

moral responsibility – for peace, for the environment, for the nature of their own society and its future. If not quite the 'socialist personality' of official propaganda, there were nevertheless distinct traces of socialist idealism as well as Western consumerism to be found among East German citizens.

Chapter Seven

Gender

Official conceptions of masculinity changed very little during the forty years of the GDR. The rather muscular ideal of the 'traditional' working-class male, characterised by physical strength and stamina, and widely prevalent in the official imagery of the 'workers' and peasants' state', was not greatly affected by the long-term shift towards more white-collar and professional jobs: the symbols of suit, tie and briefcase that proliferated in West German marketing imagery did not manage to displace the blue overalls and hard hats of East German propaganda. Those East German men who found themselves challenged to rethink their domestic roles or develop notions of the 'new man' did so largely out of necessity: the growing participation of women in the paid labour force, and in particular the demands of shift work, led many men to take on greater responsibilities for childcare and household duties. If East Germany was a more 'working class' society in its official imagery and rhetoric than West Germany, then it was also in many respects more 'male' in a very traditional construction of masculinity.

But the gendering of propaganda images did change in one crucial respect. Women were pictured, too, in overalls and hard hats, driving trucks, cranes and operating heavy machinery. This signified one crucial area of change in gender constructions in 'actually existing socialism'. At the same time it became ever more clear that gender roles cannot be transformed by focusing on one side of the relationship alone. The alleged 'emancipation of women' in the GDR was for all sorts of reasons at best lopsided and partial. There were very radical changes in the public roles and professional aspirations of women, and only minimal changes in assumptions about what was 'normal' for men. Policies were often out of line with practices, professed ideals out of line with ingrained attitudes. In any event, the notion of 'emancipation' would require far wider rethinking to encompass questions of freedom of choice and equality of opportunity for all – a discussion going way beyond the question

merely of the respective roles of men and women and changing constructions of gender. Yet if one remains with a more limited focus, the transformation in the roles of women is one of the areas of greatest social change in the GDR.

In 1950, many women in East Germany thought that it was only 'normal' for young girls to aspire to get married and have children rather than careers, and for married women to stay at home and to look after their families – however much the post-war realities departed from this ideal. By 1990, the majority of East German women thought that it was only 'normal' to go out to work – whether or not they were married, whether or not they had children. Around half the East German labour force in the 1980s was female; after unification, women were laid off disproportionately and affordable childcare facilities slashed, hitting East German women particularly hard. Such was the transformation, over forty years, in what was perceived to be 'perfectly ordinary' with respect to women's lives in the GDR.

The roles of women in the GDR have been generally considered in terms of a problematic pair of concepts, usually held to be polar opposites: 'emancipation' or 'double burden' (*Doppelbelastung*). Closer inspection suggests that there is far more at stake here than simply a pair of alternatives. The notion of 'double burden' instantly reveals one aspect of the problem: that the roles of only half the population, namely females, were subject to close scrutiny, and that, for women, traditionally male tasks were simply added on to traditionally female roles. Male roles were not subjected to the same scrutiny, and there was no comparable degree of rethinking the division of labour in the domestic sphere. Most men – including the men at the top, the policy-makers in the Politburo – still assumed that primary responsibilities for housework and childcare lay with women, even beyond the first few months of a baby's life, when breastfeeding was perhaps the only service that fathers genuinely could not perform. The focus in the GDR was thus essentially on women, rather than on gender roles as such; with the exception of the ideas of a handful of feminist intellectuals, there is little evidence of any concomitant rethinking of the roles of men.

The notion of 'emancipation' opens up a far wider set of philosophical and political issues. The question may obviously be asked about the extent to which either men or women were, or could be, genuinely 'emancipated' in a paternalistic dictatorship in which, despite claims that everything was 'for the good of the people' ('Alles zum Wohle des Volkes'), there were vast areas of life over which 'the people' had little power or control. Yet this question is not one simply of comparison between dictatorships and democracies; the formal freedoms of capitalism may not actually feel much like 'emancipation' for most people either (least of all those at the bottom of the social heap), when the

iniquitous hidden (and not-so-hidden) forces of the market, the class system, the biases of privilege and the injustices of unfair education systems, mean that structurally shaped inequalities and major constraints on freedom of choice can be camouflaged by the language of meritocracy and individual 'success' or 'failure'.

What would constitute 'emancipation' is in any event a far wider issue than that of the simple notion of (at least apparent) freedom of choice for individuals, however fundamental a human right this may be held to be. The complexities are rooted partly in the fact that individuals live in social communities where – as it is often rather concisely formulated – 'your freedom ends where my nose begins', a point noted both in the liberal tradition of J. S. Mill, in which freedom should not extend to areas where one person's actions might cause harm to others, and in the Marxist notion that true 'emancipation' is only possible in a fundamentally equal society in which the 'condition for the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'. It is rooted also in the paradox, noted more by Marxists than by liberals, that even though we may think we are free to do what we want, we are not necessarily free to want what we want – that is, individual aspirations are themselves very much a product of the social and historical environment in which they are formed.

So the question of women's roles is in fact intrinsically and inescapably about a larger set of issues concerning the social construction of gender more broadly, including men's roles; issues of power and conceptions of freedom; and the social shaping of individual aspirations and choices. Within this wider set of considerations, analysis of the dramatic changes in East German women's roles and aspirations over forty years provides a fascinating demonstration of the interplay of regime-specific social policies, domestic political forces, changing socio-economic conditions, and wider social and cultural developments.

Kinder, Küche, Kirche? The pre-1949 background

For centuries, women have of course worked. What changed with industrialisation was the growing prevalence of women in paid employment with fixed hours of work outside the home, farm or domestic environment. Increasing participation of women in the paid labour force, particularly in the growing white-collar and service sectors of the economy, had already been a feature of the early twentieth century in Germany. This trend was massively assisted by the absence of men at the front during the First World War, and the influx of women into factories, as well as clerical jobs in offices and the traditional

domestic-service roles. The emergent political emancipation of women was a notable feature of the Weimar Republic, with women having the vote for the first time in the constitution of 1919, and women being elected to the National Assembly in Weimar, which had the highest number of female parliamentary representatives in any Western state at the time. Nevertheless, female 'emancipation' remained a highly contentious issue, ranging from disapproval of *Doppelverdiener* (dual-income families, where married women were also in paid employment) to conflicts over women's control over their own fertility through the use of contraception or the practice of abortion. Nor were the political parties that particularly supported female emancipation necessarily the parties most women favoured with their newly found voting power; women tended to vote disproportionately for conservative and religious parties (such as the Catholic Centre Party) while the SPD and KPD, with their pro-feminist policies, failed to make much of an inroad into the female vote.

During the Third Reich, a number of mutually contradictory developments took place simultaneously, although interpretations of these developments remain contentious.¹ On the one hand, explicit Nazi ideology with respect to women was exceedingly traditional, stressing the return of women to the domestic and nurturing spheres of 'children, kitchen, church' ('Kinder, Küche, Kirche') – although actually, in Hitler's ideology, the 'church' part was more notable by its absence. Nazi ideology was one of 'biological essentialism', with fundamentally different roles for men and women. This was, however, no injunction for women to retreat into a 'private sphere' of family life, for Nazi racial ideology was deeply intrusive.

Racial and political prejudices cross-cut and took priority over essentialist views on gender.² It was the perpetuation of the Nazi racial community and its wider interests that was at the centre of Nazi views on gender: hence 'women' were not a homogeneous group in the Third Reich, but were rather divided on racial and related criteria into those who were to be primarily producers (such as those designated for forced labour) and those who were to be the physical reproducers of the 'national community'; in other words, the biologically defined category of women was further subdivided according to which subgroups were considered to be most useful to the various purposes and goals of the 'master race'. Women deemed to be of healthy, 'Aryan' descent were to be the 'breeding stock' of the future *Volksgemeinschaft*: pro-natalist policies such as tax incentives, subsidies, housing loans and 'Mother's crosses' combined with a prohibition on the use of contraception and the rigorous enforcement of Paragraph 218 of the Civil Code outlawing abortion, were designed to encourage the production of as many 'racially desirable' children as possible.³ Women who, for one reason or another, were by contrast deemed

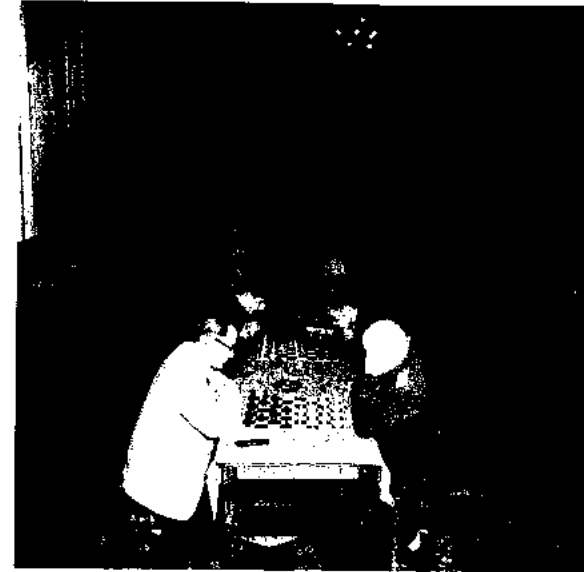
to be 'inferior' or 'undesirable' as breeders were subjected to compulsory sterilisation: around 400,000 compulsory sterilisations (on both men and women) were carried out in Nazi Germany.⁴ And, at the end of the spectrum, 'racially inferior' women (such as Jews and gypsies) and others who were designated outcasts or active opponents of Nazism (Jehovah's Witnesses, lesbians, socialists and others) faced forced labour or murder in the death camps. So even when talking about the Nazis' 'traditional conception' of women's roles, it is important to remember that this role was one that was not private and individual, but rather seen as the way of women making a personal contribution to the collective goals of the wider *Volksgemeinschaft*, as epitomised in the slogan 'every woman, every year, [should produce] a child for the Führer'.

