PART II

NORMALISATION AS INTERNALISATION?

Conformity, 'Normality', and 'Playing The Rules'

Chapter 8

Practices of Survival—
Ways of Appropriating 'The Rules':
Reconsidering Approaches to
the History of the GDR

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How to Recognize Historical Dynamics?

The study of domination revolves around socio-political structures and processes. For decades, this polarity provided a firm basis for research on societal relations and transformations. Yet, efforts to relate both anew and to explore 'structuration' (Anthony Giddens, William H. Sewell) have broken new ground in their emphasis on the processual limits of stability in the realms of the social.[1] Still, even such refined versions of a *systemic view* also claim calculability for their results. The limits of this assumption became only too obvious when 'actually existing socialism' was overthrown and imploded in 1989/90, betraying all assumptions about its coherence and prospects. It is on this basis that a fresh look at the *potential of people to act (or not to act)* is needed. Whatever the take on historical actors is—systemic views frame them as reacting. They appear as

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1. Anthony Giddens, New Rules of Sociological Method: a Positive Critique of interpretative Sociologies (London: Hutchinson. 1976), and Giddens, Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis (London: Macmillan, 1979); see also Mike Sewell, 'Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology', in Terrence J. MacDonald, ed., The Historical Turn in the Human Sciences (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. 245–80.

operating under 'constraints' or because incentives 'stimulate' their perceptions or actions (or both).

In particular, this perspective is blind to the 'inner face' of the practices people employ when coping with what they encounter day by day. Hence, such a view ignores the multi-facetted ways in which individuals or groups nuance, twist, or change what only too often appears as 'given'. Thus, the multiple forms of people's 'distancing' themselves openly or in a concealed manner remain out of sight, including the forms of breaking away or 'letting go'. Even more, systemic approaches do not render the dynamics of people's life-course, especially their ways of '*meandering*' between different if not antagonistic poles.

To turn this question around: how and why did people 'act' in the GDR? What were the settings from which they decided to 'voice' grievances or to 'exit'?[2] Did not most people in the 1960s and 1970s avoid this very choice under the impression of increasing 'normalisation'[3]? In other words, how should one account for both the *relative satisfaction* of the many and the *relative stability* of the GDR as a whole during the four decades prior to its implosion in 1989? How and to what avail did many people develop their own mode of '*Eigen-Sinn*'[4], whether silently or even conspicuously, for that matter? Such questions demarcate the task of re-starting research. A fresh look at people's manifold practices would be a good beginning!

The effort to reconstruct 'normalisation' aims at bridging that gap. In particular, it is a question about forms and ranges of 'internalisation' of institutional settings, procedures, and modes of interpretation that people might have 'taken in' or internalised. Still, 'internalisation' operates on the level of society as a whole (as do the accompanying 'stabilisation' and 'routinisation'). And even if this view emphasises 'process', this emphasis remains framed by its bipolar mode. The quest is for mapping societal developments on a scale of 'more' or 'less'—for instance, 'more' routinisation in the treatment of citizen's grievances by state and party functionaries, and how this might affect the 'stabilisation' of rule.

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2. Albert O. Hirschman, 'Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic: An Essay in Conceptual History', in World Politics 45 (1993): 173–202.

3. This was the main focus of several monographic studies on the GDR, which were discussed at the Erfurt conference in July 2005; see for the conceptual frame Mary Fulbrook, Normalisation: a contested concept (MS, 2005), also her book 'Anatomy of a Dictatorship. Inside the GDR 1949–1989 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

4. Cf. Alf Lüdtke, Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus. (Hamburg: Ergebnisse, 1993); Thomas Lindenberger, 'Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn', in Lindenberger, ed., Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1999).

Representations

The Impact of the 'Diagonal'

Representations of historical settings and practices relate the particulars of specific cases to notions (and images) that denote what is accepted as a general trend or profile. For instance, researchers take individual workers or, perhaps, workers' families as exemplary for a certain phase or feature of industrialisation, at least for the fate of a social entity such as class. In this effort, numbers seem imbued with a special power to demonstrate the plausibility of a certain point. Visual representations further enhance the truth-claim of these numbers. In other words, tables or graphs suggest the ultimate plausibility, even instantaneously, at one glance. By these tokens, one can convincingly 'show' the advancement of working people in industrialised societies—or, by contrast, the conjunctures of insecurity, if not misery.

