economic success.

In turn, members of the workforce, from production workers to technologists, administrative staff, and economic functionaries, were very much interested in working at a successful plant. Employment at a factory that fulfilled its plans and had a high status within the East German economic system would ensure high wages, bonuses, and good working and living conditions.²⁶ Naturally, many fundamental problems were rooted in the deficiency of the centrally planned economic system, and could not easily be solved; but they were dealt with sufficiently to ensure, at least outwardly, a more efficient organisation of work and a smoother production process. Success could contribute to an improvement in social relations. To a greater extent at least than in unsuccessful economic units, production workers were given a chance to be productive, technologists had the opportunity to be innovative, and administrative staff and economic functionaries avoided some of the possible confrontations with exasperated subordinates and superiors. Social peace was kept more easily in state-owned concerns with a high status than in failing ones. This was in the interest of almost everybody: central authorities, management, and, increasingly in the 1960s and 1970s, also the workforce.

24. BAB DE 1 / VA 48523, Report on discussion in Politburo, 30.9.1964, p. 12.

25. See for example BLHA Rep. 703 EVW 374, Kommunalvertrag 1969/70 EVW—Rat der Stadt Schwedt, 13.9.1969.

26. Deich, Kohte, *Betriebliche Sozialeinrichtungen*, pp. 155ff.

These are just a few examples to highlight issues that had an impact on the development and positions of state-owned concerns within an economic system that worked on the basis of selection. One other relevant issue was the influence of the SED, which not only depended on the personalities of both the works director and the party secretary, but also on changes in central policy. Furthermore, the interest of central authorities in a state-owned concern could vary widely and have diverse consequences, both negative and positive. Various aspects contributed to a factory's placement and those that were deemed deserving of promotion met with different responses than those of lesser status. Status, however, depended on various aspects and could change with time; changes in central economic policy, a new works director or technological advancements could either hinder or help a particular factory in the constant struggle for a privileged position.

Dynamics of Power: Interaction Between the Centre and the Grassroots

Even slight shifts and fine differences had an impact on company culture, specifically within the centrally planned economic system. There have been excellent studies on economic policy,²⁷ on the evolution of consumerism, and, linked to it, social policy at the central level²⁸ and developments at the grassroots.²⁹ However, the interaction or mutual permeation between central policy and the grassroots has not yet been analysed with reference to the individuality of state-owned concerns. Here, it is crucial to consider the experience of individual factories within the context of wider economic policy and socio-political developments over two decades.

Any factory depended on decisions that were made at the central level. However, short-lived upheavals were paralleled and, seen in retrospect, overlain by processes that affected people in the longer term. Specifically when considering the attitudes and opinions of people, whether the production worker, an economic functionary or the works director, behaviour patterns in the early years of a decade differed greatly from those in the later part of the same decade. In the 1960s, this was partly in response to a changing political climate caused by the power struggle accompanying the advent of a new head of state.

27. See in particular works by André Steiner and Jeffrey Kopstein.

28. See particularly Philipp Heldmann, *Herrschaft, Wirtschaft, Anoraks. Konsumpolitik in der DDR der Sechzigerjahre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

29. See, for example, works by Peter Hübner, Sandrine Kott, and Jörg Roessler.

Workplaces were the primary intersection between the working population and the state. It was here that the ideological theory of the working class as the leading force in communism, which was after all one of the founding myths of the GDR, needed to be substantiated.

Social relations at the grassroots were influenced by central policy. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the SED reserved its right to send intellectuals, specifically artists, students, and failing party members into production to learn to appreciate working class life. In many cases, the newcomers were shocked by the situation in the factory halls, the behaviour, and the attitude of their new colleagues.³⁰ Sometimes, good working relations and mutual respect developed.³¹ Sometimes, a sense of distance and lack of understanding prevailed. Production workers mostly blamed economic functionaries for inadequate work organisation and the higher levels of management for their inability to provide required materials or better working conditions. Technologists were unhappy and became cynical regarding their own work, which was seldom applied to production processes. Administrative staff were in a particularly difficult situation, positioned between complaining workers and management, but themselves mostly unable to out possible solutions into practice. Here also relations were not necessarily contented, but rather influenced by 'office politics'. It would be inadequate to describe this complex situation as simply divided into blue- and white-collar workers.