Furthermore, there were marked dissonances between Nazi ideology and policies on the one hand, and what actually happened with respect to the roles of women during the Third Reich on the other.⁵ Despite the fact that women were excluded from the higher echelons of Party and state, increasing numbers of women acquired leadership skills through participation in the Nazi girls' and women's groups (the League of German Maidens, and the National Socialist and German Women's organisations) – admittedly of no real political influence and importance in the wider scheme of the Nazi state, but arguably important experience for the women themselves. Despite Nazi pro-natalist policies, and despite an increasing number of marriages in the 1930s, the twentieth-century trend towards the small nuclear family continued. The rise in births, from a low of 14.7 per thousand in 1933 to a high of 20.3 per thousand in 1939, could be explained as much by increasing confidence in conditions of economic recovery from the depths of the Depression as by Nazi pro-natalist policies; nor did it fully recover to pre-Depression levels. The early twentieth-century trend towards increasing employment of women also continued: despite Hitler's opposition to women in politics and the law, and his ambivalence to their participation in professional occupations (with the exception of such 'caring' professions as medicine), the squeeze on women's professional employment was never complete. In 1933, 34.4 per cent of women worked, yet by 1939 this had risen to 36.7 per cent. The proportion of women employed in traditional roles in domestic service declined, compared to the proportions employed in the more visible areas of industry, trade and government; and two million more married women were in employment.⁶ During the war, with men away at the front, Nazi policy-makers argued over whether women should be enticed in even greater numbers into the labour force in order to fill the gaps, or should still be encouraged to remain at home (leaving aside for the moment women's own preferences for avoiding hard and

exhausting factory labour). And, with increasing responsibility for the running of small family businesses and farms, women began to acquire more managerial, organisational and financial experience. Similarly, while there was an enforced drop in the number of female university students in the peacetime years, many women were able to take up university places when men were away at the front in the war.

In short, the balance sheet of Nazi policies towards women is at best ambiguous; and the Nazi rhetoric of 'children, kitchen, church' was far from realised in practice. Whatever one makes of the polarised and often oversimplistic arguments over whether women should be seen as 'victims' or 'perpetrators', it is quite clear that the record of women's experience in the Third Reich was exceedingly variable according to class, politics and 'racial' categorisation.⁷ As with so many areas of the social history of the Third Reich, racial policy and foreign policy had the greatest impact, and the experience of war left the largest mark on the roles and experiences of women, who took over major responsibility for the sheer physical survival, as well as the psychological well-being and socialisation, of their families. After the war, the image of female strength was perpetuated in the concept of the so-called *Trümmerfrauen* or 'women of the ruins', in what became known as the 'hour of the women'.⁸ Although this image is clearly overstated – many women fell prey to exhaustion, hunger, illness and rape – the experience of war had a far deeper impact on women's roles than any Nazi ideology or policies.

War had also, in a far more brutal and direct way, altered the character of the labour supply: the number of men of working age had been decimated by Hitler's suicidal policies on behalf of his *Volk*. In the closing months of the war, ever more and younger men and boys had been thrown into the war effort, in a vain attempt to halt the onward march of Allied tanks by conscripting bunches of half-grown, half-trained sixteen year olds. The post-war demographic tree was, as a result, extremely lopsided, with a heavy preponderance of females over males. In 1946 there were 7,800,000 males and 10,560,000 females in the Soviet Zone of Occupation. In 1950, just after the foundation of the GDR, there were 8,160,000 males and 10,230,000 million females, and in 1955, 7,970,000 males and 9,860,000 females.⁹ Given the disproportionate losses among the adult male population that had been thrown into battle by Hitler regardless of heavy losses of life, the preponderance of females over males in this age group was even greater (see Figures 1 and 2 below). Gender roles were also affected by the very poor physical state in which many men found themselves after the war, with war wounds often compounded by the effects of lengthy periods of internment as prisoners of war.



1 'German-Soviet friendship' (1): Just a few years after they were engaged in bitter military conflict, Germans and Russians were supposed to forge close links of authentic friendship. Here, former opponents engage in a chess championship in the 'Maxim-Gorki House of German-Soviet Friendship' in Schwerin, November 1953.



2 'German-Soviet friendship' (2): A Russian soldier ostentatiously demonstrates 'friendship' with a very small GDR citizen in the symbolic surroundings of the grandiose Soviet War Memorial in Treptow Park, surrounded by monuments adorned with copious quotations from Stalin, May 1952.



3 Capturing the hearts and minds of the future (1): A massive poster, claiming that 'young activists work for peace and for a better life', advertises the 'Second Congress of Young Activists' in Erfurt, April 1949.



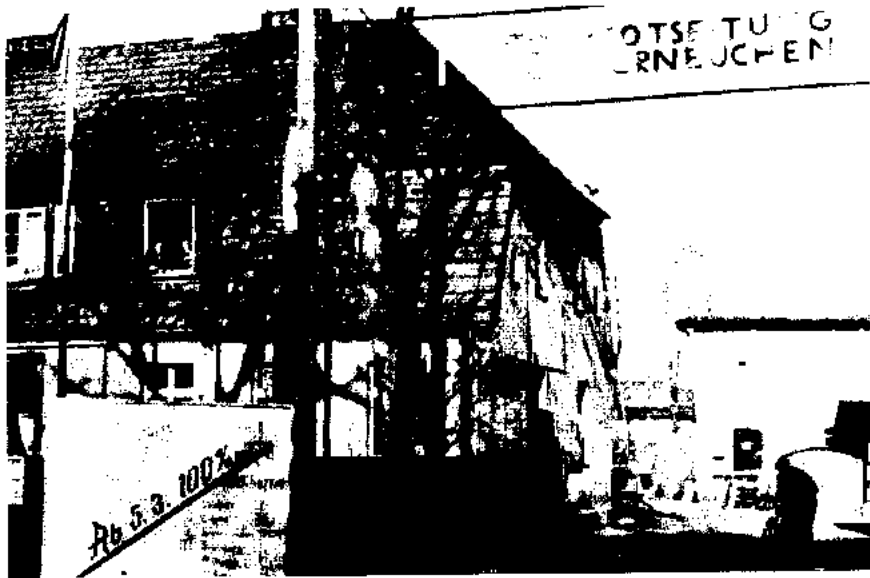
4 Capturing the hearts and minds of the future (2): Young Pioneers and their leaders on a 'tourism' training camp, August 1955.



5 Changing the face of German industrial production (1): The entrance to the 'Eisenhüttenkombinat' works in the first socialist new town, given the name 'Stalinstadt' (and later renamed Eisenhüttenstadt), May 1953.



6 Changing the face of German industrial production (2): The renowned Krupp works in Magdeburg, formerly owned by the Krupp armaments family and after 1945 taken into the 'ownership of the people', was in May 1951 renamed the 'Ernst-Thälmann-Works' in honour of the communist leader martyred by the Nazis in Buchenwald concentration camp. The building is further festooned with a slogan praising the Soviet Union, beneath a picture of Stalin.



7 The collectivisation of the peasantry (1): A 'Machine and Tractor Station' for lending heavy machinery to peasants. This one, photographed in March 1960 and half obscured by a placard proclaiming the victory of socialism, soon had to change its name when the Chinese communist leader Mao Tse Tung fell out of favour with the Soviet leadership.



8 The collectivisation of the peasantry (2): The compulsory collectivisation of remaining independent peasants, forced into 'LPGs' or agricultural cooperatives. This board triumphantly celebrates the achievement within 48 hours in the spring of 1960 of 100 per cent of LPG membership in the village of Marxwalde (originally Neuhardenberg but renamed after Karl Marx on 8 May 1949 to mark the anniversary of the end of the war).



9 Political propaganda for the 'participatory dictatorship': An election slogan for the single list of the 'National Front' in the parliamentary elections of November 1958, in which voters had no genuine choice between parties, exhorts citizens to 'plan together, work together, govern together'.



10 Political propaganda for 'consumer socialism': A poster celebrating '15 years of the SED' since its foundation in April 1946, and an iconic photo of the SED leader Walter Ulbricht, amongst a typical display of jars, tins and boxes in a Leipzig shop window, April 1961.



11 Before the Wall: A perfectly ordinary street-corner scene in Bernauerstraße, at the end of the French sector in Berlin.



12 The Wall goes up: The East is effectively cut off from the West in Bernauerstraße, 13 August 1961.



13 Three young women from Berlin receive paramilitary training in the euphemistically entitled 'Society for Sport and Technology', August 1967.



14 Notwithstanding their sully body language and sullen facial expressions, these members of a 'youth brigade' are being congratulated by the Works Director on their outstanding contribution to the fulfilment of the production targets of the Kombinat, August 1970.



15 The changing face of the East German peasantry: Female operators of massive combine harvesters at shift change, July 1975.



16 Medical education for international students, Quedlinburg, March 1973.



17 Housing (1): An elderly couple are presented with two new armchairs as a gift from the Berlin city council on the occasion of the festive handover of their newly renovated flat, supposedly the 5,000th flat to have been renovated in the context of 'participatory competitions' ('Mach-Mit-Wettbewerbe'), October 1974.



18 Housing (2): Dresdeners move into a new apartment block in November 1975.



19 A somewhat sexist sign indicates the 'Best quality worker [in the masculine gender] in the socialist competition' among this all-female labour force of a textile factory in the 1970s.



20 This district nurse, here examining the health of kindergarten children in a rural area of Bezirk Schwerin in 1986, also served as a CDU representative on the Schwerin Bezirk Council for over ten years, nominated and supported by her collective.



21 A classic scene of a work brigade of young building labourers helping to construct a new housing estate, 1986.



22 A socialist youth delegation from Korea lays a wreath in honour of the former communist leader Ernst Thälmann at the monument in the Ernst-Thälmann Park, Berlin, September 1987.



23 Residents of the Berlin suburb of Hellersdorf involved in the weekend cooperative ('Mach mit!') improvement works for the children's facilities in their housing estate, 1988.



24 Citizens of the future: Children playing in one of the many childcare facilities in a new town area of Cottbus in mid-July 1989, just a few months before the fall of the Wall and little over a year before the end of the GDR.