Not only written printed texts or, for that matter, oral utterances, but also those tables and graphs revolve around the 'diagonal'. This 'diagonal' stands for and represents what emerges as a principal trend or a 'typical' profile of things or events. Such privileging of the diagonal also shapes the production and acceptance of pictorial representations. Amateur photographers perhaps even more than professionals preferred well-composed and 'nicely' arranged people for their portraits of individuals or groups. Social documentary photographers (to a large extent professionals) veered off from that practice. However, their critical takes on established visual as well as social conventions rarely reached a wider audience. Thus, both, the stills of photography and the moving images of film did not capture those moments that preceded and then followed the moment that is actually preserved in the picture, which preserves the split second when the shutter of the camera was opened. In other words, dynamics and what might be in stock or was a potential in and of that moment kept in the photographic or filmic representation remains strikingly absent, except for rare cases when pictures render a 'punctum'.[5]

Roland Barthes has made the point that some photographs contain elements, which disturb, if they do not actually destroy, the codes and efforts to present a standard or something typical. However, crucial in this argument is that such a 'punctum' is not a result of a determined framing or way of handling the camera by the photographer. On the contrary, this 'punctum' seems to sneak in whether the author of the representation wants it or not.

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5. See on this Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, (New York, 1980).

Thus, the question still remains open of how to reorganize and change the conceptual and methodical tools for enhancing the awareness and sensitivity for the potential, for the 'not yet' in a certain setting or activity.

As to the GDR, the 'diagonal' normativity as part of the 'public transcript' (James W. Scott[6]) provided space in a comparable way for certain deviant paths, at least for renderings of other people's ways of coping and self-willed activities. For instance, a company performance report of a department might read: 'Although youth brigade X is lacking in work discipline, the collective as a whole accomplished great success in increasing productivity and in presence on the job during official working hours'. In this very formulation, however, previous noncompliance to norms of discipline and keeping to the officially prescribed working hours is clearly noted; in fact, the continuation of such behaviour in the relevant youth brigade is not denied, but rather explicitly stated. Here, the general 'trend' of such behaviour, even if in the end overcome, provides the very space for alluding to what the official view only viewed as either not or no longer typical.

Acceptance and/or Accepting?

Interpretations of politics in modern societies, in particular in dictatorial regimes, tend to emphasise people's 'acceptance' or 'consent'; the other dimension of possibilities is marked by 'opposition' and 'resistance'. However, even the wording implies a stasis—a rather stable way of acting, particularly of granting loyalty or withholding it. The very terms signal predictable ways of acting. What remains out of sight is the potential of people to move between and even connect, for instance, accepting and distancing.

Therefore, I want to propose a shift not only in perspective, but also in the usage of respective terms and words—a switch to 'accepting' or (if it is a more active way of cooperation) perhaps of 'consenting'. Accordingly, 'distancing' and 'resisting' would operate in similar ways and refer to a multitude of tactics and their forms of behaviour (hidden, semi-hidden but also visible if not demonstrative). Still, it does not suffice to supplant substantives by verbs. The issue might not be exhausted by emphasising practices or their (again, assumed) matter-of-fact-way of doing them. In the 1970s and 1980s in Western societies, the many (the 'masses') tended to accept the given state of things. And in 'socialist' societies, people appeared to be acting in similar ways. Only in hindsight does the profile emerge of the gulf that separated 'Eastern' feelings of resignation or bitterness from those of 'Western'

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6. James W. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven/ London, 1990), pp. 4f, 25–28.

satisfied numbness. Can all of this be lumped together under the heading of 'acceptance' or accepting (or even of 'consent' or of 'consenting')? A closer look would undercut such grand but simultaneously flat notions. Only then would observers reckon for the GDR both a wide variety of modes of coping with if not supporting the 'powers that be', *and also* of resigning and 'giving in', and of distancing *and* (occasionally, at least) of withholding or denying support. Whichever way people acted and behaved, they did things 'their way'—they concomitantly entertained highly individualised sets of feelings.