Policy over wages, for example, changed various times in the 1960s and 1970s, thereby influencing the hierarchical position of workers and technologists.³² In the early 1960s, it was not unusual for production workers to earn more than an engineer, thus upsetting the traditional hierarchy, partly because real wages were generally negotiated internally and here the production worker, mostly skilled and male, had a strong position.³³ With the rise of new elites during the NES period, more emphasis was put on supporting and encouraging technologists, thereby improving their position within the factory hierarchy again. This changed towards the end of the 1960s and in the Honecker period, when Ulbricht's focus on technological progress and its carriers was deemed politically incorrect.³⁴ In the

30. LAB, C Rep. 409–01 Nr. 215, 'Lunik III', 31.1.1961, 6.2.1961.

31. LAB, C Rep. 409–01 Nr. 214, 'Käthe Kollwitz', 27.1.1961.

32. See for example Peter Hübner, *Konsens, Konflikt und Kompromiss—Soziale Arbeiterinteressen und Sozialpolitik in der SBZ/DDR 1945–70* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 85–86. See also Knortz, *Innovationsmanagement*, p. 195.

33. Deich, Kohte, *Betriebliche Sozialeinrichtungen*, p. 166.

34. Karin Zachmann, 'Frauen für die technische Revolution—Studentinnen und Absolventinnen Technischer Hochschulen in der SBZ/DDR', p. 146, in Gunilla-Friederike Budde, ed., *Frauen arbeiten. Weibliche Erwerbstätigkeit in Ost- und Westdeutschland nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), pp. 121–56.

1970s, the position of production workers was strengthened once more, often forcing works directors to concessions that had a negative impact on productivity.³⁵ However, the tide turned in the 1980s, again favouring technologists.³⁶ These repeated shifts in social relations caused tensions and influenced individual careers.

The 1960s allowed for social mobility, and in the 1970s and 1980s, there were at least some economic functionaries, even works directors, who had started right at the bottom of the hierarchy and worked their way up. Women in particular appreciated the opportunity for qualification and social advancement, both in comparison to pre-war and post-GDR times.³⁷ From the middle of the 1970s onwards, one could argue that class differences had been blurred sufficiently to allow for more cordial relations at least in transition areas. Advances in the education system certainly contributed to this, as most young people, including women, were able to acquire a professional qualification by the 1970s. Specifically within the socialist system social relations were shifting over time, blurring the traditional Marxist division of classes in the process.³⁸

Nevertheless, there was certainly a recognition of and insistence on distance between various social layers. In spite of the SED's repeated attempts at levelling social differences, these gaps never entirely disappeared; sometimes they widened or narrowed depending on central policy or local conditions at the time. In factories, these gaps were closely linked to difficult working conditions.³⁹ Blaming the 'other' for inefficient production was common but at least partly based on a lack of information, which was typical for the East German economic and political system.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, in retrospect, former employees regularly stress the good relations to both subordinates and superiors, although or possibly because the latter could be and had been openly confronted with criticisms concerning working conditions and work organisation.⁴¹ Animosity mostly affected the most

35. Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan. Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Munich: DVA, 2004), p. 167.

36. Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien*, p. 167.

37. See answers to questionnaires (in possession of the author), especially regarding women already working in the 1960s or before. See also Chapter 13, below.

38. See particularly Heike Solga, *Auf dem Weg in eine klassenlose Gesellschaft? Klassenlagen und Mobilität zwischen Generationen in der DDR* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995). See also Johannes Huinink and Karl Ulrich Mayer et al., *Kollektiv und Eigensinn—Lebensverläufe in der DDR und danach* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995).

39. Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien*, p. 172.

40. For a positive exception, see Knortz, *Innovationsmanagement*, p. 214.

41. Martin Kohli, 'Die DDR als Arbeitsgesellschaft? Arbeit, Lebenslauf und soziale Differenzierung', p. 49, in Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), pp. 31–61.

immediate social environment and was only rarely directed at those far above or below.⁴²

Furthermore, it needs to be remembered that the impact of central policy was never realised seamlessly. Orders from the centre, for example, aspects of economic reforms, often needed some time to filter through to every factory. Their implementation could be delayed for various reasons, including lack of trust, competence, will or means. Also, the chain of command offered many loopholes. At a broad intermediate level, in between central decision makers and the workforce, there existed many institutions and functionaries. They all had their own agenda and often were intent on finding a balance between the aims of the centre and the interests of the periphery, in order to keep the system functioning. This constellation contained the possibility and the need for dialogue, whereby the building up of structures to accommodate such dialogue was an important part of the normalisation process. The interaction between the various levels had huge implications for stabilisation in the 1960s.

In the 1960s and 1970s, both central authorities and the workforce learned a crucial lesson, in the process of which management and particularly some works directors took on the role of intermediary. It became apparent in relation to both the uprising of 17 June 1953 and the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, that central authorities would have to live with a demanding workforce and that the workforce would have to deal with equally severe government and party institutions.⁴³ This recognition, arguably, was the founding base of normalisation. It enabled stabilisation and, eventually, routinisation within state-owned concerns as workers became more pliable and central authorities more aware and tolerant of the workforce's needs.

This new search for compromises, which was part of a trend to establish, learn, and internalise mutually acceptable rules of the (socialist) game was reflected, for example, in the improvement of working and living conditions that had been an issue since the 1950s, but received much more detailed attention from 1964 onwards. Prior to 1964, the provision of workers with meals and products at their places of work had been the main priority, which provided valuable help to many during times of food rationing. Similarly, medical care was provided to a certain extent, as was childcare

42. Horst Liewald, *Das BGW. Zur Betriebsgeschichte von NARVA–Berliner Glühlampenwerk* (Berlin: Deutsches Technikmuseum, 2004), p. 243. See also Jeannette Madarász, 'Die Realität der Wirtschaftsreform in der DDR. Betriebsalltag in den sechziger Jahren', p. 968, in *DeutschlandArchiv* 6/966 (2003): 966–80.

43. See Hübner, *Konsens, Konflikt und Kompromiss*, p. 208.

and housing. However, from the mid 1960s onwards, social policy contained much more than just those issues that might have been priorities for central institutions but not for employees and management. Specifically, childcare and housing were given a higher priority and, in addition, culture, transportation to and from work, holiday provision, sports facilities, and much more were included in the programme.⁴⁴

In 1964, a programme for the improvement of working and living conditions was being prepared by the SPK. It was discussed in the Politburo in September 1964, where the decision was taken to implement it in selected state-owned concerns.⁴⁵ However, following the initiative of some works directors, this programme was expanded to include much more than workers' provision, childcare facilities, and housing. Thereby, with the intention of increasing productivity and counterbalancing deficits of the centrally planned economy, works directors were reacting directly to needs voiced at the grassroots. As part of the NES, but more because of initiatives by middle-level functionaries, central authorities eventually perceived the issue as a complex programme that would not only help to stabilise factories and the economic system, but would also help to ensure social peace.⁴⁶

The remarkable thing about the establishment of programmes for the improvement of working and living conditions as part of the annual contracts between management and workforce was the interaction between central decision makers and the working population. Works directors used the opportunity provided by the economic reforms to stabilise factories in the sense of reducing high turnover and sickness rates. This also meant that works directors reacted to interests, demands, and discontent voiced by the workforce. This independence and flexibility in a constant battle against deficits of the planned economy was crucial, although a factory's specific means depended on its status and the personality and networking abilities of its works director.⁴⁷ These changes during the 1960s and 1970s encouraged changes of mentality among the East German population that lasted beyond 1989, at least to some extent. Attitudes to employers, and expectations of the employer or the state regarding social policy, can serve here as examples.