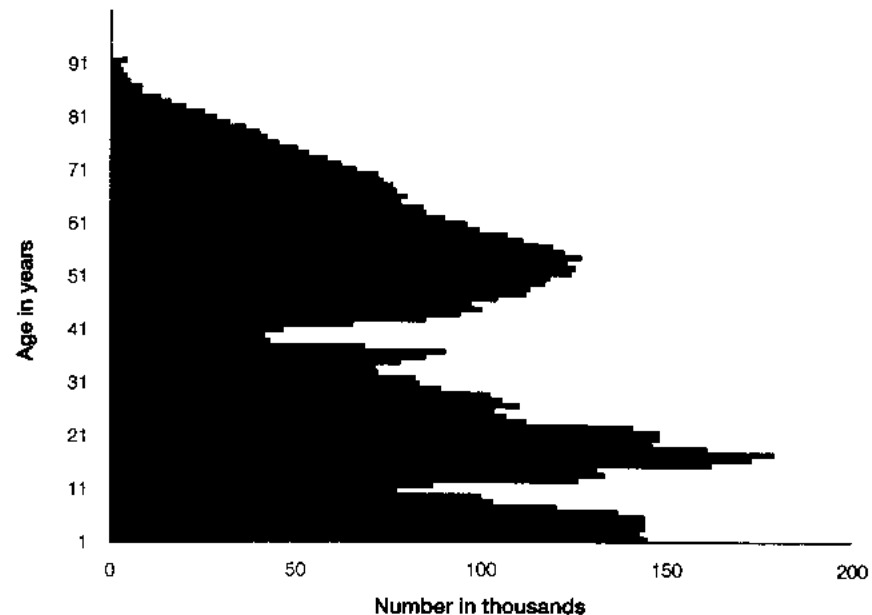


Figure 1: Demographic tree for 1955: males

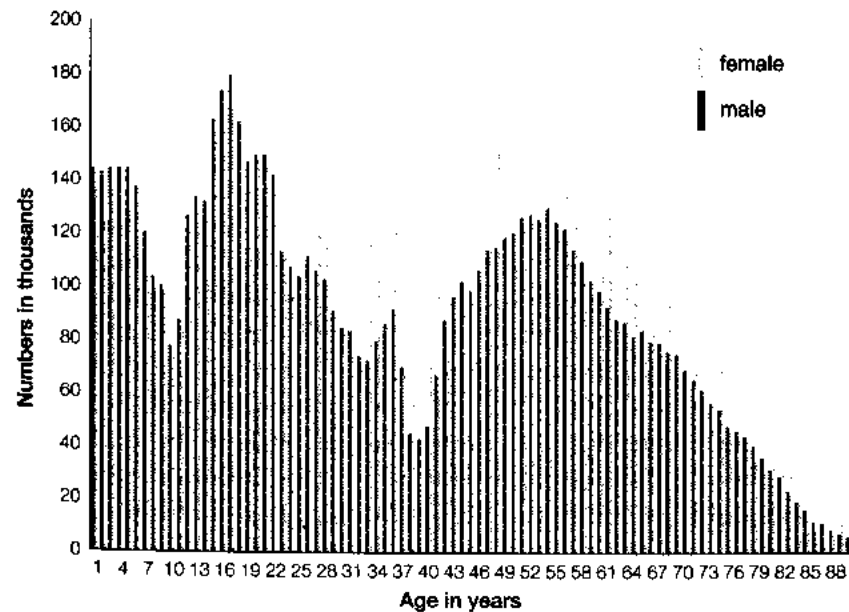


Figure 2: Comparison of male and female age profiles in 1955¹⁰

While the post-war need of the West German labour market for an increased supply of adult males was soon met by the flow of refugees from the lost German territories of the east – 3,500,000 from East Germany alone, many millions more from further east, with the proportion of refugees constituting as much as one fifth of the total population of the Federal Republic by 1960 – the GDR was not so fortunate. The demographic imbalance produced by war was further exacerbated by the disproportionate loss of male skilled labour across the 'Iron Curtain' in the 1950s. So, while West German women in the 1950s were lulled back into the domestic sphere, with a resurrection of the ideology of 'children, kitchen, church', East German women were desperately needed for the economic reconstruction of the GDR. The 'hour of the women' – with all its attendant ambiguities and burdens – was not to be so short-lived on the eastern side of the inner-German border.

The institutional and legal framework of gender in the GDR

There were two main priorities underlying SED policies with respect to women: first, the undoubted economic need for women's labour in the light of the circumstances just outlined, and therefore the need to ensure that the demands of production and reproduction were not mutually incompatible; and secondly, a principled belief in the need for the 'emancipation' of women arising from the Marxist philosophical tradition. While the first priority was largely met in the GDR, the second – at least if one does not share the SED's views – was not. Women were increasingly provided with the conditions necessary for full participation in the labour market, but neither men nor women were entirely emancipated from traditional gender stereotypes, let alone from more fundamental restrictions on human rights.

An underlying theme is the tension, here as elsewhere, between high-minded, vague-but-laudable negative goals (abolition of exploitation and such like) that can be broadly shared across different political and philosophical perspectives, and the rather specific conceptions that the SED sought to put in their place. Thus the emancipation of women did not mean quite the same thing for the SED as it does for Western liberals or feminists. The latter usually adopt a rather individualistic conception of 'emancipation' in terms of the rights of and possibilities for individuals to exercise freedom of choice with respect to virtually every area of life, from career goals and leisure pursuits, through material possessions and economic independence, to physical appearance, relationships, timing and pattern of reproduction, and so on. Such freedom of choice of course entails rejection of old material and legal constraints and of the internalised psychological repression of a 'patriarchal'

society, a programme of opposition to old forms of oppression wholeheartedly endorsed by the SED. But the SED generally sought to replace oppressive patriarchal structures and mentalities not with liberal notions of individual freedom of choice, but rather with new forms of collectivism as defined by the leading Party. So with 'emancipatory' moves often came the specification of new duties and responsibilities revolving around the fulfilment of collective goals. The future of society as a whole, and women's contributions to that future, were as much at stake as the future of women as individuals. Nevertheless, it is important not to reify the 'SED' as a unitary actor or sole initiator of policy with respect to women; it rapidly becomes clear that a variety of processes were at work, with different social and political factors shaping the pattern and character of policies affecting gender roles in the GDR.

It has sometimes been argued that GDR policies with respect to women fall readily into two major phases: an early, 'genuinely' progressive and idealistic phase in the 1950s and '60s, concerned with the 'emancipation' of women from patriarchal constraints, and the realisation of full equality with men; and a later, more 'pragmatic' phase in the 1970s and '80s, in which women's policies were designed primarily to ensure that they would both produce more children and contribute effectively in the workforce. As with many other attempts to draw sharp distinctions between the Ulbricht and Honecker periods on these lines, this periodisation tends to oversimplify the position. For one thing, pragmatic and idealistic considerations were present throughout, though differently weighted in different quarters; there was no single monolithic 'SED view'. For another, the presumed 'needs of society', or at least a conception of the system as a whole, informed policy changes throughout, and women were continually seen not as isolated individuals but as integral parts of a family that itself was a key element in the construction of socialist society.¹¹ To make a sharp break with Honecker's accession to power is both to overlook significant continuities and more subtle long-term changes.

Key measures challenging traditional notions of women's roles were instituted already in the occupation period. The SMAD Order 253 of 17 August 1946, issued by the Soviet Military Administration, enshrined the principle of equal pay for equal work. In the course of the occupation period, with the very large number of rapes of German women and girls by Red Army soldiers, and numerous consequent unwanted pregnancies in the extremely difficult conditions of widespread disease, inadequate or ruined accommodation, and often near-starvation rations, a number of *Länder* introduced a relaxation of

Paragraph 218 prohibiting abortion. With the formal foundation of the GDR, matters were very quickly regularised on a new basis.

The equal status of men and women was firmly embedded in the 1949 Constitution, which asserted that men and women had equal rights, including the right to work, equal wages for equal work, and particular protection for women, marriage and the family. In September 1950, the Law for the Protection of Mother and Children and the Rights of Women (Gesetz über den Mutter- und Kinderschutz und die Rechte der Frau) was designed to ensure that women not only enjoyed equal rights in theory, but that also the 'still persisting inequalities in practice' could be dealt with.¹² A wide-ranging series of important practical measures was introduced, including financial support, improved hospital and medical care, the provision of crèches and other childcare facilities, as well as rights at work (such as consideration for mothers of small children when arranging overnight shift work) and even – especially important at a time of continuing widespread hunger – the doubling of the mother's entitlement to food rations from the sixth month of pregnancy to the end of breast-feeding or the completion of the baby's first year of life. The one element in this document that caused concern to many women was §11, reinstating the effective prohibition of abortion by removing the so-called 'social indication' and allowing abortion only when a continuation of pregnancy would risk the life or health of the pregnant woman, or when one parent was a carrier of a serious hereditary disease (the so-called 'medical' and 'eugenic' indications). Yet this was in line with the general ideological tenor of policies towards women, given the integrated focus on women, children and the family as crucial elements of the future of the community as a whole: 'Children are the future of the nation, and therefore one of the primary tasks of our democratic state is the concern for children, for the strengthening of the family, and for encouragement of large families.'¹³ Or, as §12 put it: 'A healthy family is one of the fundamental pillars of a democratic society. Strengthening the family is one of the most important tasks of the government of the German Democratic Republic.'¹⁴ Thus the duty of women to produce the socialist citizens of the future was held to override their individual freedom of choice to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.

There was a more or less constant stream of practical measures in the 1950s and '60s that sought to affect the roles and aspirations of women, including measures for the introduction of equality in schools (co-educational comprehensive schools, abolition of separate sport and leisure activities, and separate academic or vocational curricula for boys and girls); the extension of maternity leave and support provisions; the introduction of a paid 'day of housework' for married women and also single mothers under specified

conditions; the extension of provisions for child care, including workplace crèches in enterprises with large proportions of women workers; special provisions for single mothers; and the introduction of child-benefit payments with the abolition of rationing.