(Re)Capturing Everydayness: 'Inadequate but In-dispensable' Notions (Dipesh Chakrabarty)?

Was it wishful thinking (or, for that matter, wishful advertising) when in 1978 the West German Deutsche Verlagsanstalt advertised the West German edition of Erich Loest's *Es geht seinen Gang oder Mühen in unserer Ebene* to its West German readers: 'This novel is surprising precisely in the degree to which so little of it is surprising for us. Certainly we learn lots of new things about everyday life in the GDR. However, this is shown so much 'von Mensch zu Mensch', that everyday life as well as the wishes and also the toil of the common man reflects itself in the everyday life, the longings and the toil of people here [West Germany] and, thus, can be instantly understood'.

This blurb on the book's back cover does resonate, of course, with the gist of Western social science research of that time. Peter Christian Ludz and his team underlined for the GDR the interrelationships of industrialisation, societal modernisation, and—as an aspired final result—the possibilities for democratisation of the GDR. Contemporary political rhetoric could easily be filled in. Still, however, is this claim of increasing similarity if not identity of East and West German settings, practices, and, perhaps, emotions a point in case of 'normalisation' in both respects—more 'normal' rules, but also more 'normal', that is, semi-autonomous handling of the rules by the majority of the people?

In order to investigate this issue, central dimensions of East German society ought to be demarcated. I restrict myself to three aspects I find 'characteristic' of the GDR, chosen more or less at randomly. The necessary comparison to Western or capitalist and also to other socialist / East European societies can only be mentioned here.

1) The growing impact of repression on society as a whole during the history of the state. This is certainly a trait of the GDR appearing in hindsight in a new light, at least to most observers. The strengthening of state violence,

and in particular the ever more present interventions of its various 'organs' as documented in the growth of MfS surveillance, especially from the early 1970s onwards; both were thoroughly underrated by most Westerners in the 1960s and 1970s. This holds for the application of brute force in its various forms, and is evident in the observable boost given to police measures against those who were viewed as 'a-socials' from the late 1960s. One has to include the harsh measures of incarceration of suspects and convicts alike, from long sentences to rude treatment, and also the high presence of military force and violence on many levels from the party rhetoric to its imminent presence at the border to the West, with force not only designed but applied in order to kill. However, the disciplinary furor of and within institutions, and in almost all spheres and arenas of society, did not stop here. The wider emphasis on stressing 'good order' and 'orderliness' in obviously almost all settings, including niches, have to be included too.

2)   The emphasis on and multiple meanings of work and working, as has been repeatedly emphasised, and rightly so.

3)   Rarely mentioned but almost ever present in people's everyday lives: the aesthetics of public space. Such 'greyness', however, also pervaded many tangible and palpable items that people acquired for their household or leisure time, as particularly visitors from the 'West' lamented over and over again. Still, citizens of the GDR themselves had similar concerns. And a number of them relentlessly tried to stem the tide and to contribute to improvement in these fields, some of them by joining official campaigns as those for public beautification ('*Verschönerung unserer Städte und Dörfer–Mach mit!*')

In such interpretive efforts one issue should, however, not go unnoticed; the significant distance of today's observers from the settings of pre–1989 GDR. To what extent do the notions of current researchers capture the specifics of experiences and practices—the 'inner face', as people who lived inside the GDR saw and tasted it? In other words: how to account for the scale of, for instance, 'order' or 'beauty' that people applied 'then' and 'now'? While difference here seems difficult to discern—what made a term like 'career' sound so starkly different for Westerners and Easterners? This is about 'making' the socio-political 'systems' in both East and West Germany into specific entities, turning them from a mere 'being' into respective trajectories: on both sides, generational dynamics had an enormous impact and contributed towards extending what was 'orderly' or 'beautiful' from the 1950s to the 1980s. Here, one might find a parallel to the puzzle Dipesh Chakrabarty stated in his 'Provincializing Europe': 'Western categories' prove 'inadequate but indispensable'.[7]

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7. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton, 2000), p. 19.