In the following section, the process of routinisation will receive particular attention, to highlight its impact on attitudes and behaviour patterns at all levels of East German society. Routinisation furthered the internalisation

44. See Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien*, pp. 79–83.

45. BAB DE 1 / VA 48523, Report on discussion in Politburo, 30.9.1964.

46. For a more detailed account, see Madarász, 'Normalisation in East German enterprises'.

47. Another example for this attempt to counterbalance the deficiencies of the centrally planned economy was the existence of networks between factories intended to accommodate a semi-legal (if not illegal) exchange of materials. See Steiner, *DDR-Wirtschaftsreform*, p. 35.

of values, but also led to a backlash against standardised lives and the ever more apparent discrepancy between official propaganda and real conditions in the later 1970s. Although, since the 1950s, individual interests had shifted to some extent to suit the conditions of life in a dictatorship and a shortage economy, they were never given up entirely. Routine as a concept seems especially suitable to describe a process of learning and playing the rules of the societal game as it was negotiated after the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961.⁴⁸

Routinisation and Internalisation

The concept of routine, as employed in this project, differs noticeably from ritualisation,⁴⁹ a term that also has been used to describe behaviour in dictatorships. A ritual is stereotyped behaviour in a specific situation; ritualisation takes place when behaviour turns into such a ritual. It implies outward adherence to both political expectations and prescribed procedures for political ceremonies. It also carries connotations of conscious behaviour intended to pretend approval despite both inner retreat and a pronounced lack of interest.⁵⁰ In contrast, particularly to this suggestion of outward approval in spite of inward rejection, routinisation intends to highlight long-term socio-political processes within East German society that resulted in internalisation not only of the rules of the game, but also of values and attitudes.

Routine includes both negative and positive aspects; both shall be explored in the following section. It has been argued that the rules of the (socialist) game were both established and learned in the 1960s. From this, predictability ensued, in many cases closely entwined with a progressive lack of real meaning, as for example seen in developments within official language. Functionaries, as demonstrated in the 1980s, often did not know the significance of the slogans they were using routinely.⁵¹

48. See also related concepts, especially 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977) and 'structuration' (Giddens, 1984). For a concise discussion of these concepts and their links to 'routine', see George Ritzer, *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots: The Basics* (University of Maryland) (http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/007234962x/student_view0/chapter7/chapter_overview.html) (Accessed on 18.08.2005).

49. See Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien*, p. 141.

50. Compare Günther Heydemann and Eckehard Jesse, eds., *Diktaturvergleich als Herausforderung—Theorie und Praxis* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1998), p. 184. See also Ansorg, 'Ick hab immer von unten Druck gekriegt und von oben', p. 148.

51. See for example SAPMO DY24/14230, 10.1.1989, Eberhard Aurich, 'Probleme und Schwierigkeiten von 1.Kreissekretären', pp. 11–13.

Besides these negative aspects, routine helped to stabilise both political and economic structures. Central authorities, functionaries, and the general population were able to work with established structures that were functioning smoothly even if they were not effective. Routine set in regarding behaviour not just in everyday life, but also in crisis situations. One had learned what to expect and how to achieve a specific goal. By the 1970s, probably reinforced by the experience of the Czech people during the Prague Spring of 1968, the limits of open criticism were known and mostly kept quiet out of fear of MfS involvement.⁵² Also, central authorities had acquired a customary way of dealing with crises, namely the avoidance of public awareness and the individualisation of conflict.⁵³