The variety of obstacles to women's full participation in the economic as well as the domestic sphere included not only practical but also psychological barriers to equality of opportunity. In the early 1960s, a great deal of energy was devoted to attempts to identify and remove these obstacles. A key statement was the Politburo communiqué of December 1961, 'Die Frauen – Der Frieden und der Sozialismus' ('Women – Peace and Socialism').¹⁵ The ideal was depicted in unmistakable terms: 'With self-confidence, intelligence and prudence, women accomplish outstanding achievements in their careers, in bringing up their children, and in the direction and leadership of our state.'¹⁶ The document was designed to exhort people in institutions at all levels to discuss how best to further women's positions and interests, and to alleviate the difficulties of everyday life. It recognised the weight of inherited prejudices – although ironically also reproducing them, in so far as 'women's duties' in the home appear to be simply reaffirmed – and summarised very aptly the difficulties faced on the ground by women:

Often women who already have leadership functions are over-burdened by excessive work without consideration of their duties as a mother and housewife. More is often demanded of them than of a man in the same position. Many [male] colleagues in positions of leadership are, without explicitly saying so, of the opinion that women have to 'prove' themselves through exceptional achievements. Instead of helping women and girls to deal with their greater burdens, they invent arguments that are supposed to prove that putting women into middle-level and higher functions is not possible. In particular it is asserted that the employment of a woman with a household and children to look after is economically not 'viable'; that men are more reliable and would not be absent as often; yes, there is also the 'argument' that women have less understanding for technical-organisational problems than men.¹⁷

After praising the achievements of women in all manner of fields, the complaint was made that these achievements had not been adequately acknowledged, either to assist women's own development, or for the purposes of social progress. As if the point had not already been made clearly enough, the document continued by identifying the major problem:

The main cause of this is the still-prevalent underestimation of the role of women in socialist society, particularly on the part of men, including functionaries in leading roles in the Party, state and economy and trade unions.¹⁸

The solution proposed in this communiqué was that of open public discussion. Such discussion should take place as widely as possible: not only in the parties, the mass organisations, the National Front, the state and trade union organisations, but also

In factories and residential areas, in the club houses of towns and villages, in newspapers and magazines, on radio and television, with the help of writers and artists and above all through the active participation of women themselves, everywhere the great debate about *Die Frauen – der Frieden und der Sozialismus* should take place. In the process, all questions and doubts should be expressed frankly, and the critical comments of women should be analysed and evaluated.¹⁹

In the event, there were indeed widespread discussions of women's issues at all levels in the GDR in the 1960s.

In March 1960, a Women's Commission (Frauenkommission) was founded under Edith Baumann, responsible to the Secretariat of the SED Central Committee. In February 1962 this was made responsible to the Politburo, under the leadership of Inge Lange, who was also leader of the women's department (Abteilung Frauen) of the Central Committee.²⁰ The FDGB met with representatives of workplace women's committees at a women's conference in May 1960. A decision of the Council of Ministers in 1962 laid down a number of principles for the furtherance of women in a wide variety of areas, ranging from education, training and the mundane issues of the workplace, to women's participation in politics, the creative arts and literature. The Family Law of 1965 (the *Familiengesetzbuch*), which came into effect in 1966, gave both parents equal responsibility for parenting (*Erziehungsverantwortung*). Divorce was also made much easier, such that, alongside the increasing financial independence of women through paid employment, the functions of marriage changed rather dramatically. Meanwhile, and without any publicity (indeed, under conditions of confidentiality), the 'medical indicators' for abortion were relaxed in 1965, such that the woman's 'health' was now interpreted more broadly to include not only physical health but also social and psychological well-being, thus greatly enlarging the proportion of pregnant women seeking termination who could be considered eligible for legal abortions. Women's roles were reconsidered in the wider context of the role of the family, and of young people as the embodiment of the future, with the Politburo Youth Communiqué of 21 September 1963, 'Giving Trust and Responsibility to Youth' ('Der Jugend Vertrauen und Verantwortung'), followed by the Youth Law (*Jugendgesetz*) of 4 May 1964 and the integrated Education Law of 1965 (*Gesetz über das einheitliche sozialistische Bildungssystem*). The focus of

social policy in these areas reinforced the point that women were viewed not as isolated individuals, but rather more broadly as part of 'socialist society' in which 'socialist marriage and the family' were seen as the building blocks of the socialist future.²¹

Given the general emphasis on increasing the birth rate, the Abortion Law of 1972 appears at first glance to run in quite the reverse direction, giving women the option of terminating a pregnancy on demand within the first twelve weeks. Although its precise timing was influenced by the possibility of visa-free travel to Poland (with the consequent possibility of obtaining abortions across the border), this law – passed within less than a year of Honecker's accession to power – was, more importantly, the culmination of a longer period of debate and the shifting climate of opinion in the 1960s.²² A younger, more female medical profession agreed with many women that individual freedom of choice was important, and the high disease and mortality rates associated with illegal abortions were now taken as arguments in support of legalisation, rather than used as evidence against abortion altogether. In the event, following a brief but dramatic rise in numbers of abortions to 113,232 in 1973 – along with the simultaneous introduction of free contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies and a range of measures to encourage wanted pregnancies – abortion rates steadied to rates generally between 80,000–95,000 per year, alongside rising birth rates, in the course of the 1970s.²³

The major emphasis of policies towards women in the Honecker era was primarily targeted to extending women's dual role in production and reproduction; the needs of 'non-productive' and 'non-reproductive' women (such as old age pensioners, the vast majority of whom were female) tended to be somewhat neglected in comparison. A declining birth rate in the 1960s compounded the problems brought about by the earlier loss of young adults in the years before 1961. Financial inducements for having children were repeatedly extended. Child benefits were constantly increased, with higher benefits for second and third children. Maternity leave provisions were expanded, with ever more extended periods of leave possible after the birth of first and subsequent children (by 1986, a full year on pay following the birth of a first child, eighteen months for a third child, two or three years in the case of multiple births). A comprehensive system of baby and childcare facilities was built up, such that from a very early age children could be looked after by a state institution: crèche, Kindergarten, or after-school care, depending on the age of the child. Thus there was not the economic disincentive – or sheer practical impossibility – faced by Western parents who had the 'luxury of choice' between working and not working, but who found that in practice there were no affordable child-care facilities to allow any real choice. A further practical

measure designed to assist East German parents was that of the concentration of functions such as shopping, laundry facilities and health-care centre attached to the workplace and well within easy reach. The quality of many of these institutions was, however, often quite another matter. The pro-natalist measures nevertheless appear in many respects to have been successful: the number of live births went up by as much as a quarter, from 180,336 in 1973 to a peak of 245,132 in 1980.²⁴ However, a number of factors played a role in women's choices, including not only financial inducements and childcare facilities but also the availability of counselling for teenagers, periodic scare stories about the effects of the pill, and views about future prospects in changing circumstances. And there continued to be measures to ensure that women were fully involved in employment and education, and were encouraged to achieve further qualifications whether as school leavers or as mature students, often through evening courses or retraining schemes.

Most policies were, as before, designed primarily to achieve the compatibility of motherhood, employment and contribution to the construction of socialism, rather than being informed by Western liberal notions of the 'emancipation' of women in the sense of individuals seeking 'self-fulfilment'. Nor did they entail much, if any, rethinking of traditional male and female gender roles, despite the fact that both GDR sociologists – such as some of those working at the ZIJ and at the women's research group at the Humboldt University – and prominent women writers such as Christa Wolf, Irmtraud Morgner, Maxie Wander and others, were increasingly discussing these issues at this time. Yet the changed institutional and legal framework, for all the necessary caveats, did nevertheless help to unleash or support changes in attitudes in the GDR that had far wider implications. This is evident in the ways in which gender was constructed and enacted in the various spheres of the workplace, organised politics and informal political activism, and in the domestic sphere and everyday life.

Gender assumptions and the division of labour

Far more problematic than changing the legal, institutional and social policy framework was the question of changing attitudes about the gendered division of labour among ordinary members of the population – both male and female.

The long prehistory of women's roles was still deeply ingrained in the consciousness, aspirations and activities of young women in the early years of the GDR. An immediately recognisable picture is presented, for example, in a report of September 1955 on young women in the district of Greiz, where, despite a predominance of females in the local textile industry (approximately

80 per cent of the workforce in textile factories), very few women held qualifications or leading positions. While the men claimed that women were physically too weak to become *Meister*, the report writer identified low aspirations on the part of young women:

Numerous girls do not yet adequately recognise the role of women in our state. They often only intend to work just until they get married, in order to obtain the basic essentials for the marriage. These intentions are generally supported and furthered by the parents. It is the case that those girls who are prepared to go on to study and who set this goal themselves are for the most part from a petty bourgeois background, while working-class children are only after a longer and persistent process of persuasion willing to work for qualifications.²⁵

The sights of most young women were predominantly set on the traditional targets of marriage and motherhood:

The majority of girls aged over eighteen, in so far as they have not yet got married, demonstrate the natural (!) desire to prepare themselves for marriage. This is often accompanied by a tendency to pursue individual interests more strongly and to play less of a part in societal work...

However, to this must be added the fact that the attitude of girls towards the [Free German Youth] organisation and towards societal work in general is often heavily dependent on the influence of the boyfriend or fiancé, since most girls just agree with their opinions. Girls from the age of eighteen to twenty-five are interested above all in learning how to cook, bake, sew, look after babies and bring up children, and in women's illnesses, the new Family Law, furnishing a flat, questions of fashion and make-up, etc.²⁶

In so far as young women engaged in such elevated pursuits as reading, they appeared to choose predominantly light literature such as adventure stories, travel stories and love stories (some of which unfortunately appeared to have come from West Germany, and hence had unwanted political implications). And in so far as they had any career aspirations alongside the desire for marriage and family, it was with a view to traditionally 'female' jobs and nurturing roles:

As far as choice of career is concerned, it has to be said that, alongside the opportunities presented by the textile industry, girls who are leaving school have a preference above all for careers such as seamstress, retail positions, baby care and nursing.²⁷

Such a picture, with local variations with respect to prevailing local employment patterns, could be repeated from virtually anywhere in the GDR in the 1950s.