Against this background: do the notions that we nowadays employ in our research on the GDR capture the experiences and practices people aimed at or aspired for? Do words such as 'order' or 'beauty' denote the same—do they, at least, refer to similar experiences and imaginaries of reality? More generally: do the *'Western' concepts* suffice? At this point I have to resort to Dipesh Chakrabarty's remark that 'western categories' are '*indispensable* and inadequate'.

Practices of Work—and Their Emotional Charges

The 'hero of work' was one, if not *the,* pivotal figure, especially in the first years of the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) and GDR. On the level of propaganda and rhetoric, the Soviet model was certainly a central blueprint. However, engrained in the notion of society and politics that had dominated the socialist and communist workers' movements since the late nineteenth century was the energetic, muscular male figure, aspiring for a better future, who embodied the anti-bourgeois or proletarian hero of history. In the concrete setting of 1945, the shock of violence and the ensuing rubble, turmoil, and forced mass migration, as well as the terrifying pictures and accounts from the extermination and concentration camps, occupied people's mind and hands. Thus, reorganising production in agriculture and industry had absolute priority in order to give people a chance of survival. Campaigns for getting people back to work, if not to steady work, prevailed in all four zones of Allied occupation.[8]

Under the leadership of the SED, local functionaries as well as union activists called for increasing and sustained 'activism' on the part of all of the people working in their respective jobs. Reports about the narrow limits of such actions were abandoned. The complaints emphasise that in contrast to good old working class traditions, the emphasis on doing 'a good job' and being a 'quality worker' obviously had no meaning any more. People strove to get by, whether or not they ransacked the company and took away supplies—in the views of the party activists, nobody seemed to care. Campaigns like the one organised around the miner Adolph Hennecke (in October 1948) failed to stem the tide. This and other campaigns got a cold if not often hostile reception. Still, the official efforts did not stop or slow down: campaigns to honour Hennecke and other 'activists of work' were regular

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8. See for a general account of the East German economy André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan: eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Munich: DVA, 2004); for the aftermath of the war, Rainer Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft: Versorgungskampf und Vergleichsmentalität*, Leipzig, München und Köln nach dem Kriege (Münster, 1991).

features, as were competitions. And it fitted this strategy perfectly that outstanding performers were honoured as 'heroes of work' (those honoured received a bonus as well as a medal and media attention).[9]

Of course, it was a protest against another attempt to push up norms by official decree that triggered first a strike and, then, direct action against state and party authorities. Public protest rapidly spread on 16, 17, and 18 June 1953, not only in cities and towns, but also in the countryside. Although the party stepped back and signalled a new attentiveness to consumers' needs, it did not change its policy of preferring production over consumption, in particular heavy industry and its output. Let us finally consider five individual examples (or individual cases):

Demystifying Heroism

It is against this background that contemporary literary authors took up the issue. Many of them had themselves participated in campaigns to boost production and productivity.[10] The young writer Brigitte Reimann addressed the topic in this context. She, however, chose a different take: in her *Ankunft im Alltag* (published in 1961), she presented a story and portrayed the interactions of the leading figures of this book, set in one of the large construction sites where the 'new cities' materialised in oftentimes hard and strenuous work. Here she presented views of, in particular, young working people who in different ways deviated from the prevailing emphasis on heroising work and workers.