Keeping the social peace was an absolute priority following Honecker's rise to power; under Ulbricht, this had been much less the case. Not for nothing, at the beginning of his reign Honecker insisted that 'One can never govern against the workers.'⁵⁴ He tried to distance his position from that of Ulbricht, whose rational prioritisation of investment in the economy over the financing of a higher standard of living for the population had been hugely unpopular. In the 1960s, especially just after August 1961 and again following the 11th plenary meeting of the SED's central committee in 1965, socio-political appeasement of the population was deemed desirable, but not at all costs. Ulbricht, for example, had not been reluctant to introduce aggressive policies regarding salaries and the criminalisation of critical voices just after the building of the Berlin Wall. Similarly, both cultural and youth policy underwent radical periods in the 1960s and not just phases of liberation, although, arguably, in these areas the initiator may have been not Ulbricht but Honecker's faction in the Politburo.⁵⁵ Honecker, by contrast, always tried to avoid open confrontation.

In the 1970s, routine ensured a comparably smooth functioning of socio-political relations in most sections of East German society. Dialogue had been increasingly institutionalised in the petition system (*Eingaben*) and pressed into an 'official' language that accommodated political expectations. Routine led to internalisation, especially for young people who knew no other socio-political environment, but also, to some extent, for everybody wanting to feel at home under the very difficult political circumstances of life in a socialist dictatorship.

52. See also Chapter 1, above.

53. See Renate Hürtgen, *Zwischen Disziplinierung und Partizipation. Vertrauensleute des FDGB im DDR-Betrieb* (Cologne et al.: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), pp. 247ff.

54. BAB, DE 1 / VA 56131, SPK, notes on PB meeting 24.3.1972, p. 8.

55. Monika Kaiser, *Machtwechsel von Ulbricht zu Honecker. Funktionsmechanismen der SED-Diktatur in Konfliktsituationen 1962–1972* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), chap. 3.

Within the economic sector, routinisation became apparent in various ways from the late 1960s onwards. Central authorities acquired some routine and became less likely to interfere in the running of factories directly, as long as the plan was fulfilled. In the 1960s, this had been a regular occurrence leading, for example, to a high turnover level of works directors.

In the 1960s, the involvement of central authorities could be either a blessing or a curse. Especially in the early years, at least some works directors still tried to attract the attention of central authorities. They hoped to solve problems by involving those who were felt to have the power to improve a difficult situation. This happened mostly when the factory was still able to fulfil the plan, although with great difficulties. Support from superior institutions such as the VVB or relevant ministries could include lower production plans, credits or simply a better supply of materials. However, when such solutions seemed no longer likely, works directors became more reluctant to call for external support, which often had been provided in the shape of ad hoc measures, including the repeated exchange of works directors. Mostly, there were no real solutions, beyond short-lived rescue missions, within the given circumstances.

Slowly, however, this changed; and in the middle of the second half of the 1960s, the situation became calmer, at least outwardly, although the deficiencies of the centrally planned economy continued to undermine efforts to ensure efficient and profitable production. Between the late 1960s and late 1970s, works directors tended to stay in their positions. Only the new drive to create *Kombinate* initiated a new round of replacements in the late 1970s. Accordingly, TRO had had five different works directors in the 1960s, but only one in the 1970s, and the BGW had to accommodate three works directors during the 1960s, but only one for the 1970s and a large part of the 1980s.

By the 1970s, a reluctance to attract attention from central authorities defined the attitude of most economic functionaries. Possibly it had become clear that no improvements were to be expected from their involvement. Most works directors and their management teams were glad to be able to fulfil the plan, at least officially. Whatever methods seemed necessary were employed, including semi-legal initiatives such as unofficial networks, additional bonuses, and higher wages for the workforce or false bookkeeping.⁵⁶ Any detailed attention could have been disastrous in what was, by the late 1970s, an extremely precarious situation in spite of officially fulfilled plans. There were two sides to routinisation: outward calm and inner chaos. Not

56. Deich, Kohte, *Betriebliche Sozialeinrichtungen*, 168. See also LAB C Rep. 411, Nr. 1306, Volume 5, *Stellungnahme und Beschluss der Parteileitung in der Leitungssitzung 28.9.1978*. In addition, see interview with K., 30.5.2005 (transcript in possession of author).

either one but the combination of both aspects undermined morale in the long term.