In the early years, traditional attitudes towards 'children, kitchen, church' were prevalent: perhaps a majority of East German women and men did not think that women, if they could afford the luxury of choice, should be involved in politics or paid employment once they had a family. Views such as 'Politics is a matter for men, it's not appropriate for girls' or 'A good marriage is only possible if the woman devotes herself exclusively to household and family' were widespread.²⁸ But official images and propaganda worked hard to counteract such views. The early heroisation of the *Trümmerfrauen* was soon replaced by the new idols of the *Aufbaugeneration*, the builders of the new society. Illustrations on posters and in the state-controlled media (magazines, newspaper articles) sought to portray women in occupations that were traditionally seen as 'male', such as tractor-drivers or 'firemen' (now even in the anglophone world known under the more politically correct term, 'fire-fighters'); beautiful blondes in hard hats on construction sites, or in surgical uniforms bending over patients in hospital beds, stared out of the pages of glossy magazines in an effort to revise traditional stereotypes. Broader changes in the structure of the economy assisted this process of reconceptualising the roles of men and women at work. The ideal of muscular masculinity, evident in the paintings and statues of socialist realism, was highly emphasised in the early years. Thus, for example, the posters exhorting people to work harder, in the 'Activists of the First Hour' movement and the state-sponsored idolisation of the worker Adolf Hennecke, stressed the importance of physical strength. The emphasis on sheer physical might was toned down as faith in the possibilities opened up by technical-scientific progress took over in the 1960s. Brain-power became more important than physical power as the preferred solution to the GDR economy's ills. Skills and training became the watchwords of the 1960s, areas in which (unlike sheer physical force) women could be seen to be potentially as proficient as men. Organisations such as the FDJ and the DFD devoted immense amounts of time and energy to trying to raise the educational aspirations and career goals of young women with the general focus on the need for a more highly skilled workforce in the 1960s.

As a report from the FDJ from the late 1950s (probably 1957) noted: 'Every day one meets girls and women who have not yet grasped what it means to be a fellow creator of our new society with equal rights [*gleichberechtigter Mitgestalter unserer neuen Gesellschaft*]. They still voluntarily subject themselves to their husbands and sacrifice the possibility of further career development to household duties.'²⁹ The FDJ saw it as its own particular duty 'to participate actively in the creation and development of a new socialist women's generation, a women's generation that has freed itself from the chains of the past that condemned women to exploitation and repression.'³⁰ To some

extent this aim was achieved, though arguably with little credit due to the activities of the FDJ in the process: over time, women's aspirations did change, although more as a result of changing opportunities and experiences than of FDJ exhortations; and women were not always overly keen to swap the discredited 'chains of the past', the exploitation and repression of capitalist patriarchy, for the new chains of political subservience and control in the communist version.

There were indeed crucial shifts in attitudes as younger women, socialised within the GDR, grew to maturity and entered the workforce. These shifts were evident already by the start of the 1960s. A particularly wide-ranging and insightful report of May 1961 on women in the textiles industry argues that, despite continued use of very antiquated machinery (usually forty to fifty years old, but in one location still the original eighteenth-century machinery!), young women were becoming increasingly productive. Moreover, they were increasingly committed to their work in principle:

For many young female workers their work has already developed into a need, and the desire to work permanently is increasingly growing. In the 'Nortex-Girls' brigade there was a serious dispute because the District Secretary of the FDJ said in his speech to the District Delegates' Conference that, while women admittedly achieved good results by way of productivity, they still suffered from great ideological confusion. This was evident in the fact that some of them would not want to continue working after marriage. The young female workers decisively challenged this, and expressed the view that, while they may still have thought this way eighteen months earlier, today it was clear to them that they would go on working constantly.³¹

Often differences in opinion between younger and older women led to conflicts within the workplace. This was particularly the case when new methods were introduced, which were adopted more easily by younger women, who were both more flexible and often also better educated: 'In the process, the authority of young women workers with the economic functionaries grows, in opposition to the older women workers.'³² Such conflicts were not always easily resolved: 'Often the younger ones have reservations about introducing new methods or improving the organisation of work, because they then get characterised as "bringing wages down" [*Lohndrücker*] by the older women workers.'³³

Many of the older generation in the workplace did not trust their younger colleagues; but at the same time, they appear to have poured out their own life experiences – which were often, in the case of this war-time generation, quite

traumatic – and sought to counsel younger women and give them the advice of the worldly wise. As the report writer complains:

Not to be underestimated is also the influence of a series of older women workers, who, on the basis of their own experiences from capitalist times give the young women workers bad advice . . .

Precisely in the textile industry there is a strong concentration of such women, whose own happiness in life was destroyed by the World War. On the basis of this bitterness their relationships with the younger women workers are often formed in a very ugly, jealous and immoral manner. Such pieces of 'advice' are expressed in comments such as: 'Don't be so dumb, girl, get yourself a man who earns well, don't go running to work all your life. I would be happy if I didn't have to.'³⁴

Whether or not such report-writing was in part informed by wishful thinking, there is a wide range of evidence to suggest that attitudes towards women and work began to change with the shift in generations in the 1970s and '80s. In 1970, 37 per cent of men still felt that the employment of married women with children would have adverse effects on family life; by 1982, only 5.9 per cent of men and 9.7 per cent of women continued to think that women should resign from employment when they had children.³⁵

Attitudes to the domestic division of labour, by contrast, proved remarkably resistant to change, although there is evidence again of at least incipient generational shifts. In 1968, for example, a report-writer complained that:

The awareness of many citizens concerning the necessary division of labour between husband and wife with respect to childcare and household duties is still nowhere near the level that the Family Law is striving towards . . . In addition many women, through lack of self-confidence, are evidently inclined to use their household and childcare duties as a reason for not using more fully the possibilities for the development and application of their own faculties.³⁶

The commentators suggested that:

Political-ideological work needs to be more strenuously developed on the basis of the Family Law. With the help of press, television and radio, and perhaps also through popular scientific films, examples should be used to show how husband and wife can together share responsibility for family and household duties. Strengthening the self-confidence of women also remains now, as previously, an important task.³⁷

A study of 1970 found that fewer than one in five men and women were unreservedly in favour of women working, while around half (52.9 per cent of men and 45.8 per cent of women) favoured only part-time employment for women. Interestingly, while only a quarter (26.4 per cent) of women thought

both partners in marriage shared their household duties in common, as many as 43.2 per cent (!) of men seemed to think they contributed equally.³⁸ Meanwhile, another study in the same year found that maintenance of the household took up as many additional hours a week as the normal paid working week; and, what is more, the women did the lion's share of this additional unpaid labour. Of the average 47.1 hours a week spent on housework per household, women did 37.1 hours, men did 6.1 hours and 'others' did 3.9 hours.³⁹

In the mid-1970s, simple financial necessity was still given as the main reason why women should work, rather than the pursuit of a career for its own sake. Nevertheless, by now two thirds of women (64.6 per cent) were also of the opinion 'that they could no longer imagine a life without professional employment'. However, old attitudes towards the domestic sphere died hard: twice the proportion of men (37.5 per cent) as women (17.9 per cent) were of the view that 'The employment [of the woman] has an unfavourable effect on the upbringing of the children.'⁴⁰ Even in the 1980s, when women's paid employment was more or less taken for granted, women still took primary responsibility for the household and childcare. A 1982 study by the Institute for Sociology and Social Policy of the Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, for example, found that married women with children still spent around three times as much time on housework as did their male partners. Moreover, both sexes still appear to have accepted this as 'natural':

Neither men nor women have yet overcome the assumption that women have a 'natural' aptitude for housework. Both sexes accept the current situation with the over-burdening of women, but do not experience it as threatening to their relationship. In this context the generally higher commitment of men to the work process is put into the equation by women. Young people do not accept this attitude. They demand a stringently just division of household duties.⁴¹

Although there was a complex combination of factors involved, it appears from a number of recent studies that changes in work patterns, and particularly the prevalence of shift work, combined with the expansion of state childcare facilities to alter the character of family life and related assumptions about women's traditional responsibilities.

In the thinly populated, largely agricultural Prignitz area in the north of Bezirk Potsdam, for example, women who had worked in non-skilled agricultural production were threatened by the increasing mechanisation and specialisation of agriculture.⁴² In the later 1960s and '70s, the SED mounted a massive campaign for enhancing women's qualifications. In 1968 a new factory producing women's woollen goods (Obertrikotagenbetrieb, OTB) was opened

in Wittstock in which, following a relatively short six-month period of training, women were easily able to find employment. Indeed, because of the increasing emphasis on the production of consumer goods after the Eighth Party Conference, this was rapidly expanded. The factory operated three shifts a day, and women worked in large, windowless, stuffy rooms at a hectic pace, their levels of payment affected by quantities of output.⁴³ Quantity (fulfilment of the plan) took precedence over quality, and shops often returned goods as impossible to sell. Yet the OTB factory was further expanded in the later 1970s and '80s, with the construction of two new housing estate areas to accommodate increasing numbers of workers. In these conditions, worker turnover was relatively high, with around one fifth of the workforce leaving every year. Many women experienced work not as 'liberating', but rather as a process of subjection to authority and collective needs, and as increasing pressure to produce in order to receive payment. Nevertheless, in this relatively young and overwhelmingly female workforce, in which the average worker was in her mid-twenties, some women were able to rise to positions of authority and take on leadership functions. Young women found they had economic independence, and often earned more than their male partners. In the later 1970s and '80s, a whole set of new work-related institutions – childcare facilities, a medical centre with seven doctors, kitchens, a social centre, shopping facilities, even a hairdresser, as well as improved transport services – eased the pressures of combining motherhood and employment. Moreover, husbands often simply had to take over some domestic and childcare duties as a result of the exigencies of their wives' shift-work patterns. Thus, in interviews carried out after 1989, many women who had now lost their employment in this area remembered – despite the relative miseries of the pressurised and monotonous factory work – their former independence and social lives around the factory rather nostalgically.

Clearly the experience of employment and the relevance of gender depended greatly both on the nature of work, and on the question of whether the area of employment was predominantly female, male, or mixed. A comparison of a predominantly male office-machinery factory in Sömmerda and a predominantly female textiles concern in Leipzig, for example, has demonstrated that gender roles differed considerably.⁴⁴ In both factories, traditional sex stereotypes predominated in the 1950s. While these persisted in the male-dominated office-equipment factory, with men retaining the leadership positions despite the rising level of women's qualifications, in the predominantly female textiles factory women were more readily able to take on leadership positions vacated by male retirements. Yet even here the top positions in the Directorate were retained by men. There were higher chances of upward

mobility, but in this traditionally somewhat dubious area of employment (where there were connotations of loose sexual morals going back to the nineteenth century, and where in the Third Reich forced labourers had been exploited) there was less social prestige and lower remuneration; by contrast, in the traditionally male-dominated factory, women enjoyed better status and material rewards, but had lower chances of promotion to leadership positions. Even promotion was hardly the product of active individual aspiration, since women had to be 'selected' to be 'furthered', in a rather passive sense, in the cadre system; and the somewhat ambiguous outcome would simply be more demands on a woman's time in terms of carrying out functions and attending meetings.