The title of Reimann's book, 'Arrival in the Everyday', demarcated a stance that differed generationally from the experiences of those who had designed and directed the first steps (and years) of what they claimed to be the 'New Germany' in the GDR. In her fictitious treatment of work in a lignite processing plant, Brigitte Reimann directly addresses the need to de-heroise perceptions and accounts of work (of course, at stake is toilsome manual labour). As they watch the sun rise on a cold winter morning after a long 'special shift', the young worker, Nikolaus, blushing somewhat towards the end of his reflections, comments to his friend Recha that what surprised him most was the:

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9. See on this Alf Lüdtke, 'Helden der Arbeit'—Mühen beim Arbeiten. Zur missmutigen Loyalität von Industriearbeitern in der DDR, in Hartmut Kaelble, J. Kocka, H. Zwar, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), pp. 188–213; Peter Hübner, 'Die Zukunft war gestern: soziale und mentale Trends in der DDR-Industriearbeiterschaft', in Kaelble, *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, pp. 171–87; *Parteiauftrag: ein neues Deutschland. Bilder, Rituale und Symbole der frühen DDR* (Munich, 1996).

10. Among them were people who were by no means just propagandists such as, for instance, Franz Fühmann who contributed in the late 1950s *Kabelkran und blauer Peter* (Rostock, 1961).

sheer ordinariness of the whole affair. . . No, it was not at all dramatic or romantic or anything, and certainly no-one felt himself to be a hero. They work through the night and make a gift to the state of several thousand tons of good coal, and afterwards they go and drink a beer and talk about dripping taps. . . . But it is, after all, something special. . . one feels as if one had done something special; don't you think? . . . One has to correct one's idea of heroism.[11]

Workers' Honour

In December 1962, some SED-activists in the *VEB Kombinat Werkzeugmaschinenbau '8. Mai'* noted self-critically in an internal report their scepticism about their coworkers in showing very unheroic behaviour. What the activists found particularly lacking was any sense among most colleagues that it would be 'normal' and necessary to work regularly. Instead, they observed widespread failure to understand basic needs of regular and well established 'rules for and of *normal work*' (not the least directly affecting one's wages, as one of the authors sarcastically added!). And those already trained prior to 1945 had 'mostly forgotten' (in the first draft the author had written 'totally forgotten') the 'extent to which they had devoted much of their energy in achieving higher quality work in the capitalist era'. However, in socialist times that kind of enforced self-regulation did not operate any longer. Hence 'some' (the first draft had 'all') disrespected the 'law of quality work'.

What had to be done? The '*proper worker's honour*' could only be re-established if everyone would be careful, for instance, in connecting pipes or handling tools when adjusting screws properly; such were basic characteristics of proper working. In addition, the authors called for everyone to pitch in and to clean up his workplace upon leaving, just as he had to return tools: *good order and reliability* were the main clues they emphasised.

The irony is that it was precisely this situation that had stimulated SED-functionaries to invite literary authors and other people from the arts to get actively involved with workers and to give artistic accounts of their strivings!

'Flyerin': a Female Worker in the Eichsfeld

Biographical accounts allow us to pursue individuals and trace their behaviour over time. It is especially important to explore the range of articulations and forms of behaviour. Only then is it possible to understand

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11. Brigitte Reimann, *Ankunft im Alltag*, (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1961), p. 212 (translation by MF).

the ways of appropriating specific settings or 'the rules', at least by specific individuals.

I am thinking of E. B., who was born in 1921 in a small village between Worbis and Leinefelde in the only overwhelmingly Catholic patch in East Germany, the Eichsfeld. She was married to a small farmer whom she married in 1946, she became mother to eleven children and in 1962 (one year after her tenth child was born) she followed the call for workers at the newly established cotton-spinning factory at Leinefelde. Here, she advanced rapidly and became one of the workers who had to train incoming young women (thus, she was not a brigadier, but did fulfil this specific task of training others). She was officially represented in December 1963 as one of those staunch supporters of the socialist state and its programme of industrialising.

When I interviewed her in 1999, she *proudly* told stories of her work, and how well she and her colleagues had got along, at least most of the time. Still, from the late 1970s her wage was cut back, and she lost that job she liked so much (namely the training of incoming new workers). She obviously left the company for good prior to retirement—but she returned to the small plot in the context of a LPG almost one hour by bus away from the company: she devoted *cheerfully* much of her energies to what she had already done before—writing stories in *Plattdeutsch* and, even more, composing an immense chronicle of her life.

Had she ever participated in a political action? Well, she had seen and liked Hitler, she told me. So, what about politics later on, I asked. She shrugged and did not elaborate.