On the one hand, most people adjusted to given circumstances and, on the other hand, many exploited the system. Routinisation had brought with it structures that tended to be ineffective with regard to what they were actually meant to achieve. These structures had acquired some stability and ensured the relatively smooth running of everyday processes, which was a crucial part of the sense of 'normality' that had been growing since the 1960s. Nevertheless, over time the recognition grew that these structures would not be able to help.

By the late 1970s, at the latest, suspicions had arisen that they presented a major aspect of the basic deficiencies of political system. In the 1970s, most structures had become established and were regulated by laws that underwent only minor changes under Honecker. Their behaviour became predictable and, thereby, they could be exploited; exploitation meant in the sense of using given opportunities such as social benefits and educational possibilities to their maximum. The realisation of personal interests without useless confrontation helped many to keep a sense of self-determination in an extremely controlling environment. It allowed the majority of East Germans to create a life for themselves and their families that they felt was worth living.

State-owned concerns were part of these structures and, as has been indicated above, most had been able to stabilise their production processes sufficiently by the 1970s to ensure relatively smooth functioning, at least outwardly. In spite of continuing problems such as unreliable deliveries of material, insufficient investment, and difficult working conditions, officially plans were fulfilled, although the methods used were not always legal and often relied on short-term solutions. By 1971, the intense focus on the improvement of working and living conditions had helped to stabilise the workforce: turnover and sickness rates had declined notably from the high levels of the mid 1960s.⁵⁷ However, stabilisation was closely interlinked with routine and the workforce reacted in an ambivalent manner, sensitive to routinisation, a reaction that had a notable impact on company culture. People got used to political and economic circumstances that seemed unalterable and to the fact that fundamental problems would not be solved by central authorities. Neither initiative, nor criticism, nor opposition would make the economic system efficient; at the most, it would enable factories

57. See for example BLHA Rep. 704 HFO 415, 427, 428, 429, 500, 668. See also BLHA Rep. 704 HFO 15; 36 *Erfüllung der geplanten Arbeitsproduktivität*, 21.10.1966, p. 2.

to fulfil the plan without necessarily working profitably. It would at least serve to ensure wages and bonuses.

The brigade movement is one example that highlights this process of recognition and, increasingly, resignation. The first brigade movement was stopped quickly because of its tendency towards independence. In 1958, a second attempt was made to bind together small groups of colleagues into brigades. It was intended that these brigades would ensure higher productivity, greater control, and the social and political education of individuals. In the late 1950s and very early 1960s, the movement was quite effective. Brigade diaries were still kept on a daily basis, noting every success and each problem that arose during the working day.⁵⁸ Individual brigades tried to address problems in this way and hoped for support from economic functionaries, whom they confronted with their records. However, already in the early 1960s, it became apparent that the workers' criticisms were not welcome and tended to be ignored.⁵⁹ Routine set in, which was manifested in brigade diaries that became more colourful, but had less content; criticism was replaced by politically correct statements and descriptions of social events.⁶⁰ The number of brigades increased steadily until 1965, but they experienced decline up to 1967, when central authorities stepped in and ordered new efforts to reinitiate the movement.⁶¹ From then on, ever more brigades were founded although activities of many (but certainly not all) brigades were increasingly limited to those officially expected and necessary for the award of the title '*Brigade der sozialistischen Arbeit*', which included a financial reward. The numbers of brigades were increasing gradually and brigade diaries were kept, but resignation and a new focus on personal interests were growing; routine was taking its toll.