A similar, if slightly more depressing tale is told in a study of the 'last' workers in the textile industry in Niederlausitz, thirty of whom were interviewed in 1990–91, at a time when the textile industry was collapsing and unemployment was escalating.⁴⁵ As children, poverty and hard work were the central experiences of these women's lives: many had lost their fathers in the war, and their mothers from illness and exhaustion soon after the war; many had been brought up by relatives or in an orphanage. Employment in the textile industry was both hard and poorly paid. Difficulties in recruitment and domestic labour supply in this area led to the employment of migrant workers from Mozambique, Cuba and Vietnam in the 1970s and '80s. As far as women were concerned, poor pay and conditions were slightly mitigated by opportunities for regular skills training, and a few were able to rise up to the level of *Meisterin* (female Master) or *Ingenieurin* (female engineer); but work in this area generally was regarded with less esteem and carried lower social status than jobs in the coal and energy industries of the area. A wider report on the textiles industry carried out in 1961 had in fact commented adversely on the poor social repute of this occupation, noting that many functionaries responsible for occupational training were of the view that one could not ask parents to let their 'well-brought-up daughters work in such a morally degenerate industry.'⁴⁶ Nevertheless, however hard the combination of work and continuing poverty, and despite a general attitude of resignation, some of the women interviewed remembered with a degree of nostalgia the collective spirit of work brigades and camaraderie or togetherness (*Mitmenschlichkeit*).

In agriculture, women benefited from the growing social, educational and communal facilities and functions of collectivised agricultural enterprises; they enjoyed a degree of financial independence, with their own pensions and insurance schemes, and growing numbers (91.8 per cent by 1989) acquired some form of vocational qualification in relation to the increasingly specialised agricultural production methods of the GDR.⁴⁷ But despite the

rising level of qualifications, and the increasing numbers of women in some form of managerial position, very few women attained real positions of leadership within agricultural cooperatives (LPGs): only 2.8 per cent of LPG Chairs were female in the 1980s. Interestingly, however, women in agriculture appear to have compared their position favourably with that of their mothers and grandmothers, and felt pride in their own economic independence, qualifications and social status; they do not appear to have felt the relevant comparison was with the positions of their male contemporaries and colleagues.

This sense of pride in their own achievements and massive social mobility in comparison with previous generations of women is evident, too, among the selected members of the first post-war generation interviewed in a unique study carried out by Western scholars in the later 1980s.⁴⁸ As male skilled workers had been promoted to leadership positions, women had acquired professional qualifications and filled the positions of skilled labour vacated by the men. While some of the interviews reveal that traditional gender assumptions about what was appropriate for 'women's work' persisted, even without much rational foundation, they also suggest that many women from previously disadvantaged backgrounds were quite content with their new status. Thus, for example, 'Dörtle Grothaus' (pseudonym), a skilled steel worker, comments on the widespread view in her factory that women were to be protected from 'men's work', even though no rationalisation for this could be given.⁴⁹ A woman of proletarian background, with a persistent fear of falling back into the 'underclass', Dörtle Grothaus appears to have felt she did well out of the new conditions of the GDR, and was able to lead a satisfied life as a 'modern' worker, wife and mother. Although she recognised she had no real power, she nevertheless felt she had a secure and valued position in life.

The question of attaining positions of power and authority was an ambiguous one. What is clear, however, is that in virtually every sphere of the economy, despite the increasing numbers and enhanced qualifications of women, they did not rise to positions of leadership in the same proportions as men. This is clear in even traditionally 'female' areas of the professions, such as education, health and social services.

For example, women made up 82 per cent of the total teaching profession in 1987. But among the leadership positions in the Ministry for Education (which was, of course, headed by a rather unusual woman, Margot Honecker), there were only four women, making up a total of only 8.9 per cent of departmental heads (*Abteilungsleiter*).⁵⁰ Not a single Rector of an Institute of Education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*) in 1986 was a woman, although there was one female Deputy Rector (making up a grand total of 2.9 per cent of

deputies); only three of the Directors of Teacher Training Institutes (Institute für *Lehrerbildung*) were female, constituting a proportion of just over one in ten. The situation was only slightly better at the level of heads of secondary schools and sixth-form colleges (POS and EOS), with just under a third of these positions being held by women in 1983 (a total of 1,927 such jobs constituting 31.6 per cent) and rising to just over one third in 1986 (2,044 women making up 36.3 per cent of the total). In every section of the education system, women were better represented at lower levels than in the top jobs. In 1960, while nearly a third (30.4 per cent) of students at Berlin's Humboldt University were women, only 25 per cent of *Dozenten* (roughly the equivalent of British junior lecturers or untenured Assistant Professors in the US) were female, and 7.5 per cent of Professors were women (actually quite an impressive figure in comparison with West Germany at the time).⁵¹ Even following the great expansion of educational opportunities and the rapidly increasing numbers of girls taking the higher school leaving examination (*Abitur*) and going on to higher education in the later 1960s, women who became academics tended to become assistants rather than leaders of collective academic projects.⁵²

Similarly, in another traditionally 'female' and 'caring' area, that of health and the social services, 86.2 per cent of all employees in 1988 were women.⁵³ A total of 21,292 women were doctors, making up 52.6 per cent of all doctors. But a mere 12.8 per cent of those holding the top positions (*Chefärzte*) were women, and only 34.9 per cent of those on the slightly lower rung of *Oberarzt*. According to this report, a combination of gender stereotypes, sexist prejudices and women's own lack of self-confidence appears to have been involved. Often higher standards or expectations seem to have been set for female candidates for promotion than for men. Many males in leadership positions did not want women in positions of responsibility and authority. Many women, including those who had no children, lacked confidence in their own abilities and were dubious about whether they could combine motherhood and a demanding career.⁵⁴

So women benefited massively from the strenuous campaigns of the 1950s and '60s to ensure they achieved similar levels of education and qualification as men and had comparable career aspirations, and they fully entered the East German labour force, their capacity to combine motherhood and employment greatly eased by the institutional and legal framework; but, with the exception of predominantly female industrial concerns, women did not rise to levels of leadership and management to the same extent as their male colleagues. Women continued to take primary responsibility for childcare and indeed also for domestic responsibilities throughout life, including care of elderly relatives, and to prioritise the needs of their families above those of the workplace.

Despite emphasis on 'emancipation', the attitudes of both men and women towards the fact of women working outside the home changed very much more than attitudes towards the domestic division of labour. There was increasing acceptance that women should take and retain paid work throughout their adult lives, rather than giving up after marriage or birth of children; but there was only a very slow and partial shift towards asking whether men should not also take an equal role as partners and parents in carrying some responsibility for the home and family affairs. And, given that women had to stretch themselves between two spheres, they by and large chose not to accept the overwhelming additional demands on their time that would have come with increasing responsibilities and promotion at work and in political life, which were extremely closely related.

By the later 1980s, many GDR sociologists, such as Barbara Bertram and her colleagues in Leipzig, explicitly recognised that the roles of women could not be rethought without a concomitant rethinking of the roles of men. They argued that, although rooted in biological differences, the gender roles of both men and women were primarily socially determined. As one (remarkable) text written by a team at the ZIJ put it: to achieve equality of opportunity for women and girls 'presupposed a rethinking of the development of *both sexes*'.⁵⁵ Considerable effort was devoted to exploring the attitudes of men and women in professional, political and familial spheres, and analysing what were held to be 'typical' patterns of behaviour for males and females.⁵⁶ The variety and energy of East German debates in the 1980s over women's roles, images, socialisation experiences and typical patterns of attitude and behaviour also became very evident in the 1990s, when the interaction of East and West German approaches occasioned lively debates.⁵⁷

Issues of male and female sexuality were rethought to at least some degree even at the level of officialdom. For example, although it never ceased to be a somewhat sensitive topic surrounded by a degree of taboo, homosexuality was legalised in the GDR. Section 175 of the Criminal Code (*Strafgesetzbuch*), which had criminalised homosexuality, was barely used after the reform of the Criminal Code in 1957, and was struck out of the new Criminal Code of 1968. Section 175a, forbidding homosexual relations with minors, was replaced by Section 151, for the 'Protection of Youth'. In 1988 this, too, was struck out in the fifth amendment of the penal code.⁵⁸ Whereas in the 1950s and '60s gays and lesbians were generally perceived as 'abnormal' or 'ill', there was a more liberal climate in the 1970s and '80s. There is even a degree of sensitivity to be found in the official documents on this score: a Ministry of Health document comments, for example, concerning the possibility of AIDS appearing in the GDR, that homosexuals should be prevented from offering their services as

blood donors 'without any personal discrimination'.⁵⁹ The real dangers of homosexuality, in the official view, lay in public health risks (such as already common infections such as Hepatitis B), and in social or 'lifestyle' aspects that were deemed to be politically suspect: 'through their relationships that transcend borders . . . and through their being used to subversive ways of life and behaviour . . . [and] through their desire to seek out exceptional anonymity in large towns, in particular also in the capital city Berlin'. About the only area of social life that was deemed to be 'free of homosexuality' was the People's Police, the *Volkspolizei*.⁶⁰ Organisations for the representation of gay interests were not possible within the formal political structure of the GDR: such groups were able to form only under the protective umbrella of the Protestant Churches in the 1980s. Nevertheless, there had been a clear shift in attitudes: being gay was no longer viewed as a potentially criminal condition, medical abnormality or moral abomination, but merely as one among a number of alternative lifestyles with links with the West that were viewed therefore as potential political threats.