In a similar process towards disillusionment, sickness rates and turnover started to rise again from the mid 1970s onwards.⁶² This was partly connected to higher levels of stress at the workplace due to efforts to rationalise production processes, reducing possible gaps in the working day to a

58. See Jörg Roesler, 'Das Brigadetagebuch—betriebliches Rapportbuch, Chronik des Brigadelebens oder Erziehungsfibel?', p. 153, in Evemarie Badstübner, *Befremdlich Anders. Leben in der DDR* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 2000). See also Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien*, p. 138.

59. See Madarász, 'Die Realität der Wirtschaftsreform in der DDR', p. 970. See also Thomas Reichel, 'Jugoslawische Verhältnisse?—Die 'Brigaden der sozialistischen Arbeit' und die 'Syndikalismus' Affäre (1959–62)', p. 72, in *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur—Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Cologne et al.: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), pp. 45–73.

60. Roesler, 'Das Brigadetagebuch', pp. 156, 158.

61. Jörg Roesler, 'Probleme des Brigadealltags. Arbeitsverhältnisse und Arbeitsklima in volkseigenen Betrieben 1950–89', pp. 11–12, in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B38 (1997): 3–17.

62. BLHA Rep. 704 HFO 1107 Vorlage 6/75, 14.5.1975, 2; 1134 Vorlage 3/78, 26.1.1978, 2; 1143 BGL-Sitzung 5.12.1979, p. 4.

minimum.⁶³ In addition, the improvement of working and living conditions stagnated because of changes in investment policy, which prioritised Honecker's buildings programme and central social policy. For the economy, this meant first of all, a lack of adequate capacities and materials. Therefore, extensive programmes for the improvement of working and living conditions existed on paper and were agreed upon every year, but their realisation was not ensured. Particularly unsatisfactory sanitary facilities and old building stock such as the cramped and draughty production halls in the BGW could not be dealt with for years. Managers were forced to realise the most urgent tasks as far as possible within their own means. Naturally, the workforce noticed these problems, which reflected growing deficiencies within the production process.⁶⁴ Frustration and changes in mentality affected all parts of the workforce, including functionaries, party members, and, especially, young people.

However, long-term processes also influenced the development of different attitudes among workers. The extension of the programme for the improvement of working and living conditions had been a new development in the 1960s. Eventually, it became a significant and obligatory part of the annual contract between workforce and management laying down mutual pledges and promises. The growing breadth of the BKV in the 1960s, at least in this instance, was not a sign of growing routine in all aspects of trade union work, but of a decisive achievement for the workforce. Their expectations and rights were embodied in these contracts, which made it possible to voice demands and criticism. By the 1970s, directors were making vague promises and blaming technical and financial difficulties for substandard working conditions.⁶⁵ This was progress: it is crucial to remember here the changes that had taken place in the 1960s. In the early 1960s, it would have been neither acceptable to complain openly about working conditions nor would an economic functionary have stammered an excuse; mostly public complaints either were not made or were ignored. The establishment of programmes for the improvement of working and living conditions enabled the workforce to complain and to be heard, and they did this on a massive scale during the 1970s, when investment shifts under Honecker really did cause additional technical and financial difficulties for individual factories.⁶⁶ Increasingly, these benefits were taken for granted and were expected.

63. Gareth Dale, *Between State Capitalism and Globalisation. The Collapse of the East German Economy* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), p. 184.

64. See Madarász, 'Normalisation in East German enterprises'.

65. Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien*, p. 169.