There appear, however, to have been limits to the rethinking of men's roles. For example, control of reproduction continued to be seen as purely a female responsibility, as illustrated by the remarkable case of one Herr M.⁶¹ This gentleman had already fathered several children, and was terrified of being trapped into further extra-marital paternal financial responsibilities, or even an unwanted marriage by the woman becoming pregnant against his will; on the other hand, as he pointed out, it destroyed any trust in a relationship if he used mechanical contraceptive measures despite the woman's assurances that she was taking the pill. Yet, as he disarmingly put it, 'I want to put all my energy into the strengthening of our Republic' instead of 'living under the permanent fear of creating more children'. Furthermore, this was a question of equal rights for men: 'The age of the Pill and of Abortion have only given women the possibility of making their own decisions about their lives and their bodies. Now as before, in such an important question as the creation of new life the man's life depends on either the accidents of biology or the will of the woman.'⁶² Herr M.'s repeated attempts to obtain sterilisation were met with a notable lack of sympathy on the part of the medical authorities; there was simply no legal provision for routine male sterilisation. The argument was in the end taken to the highest levels: even top officials in the Ministry for Justice were ultimately involved, who resorted to invoking arguments from the practices of the Soviet Union and the writings of Lenin to support their case; ultimately, it seems, they succeeded in silencing Herr M. (or perhaps the Wall fell and his personal saga could be concluded under Western provisions) and

sustaining the principle that male sterilisation could only be carried out under exceptional medical circumstances. In any event, even if this particular individual was remarkably unlucky in the degree of trust he was able to find in his intimate relationships, he nevertheless had a point about lack of equality for males. By the 1980s, not only lesbian relations but also different patterns of heterosexual relationship and types of partnership were being more openly discussed.⁶³

Yet traditional conceptions of the allegedly feminine were still heavily represented by officially published works, even in the late 1980s. An encyclopaedia for women, *Kleine Enzyklopaedie: Die Frau*, for example, which was published as late as 1987, included articles on 'traditional' areas of women's interests, such as fashion, cooking and home care ('Furnishing the Flat' and 'Beautiful Consumer Goods that are Fit for Purpose', 'Cooking appropriately' and 'Clothes and Fashion') among those specifically on female health, legal and occupational issues.⁶⁴ An articulate minority of women challenged such perceptions; but changes were only partial and slow.

In general, despite growing discussion at least among a minority of citizens, and between at least some GDR sociologists, what appears to have changed is not so much conceptions of gender as such; rather, traditionally male areas, such as educational and occupational aspirations, were simply tacked on to areas that continued to be considered the female domain. Thus in general, rethinking was directed towards the question of making women more like men in the areas of work, while making little impact on traditional conceptions of female roles in the domestic sphere. On the other hand, before the notion of the unique 'double burden' of women is accepted too rapidly, the additional roles of men have to be reinserted into the analysis. For employment in an officially recognised job was not by any means all that men did either. Many men made a major contribution to the total income and well-being of their families by doing all manner of unofficial jobs in their 'leisure' hours, from do-it-yourself household maintenance, repairs and improvements, to participating in a far wider network of exchange of goods and services in the unofficial 'black economy'. There may have continued to be a gendered division of labour in the domestic sphere, but many men also bore a 'double burden' of a slightly different sort.

Gender and politics

Men also dominated the formal political system of the GDR. In the 1980s, no full members of the Politburo were women. There were only two female candidate members. Only one woman at this time held a ministerial post – and

this woman was Margot Honecker (the wife of Erich Honecker) who held the post of Minister for Education from 1963 until the collapse of SED rule, and was a full member of the Central Committee from 1963 (a candidate member since 1950), but never a member of the Politburo. The woman responsible for women's affairs from 1961 to 1989, Inge Lange, was made a member of the Central Committee in 1964, and in 1973 became a candidate member of the Politburo, but was never promoted to full member. Former Politburo member Günter Schabowski suggests that Lange was not taken entirely seriously by Honecker: 'From time to time Inge Lange was the object of lightly ironic banter, if she in some context pointed to the interests of women. It would all be relatively temperate and, as far as those not involved were concerned, there was nothing too crazy about it.'⁶⁵ Even Schabowski's own post-unification description of this evident sexism – treating the very raising of women's issues as worthy of mirth rather than as a matter to be taken seriously – is itself indicative. The top of the SED – the ultimate power centre in the GDR – was almost unremittingly male and certainly male-dominated.

In the central state apparatus, women were very few and far between at the top. In 1986, apart from the sole female minister, there were 4 female deputy ministers, constituting 1.5 per cent of the total; 181 female heads of department, making up 10.2 per cent of this level of the hierarchy; and 685 female sector leaders, comprising 18.2 per cent of the total.⁶⁶ The situation with respect to percentages of women in higher positions improved somewhat at the regional and local levels of the state, although even here the picture demonstrated marked variations according to area. Thus only 1.3 per cent of those in charge of construction and planning at district level (*Kreisbaudirektor*) were women; and while women held a little under a quarter of the state posts with significant responsibility in most areas, they were somewhat better represented in the spheres of culture (37.9 per cent in 1982, 38.7 per cent in 1987) and youth (46.2 per cent in 1982, 48.2 per cent in 1987).⁶⁷

Similarly, the further down the political hierarchies one goes, the higher the percentage of women becomes. While in 1949, fewer than 5 per cent of mayors were women, this rose steadily to 18 per cent in 1970, and more than 34 per cent by 1989.⁶⁸ The percentage of women correlated very closely with size of community, however. In 1987, while over half (51.2 per cent) of mayors of communities of fewer than 200(!) people were women, less than one in twenty (4.7 per cent) of mayors of communities between 10,000 and 20,000 were female, and 7.9 per cent of mayors of communities larger than 20,000, with a steady slide down the spectrum in between.⁶⁹ The absolute numbers of mayors in each size of community make for interesting reading, too: there were very many more small communities than larger ones, as represented in Table 1,

which was prepared for Inge Lange and accompanied by detailed studies of the percentages of women in many other areas of East German society, with similar results.

Table 1: Female mayors of towns and communities in the GDR in 1984 and 1987⁷⁰

Size of community	1984		1987	
	number	%	number	%
more than 20,000	5	5.7	7	7.9
10,000–20,000	6	5.6	5	4.7
5,000–10,000	12	6.8	13	7.6
3,000–5,000	39	14.4	44	16.1
2,000–3,000	44	12.7	48	14.4
1,000–2,000	217	20.5	232	22
500–1,000	506	25.6	531	27.6
200–500	1,017	37.3	1,060	38.2
fewer than 200	354	50.6	395	51.2

A similar picture emerges when one considers the statistics for female deputies to representative positions, such as assemblies at various local community, urban and district levels, compared to percentages in the national parliament, the Volkskammer. Nevertheless, the representation of women in these 'elected' positions always seems to have been markedly higher than one would expect in comparison to the Western participation of women in local, regional and national politics at the same time.

In 1953, for example, in the wake of the June Uprising, women represented a little over a quarter of those involved in discussions of the 'New Course': 27.4 per cent of representatives in the regional parliaments were women (279 out of a total of 1,019); 28.7 per cent of representatives on town councils (567 of 1,976) were women; 27.3 per cent of urban area councils (605 of 2,216) were women; and 25.1 per cent of representatives in district councils (1741 of 7,537) were women.⁷¹ In the later 1950s, the percentage of women representatives at district, town and local level seems to have somewhat declined to around 17 per cent; but it rose steadily again thereafter.⁷² Most ordinary women in the 1950s had neither the time nor the energy – nor arguably the inclination – even to attend political meetings. As a report of June 1959 noted, 'Particularly among the peasant women one has to notice that they have not bothered themselves much about societal development. This is because from early in the morning till late in the evening they have to work in the household and also in the fields and cowsheds. Only the men attend the meetings and other discussions.'⁷³ Those women who did become actively involved in politics found that demands were made on them from all sides, resulting in failure

to fulfil their roles adequately. A report from the late 1950s draws attention to the fact that, 'In our opinion, the greatest hindrance to the success of the work of female people's representatives turns out to be the fact that virtually all these women also fulfil a whole series of often important societal functions quite apart from their activities as a representative.'⁷⁴ Once a woman was elected to the district council (Kreistag), she might well also be expected to hold functions in the DFD, the parents' association (Elternbeirat), act as an LPG-Chair, and so on.

But the situation changed markedly over the succeeding decades. A study of women in leadership positions in local government in the 1980s has provided an insightful analysis of the stages of women's increasing involvement in employment and politics over the years.⁷⁵ While the founding generation of *Trümmerfrauen* ('rubble women') had to focus on clearing the literal and metaphorical rubble of the war, the *Aufbaugeneration* (those building the new society) of the 1950s and '60s made the switch from merely wage labour to the acquisition of skills, qualifications and the notion of a career or profession rather than just a job. The *Enkelgeneration* ('grandchildren's generation') of the 1970s and 80s, products of GDR education and expectations, had a certain internalised self-understanding that included the notion of a career. The many female mayors of small communities in the 1980s were predominantly from this generation: their average age on becoming mayor was 32, and around 80 per cent of them were married, a far higher proportion than that in the general population. Their positions involved delicate negotiation between the needs of the community on the one hand – with which, given the generally small size, they were intimately familiar – and the demands of the SED and The Plan or The Task (*Aufgabe*) on the other. Tasks included checking on the well-being of elderly, frail or disabled residents, ensuring wood and coal supplies, and organising local festivals, rituals and the like, as well as bringing out the vote for the SED when required. However much there may have been frustrations and conflicting demands, holding a political office at this level could be very fulfilling, and indeed a position of more real power – in the sense of the capacity to put one's energies into genuinely improving the position of others – than serving at some higher level in the political bureaucracy.⁷⁶ Far from being prevented from rising further by some putative 'glass ceiling' (which undoubtedly did also exist), many women may have made a quite clear-sighted choice about personal priorities for spending their time.

What is perhaps of most interest about the many other statistics available in the GDR archival records, in some respects, is simply the mere fact that the authorities were so concerned about percentages of female involvement in different areas of employment and politics, and in particular in leadership

positions. The extent to which they tracked female under-representation and discussed possible causes and remedies for the relative paucity of women in top positions is indicative of a genuine desire, at least in some quarters, to ensure that women's talents were fully harnessed to building the new society – and not merely that their labour power was exploited at any level in economic production.

Moreover, as far as involvement in politics is concerned, the situation is perhaps a little more complex than simple statistics might at first sight suggest. Generally, the principle of exclusion in the GDR was related to political conformity rather than gender, and politics was very much predicated on the cadre-selection principle. Attempts at the politicisation of women in the official directions desired by the SED by organisations such as the FDJ and the DFD did not always succeed in a purely formal sense.⁷⁷ But the changes in women's lives and experiences had far more subtle and far-reaching effects on their levels of self-confidence and their assumptions about the normality of leading a life that was not purely bounded by the spheres of domesticity.