66. See for example BLHA Rep. 704 HFO 447.

Furthermore, in the 1970s it became apparent that patterns of behaviour were changing. To take a specific example: the so-called *Neuerer*, workers who suggested technological improvements and innovations, encountered hostility from some of their colleagues in the 1950s and beyond.⁶⁷ Management also became afraid of technological improvement very quickly as it disturbed the precarious production process.⁶⁸ In addition, potential *Neuerer* seem to have become reluctant to suggest innovative changes to the production process, either because they did not want to upset their colleagues by suggesting innovations that might increase norms or because they cooperated with each other to exploit the system.⁶⁹ By the 1970s at the latest, it had become more important (or practical) to uphold cordial relations with colleagues and to avoid confrontations than to work effectively. With routine, the conviction developed that nothing would ever change for the better, causing lethargy, frustration, and a growing concern for one's personal interests rather than those of the factory or society at large.⁷⁰

The strong focus on personal interests affected East German society most severely. It undermined the desired sense of collectivism by concentrating concern on the individual and no longer on the group. Individualisation, however, does not entail autonomy, emancipation, and limitless self-realisation, but rather a combination of self-determination and dependency on existing conditions. Strong tendencies towards individualisation became noticeable in the late 1970s, especially among young people and women, but certainly affected almost all sections of society.⁷¹

Conclusion

The two faces of routinisation combined stability and outward calm, even social peace, with resignation that was turning into lethargy and, eventually, individualisation. Routine was based on an internalisation of the rules of the game, and on certain norms and expectations, which is a significant part of normalisation. It allowed many to accept 'socialist normality', as it had developed in the 1960s and 1970s, as a given and thereby enjoy its

67. Kott, *Le communisme au quotidien*, p. 123.

68. Steiner, *DDR-Wirtschaftsreform*, p. 38.

69. See Günter Mensching, *Ingenieur M. ppm. Einer unter Millionen. Lebenserinnerungen und Ansichten* (Berlin: Nora, 2005), pp. 189ff. See also Dagmar Semmelmann, *Gespräch mit vier Kollegen aus der Tischlerei des O-Betriebes*, unpublished notes, 6.9.1978, pp. 1–2.

70. See Dagmar Semmelmann, *Gedanken zum sozialistischen Wettbewerb*, unpublished notes, 1978/79, p. 3.

71. See Müller, *Jugend*, p. 13.

advantages, grumble about its disadvantages, and avoid its hazards and pitfalls. This 'socialist normality' included social benefits at the same time as it contained the presence of the MfS. Normal life in the GDR, as experienced by most people, was based not only on shortages increasing the need for personal networks, but also on a surplus of expectations, which the state had unwittingly encouraged in its attempt to uphold social peace, but proved unable to satisfy in the long-term. It was also built on structures and a language specific to the East German dictatorship, and on personal relationships and values that mirrored those in other European societies. Perceptions of 'normality' were shaped by experiences, expectations, hopes, and fears. However, perceptions changed: the early 1960s offered a different 'normality' to that of the late 1970s. Arguably, tendencies towards individualisation from the mid 1970s onwards can be described as a backlash against some aspects of routinisation, especially standardised biographies, inefficient institutions, and rigid structures, but also against the gap between official propaganda and everyday life, between promise and reality.

Normalisation in the 1960s and 1970s had led to relative stability, although fundamental problems were not solved. With time, the majority of the population began not only to adjust to, but also to shape 'socialist normality'. On basic issues at least, common norms and mutual expectations were established. Therefore, it is insufficient to describe the 1970s by pointing at the reliance on mutual arrangements, whereby functionaries were reluctant to insist on a rigid application of central policy and the population adhered only to the required minimum. Such an approach would neither explain the remnants of enthusiasm still existent in the mid 1960s, nor the optimism of the early 1970s, nor the subsequent decline, which certainly had its roots in this first decade under Honecker's rule. Routine upheld outward appearances whilst underneath both ideological tenets and their practical implications, such as the centrally planned economy or the brigade movement, were breaking down. In the late 1970s, however, tendencies towards individualisation not just in the private sphere, but also at places of work contributed strongly to symptoms of disintegration. The long-term consequences of this process did not become apparent until the end of the 1980s.