The ways in which women were capable of serious political involvement when it was a question, not of time-serving in a constraining and hierarchical apparatus with its own constrictions on real power, but rather in movements with a sense of purpose and ideals, became particularly evident in the course of the unofficial political movements of the 1980s. One has only to mention names such as Vera Wollenberger, Bärbel Bohley, Ulrike Poppe, or think of key groups such as Frauen für den Frieden ('Women for Peace') to realise that by the 1980s, women had not only found a voice – something that was not always easy for individuals brought up in a system in which there were only rewards for conformity – but also acquired the capacity for highly effective organisation, strategic and tactical skills.⁷⁸ Similarly significant developments in the exploration and articulation of women's roles, if tending in rather different directions, can be observed in the 'protocol literature' and in creative women's writing in the GDR, where a wide range of female authors – Christa Wolf, Brigitte Reimann, Maxie Wander, Irmtraud Morgner, Helga Königsdorf, Gabriele Eckart and many others – explored the historical complexities of female roles and possible alternative constructions of society that would allow for experiments in more genuine 'emancipation'.⁷⁹

The extent to which large numbers of 'ordinary' women – those who did not make names for themselves in political groups that caught the headlines, or in literary works achieving international renown – nevertheless developed a degree of articulate self-confidence is also evident when one reads, for example, the mountains of letters that piled up in the files of a whole range of organisations. It is arguable that women were, in a more general sense, in fact

far more politicised than purely statistical measures of numbers of women in high places might imply. Their willingness to speak in public meetings on a wide range of topics, to submit *Eingaben* on matters of personal concern, to argue for the right to have an abortion on demand, to extend their enjoyment of holidays, have increased time off for household duties, better access to part-time childcare and part-time jobs, or increased pensions, is illustrative of an active participation in the affairs of the day, in ways that might not be measurable in terms of occupying formal positions of power, but which should nevertheless not be overlooked as forming a significant part of the history of GDR society. Letters from women such as Frau Barbara C. of Rostock in 1988, who couched her appeal in terms of 'my rights as a working woman and a mother', indicate the extent to which women had by the later 1980s internalised the notion of equal rights, the lack of which had been such a cause for concern on the part of functionaries in the 1950s.⁸⁰ Such a sense of rights is evident across the generations by the late 1980s. One letter from older women in a DFD group in Oranienburg protested rights for pensioners in terms of the contribution they had made to the foundation and early years of the GDR: 'Why has the National Executive Committee over the years not argued more strenuously that the women who cleared the ruins after 1945, and who from the very beginning helped to build the GDR, should receive an appropriate pension?'⁸¹ Another, from Dr Renate S., a research scientist in Rossendorf, gave a blast about the more general situation of women at the height of their careers: why were some working in a job below their level of qualifications because they could earn more in a less-qualified position; why were men and women not actually paid the same for equal work; why were women not arriving in the top positions? Dr S. sought to speak for her whole generation:

We women embarked on our education full of optimism with respect to our future development. I personally was born in 1936 and since my youth I have been active in societal functions, in the last 25 years in the Women's Commission of our Institute, and in this capacity I have frequently taken part in Women's Conventions of the Science Trade Union [IG Wissenschaft]. For years we have been asking ourselves what has been happening in the course of time. When we started out in life, we were effectively promised the earth ['das Blaue vom Himmel versprochen']. In the meantime a great process of disillusionment has set in. Not only in our Institute but also in the women's meetings of the IG Wissenschaft one senses that the early momentum and vitality have been transformed into resignation and frustration... Now here we stand with empty hands: career goals have come to nothing, and families are destroyed.⁸²

Women such as these were not afraid to raise their voices and articulate demands for better conditions and social improvements. It was indeed in part because of such widespread willingness to voice critiques that the collective debate of the autumn of 1989, which swept up not only oppositionalists but also those who had been relatively loyal supporters of the regime but who saw the acute and increasing need for reform and improvement, contributed to the collapse of the GDR and reunification with the West.

In the event, unification inaugurated massive changes for women, not all of which were unambiguously 'liberating' even in the Western sense of the word. Over 70 per cent of women rightly feared that women's employment prospects and childcare facilities would deteriorate rather than improve as a result of unification.⁸³ With unification came the collapse of the infrastructure of state-run childcare facilities; with the collapse of East German industry, women were laid off faster than men, such that a disproportionate percentage of the unemployed in the 'five new *Länder*' were female (and there was a larger pool of hidden female unemployment among those who did not feel they could register for work); the traditional ideals of female domesticity and consumerism were reinvoked, despite the fact that many East German women registered a sense of isolation and loss of social identity with the loss of the workplace environment. The right to abortion was challenged as the West German constitution, with its prohibitive stance, formed the basis for the accession of the East German *Länder* to the new enlarged Federal Republic, leading to two years of uncertainty, debate and compromise. And over a decade later, many ordinary women in the eastern part of Germany were looking back with nostalgia to the days of seamless childcare, educational and training opportunities, subsidised holidays and secure careers. There was little point in having the formal freedom to take a holiday in Spain if one lacked even the means to travel out of Saxony.

Interpretations of gender in the GDR

Gender provides an intriguing topic for analysis of some key interpretive questions concerning the GDR. For one thing, the initial political barriers to understanding SED policies (and their failures) are relatively low: apart from out-and-out misogynists, there are few observers who start from a position of principled opposition to all and any attempts to raise the career aspirations and achievements of women (as well as men). Thus, the 'repression thesis' is harder to sustain when in this case, for once, many Western historians can sympathise with the ideals of those who were trying to alter the perceptions, values and aspirations of women. Exasperation at the 'resistance' of women

who stubbornly continued to believe that they had no future after leaving school at the earliest opportunity other than to pursue the best possible marital match and then live a life subordinated to the needs of husband and children, seems to many Westerners more readily understandable than many other aspects of the SED project for future society. The general arena of discussion is hence less beset by extra-historical mines and booby-traps than are the more directly 'political' areas, even if the conclusions reached (with respect, for example, to the extent of 'emancipation' possible within a dictatorship) often remain highly contentious.

SED policy-making was never monolithic on the question of women or gender more generally: unexamined assumptions about the primary responsibility of women for reproductive and nurturing functions were continuously held by some of those in power, while others repeatedly argued for change; and an underlying theme at all times was that of women's contribution to the building of a socialist society, however differently this might be interpreted in terms of specific social policies in practice. The standard periodisation in terms of an earlier, idealistic phase focusing on 'emancipation' under Ulbricht, and a later, more pragmatic phase focusing on what might be called the 'unity of production and reproduction' under Honecker, thus requires some revision. Nor is the story easily written according to the standard top-down/bottom-up scripts of totalitarian theorists. Often we have pressures coming from below for changes in the position of and opportunities for women, which were taken up by some but not all of those in positions of power; and we can sympathise more easily with the frustrations of at least some of those SED functionaries seeking to raise the aspirations of young women beyond domestic bliss (or otherwise) at the earliest possible moment on leaving school.

The roles of women themselves in negotiating change – as indeed the roles of 'ordinary people' more generally in the development of GDR history – are, however, often greatly understated. Totalitarian theorists suggest that women were unable to represent their own interests, and that the official women's organisations in fact merely represented the exploitative and repressive interests of Party and state.⁸⁴ But this view more or less ignores the role played by women in raising their voices over certain issues, such as the Abortion Law of 1972, or the more frequent complaints regarding the difficulties of everyday life (housing, childcare, food supplies and so on). It understates the very real concerns of SED policymakers – whether female or male – in seeking to redress such difficulties. It underemphasises the genuine desire for female emancipation, which was a permanent, if at times submerged, strand running through SED thinking on this issue. And it grossly understates the role played

by large numbers of women in many areas and at many levels of East German cultural and political life.

Some major interpretive questions remain, in part because the significant moves towards a rethinking of gender roles were in practice both partial, and attempted under the doubly constraining conditions of a political dictatorship with an ailing economy. The legal position of women with respect to such matters as rights within the family and at work, marriage and divorce, insurance and pensions, and control over reproduction, was undoubtedly improved in purely formal terms. The high participation of women in the paid labour force also signalled a significant move in the direction of some form of 'female emancipation', made possible by generous state maternity and childcare provisions, in that – however disagreeable the work – women gained a degree of real financial independence, experience and self-confidence that had not previously been so widely enjoyed. However, it is not always easy to evaluate patterns of change. For example, is the continuing under-representation of women in the higher reaches of politics and in positions of responsibility in the economic sphere primarily a consequence of some communist version of the 'glass ceiling', or rather an indication of the good sense of women choosing to evade even more overwhelming burdens of responsibility, and having the wisdom to concentrate on areas in which they could be most effective? Furthermore – as at all times – it is important to remember that the experiences and aspirations of 'women' varied dramatically according to their positions in the stratification system. Articulate and relatively privileged women writers such as Christa Wolf had very different experiences of what it meant to be a woman in the GDR than did, say, a woman working on a collective farm, in a textile factory, or a large industrial concern. The majority of women continued to lead extremely hard lives, concentrated predominantly at the lower levels of any hierarchy, where they had lower social status and less control over their work than did their male superiors; and they continued to rush around in an often-frenzied attempt to accomplish, in addition, the majority of mundane tasks required to keep families and households functioning. Meanwhile, male gender roles were rarely, if ever, explicitly challenged or significantly shifted.

Even so, the construction of gender and the social determination of women's roles changed in quite remarkable ways over the course of forty years. The experience of unification served to underline the ambiguities of gender roles in the GDR. The sudden removal of crucial institutional supports and an effective rejection of women from the worlds of work and politics simply heightened a sense of nostalgia for what had been lost, quite apart from the gains in terms of formal political freedom. Although conditions for women in

the GDR had been far from perfect, and at the time experienced by many as a 'double burden', any notion of real 'emancipation' would have been better served if the introduction of political democracy had been accompanied by a continued movement towards equalisation of responsibilities in the domestic sphere, and a wider rethinking of the roles of both men and women not only as producers but also as equal partners, parents and citizens.