The Engineer–the Loner: Reputation Paid

D. V. was an engineer who had graduated from a *Fachschule* (Nordhausen) in the mid 1970s.[12] After leaving school at the age of 16, he had started as an apprentice in a motor repair workshop in the city of Erfurt, close to his home village. After having completed this stint, he did his military service and upon his return, in 1963, he started to work for a local repair unit, the machine and tractor lending station (*Maschinentraktorenstation*), which was responsible for maintaining the moving gear and heavy machinery for working the land and especially its engines. This was either a one-person job or, at most, he accompanied a colleague or was accompanied by a colleague.

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12. See on this case my piece, 'Meister der Landtechnik oder Grenzen der Feldforschung? Annäherungen an einen "Qualitätsarbeiter" auf dem Lande im Bezirk Erfurt', in Daniela Münkel, Jutta Schwarzkopf, eds., *Geschichte als Experiment. Studien zu Politik, Kultur und Alltag im 19.und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Adelheid von Saldern* (Frankfurt/New York, 2004), pp. 243–57.

Since D. V. was intensely engaged with his job and was obviously 'good at it', there were no problems with his non-participation in social work or '*gesellschaftliche Arbeit*'; in the union, he remained passive. Repeatedly, he made the point that he had withstood numerous efforts to recruit him for the '*Betriebskampfgruppe*'. In fact, in interviews I did in the late 1990s, he complained furiously about those 'incompetent lazy boys' who sneaked away under the pretence of doing 'socio-political work', but, in fact, simply took a break and enjoyed the company of buddies and, not least, some beer and hard liquor. Still, our man was 'delegated' to *Fernstudium* (a distance learning course) for engineers, which he successfully completed in the early 1970s. He was then promoted to become the leading mechanic of the moving gear in cooperatives in the whole district of Erfurt.

In this new capacity he was, again, working basically on his own. In particular, he was responsible for maintaining and solving guarantee claims for tractors built in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. Thus, his job had an international dimension. This was challenging and rewarding at the same time. The challenge came from the different technical standards and, in particular, the lack of proper information to prepare him for his task. But he had learned to cope with inadequate supplies and information, and since he obviously managed well, he got 'reward trips' to visit the respective companies, which he obviously enjoyed and was visibly proud of, both at the time as well as in hindsight.

This was in many ways a rather straight line: the pursuit of engaging oneself with one's work and task. Here, he relied on his own experiences and dexterity, but also on networks of colleagues in the neighbourhood and afar (in most districts of the GDR and even reaching beyond the borders, although still within the Soviet block). Still, whether D. V. 'internalised' any of the specific goals the SED offered or propagated seems rather unlikely.

Working as an IM–the Craze of Writing?

This particular person I got to know through the lenses of *Stasi* files. Upon searching for Stasi surveillance in industry, a two-volume file turned up labelled 'Harry Baumgarten'. As usual, the file included the CV of this man by the name of T. He was born in 1948 in Leipzig in a 'worker's family', as one of the assessments noted.[13] However, in another file someone else had remarked that T. had not known his parents and had grown up with a foster mother. Whether he had trained as a mill hand or an electrician remains unclear (two different reports mention either one). After completion,

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13. BStU Außenstelle Leipzig, AIM 227/92, Bl. 159.

in 1965, he had volunteered for the riot police (*Bereitschaftspolizei*), but was dismissed five years later for disciplinary reasons (which were not specified in these reports). However, during his stint with the police, he had become a member of the SED and had also begun to cooperate with the secret police or MfS. This cooperation T. carried on when he got a job as a turner in a machine construction shop in Leipzig. From then on he regularly reported on his superiors and mates. The summary report of 1979 commented on the 'disciplined way' T. had worked for the MfS for (at least) eleven years, and that he 'was fully reliable in his cooperation with the MfS'. The file also testified to the range and intensity of his cooperation: T. had reported continuously. He met his liaison officer every week (or every fortnight). He obviously also regularly wrote reports himself, sometimes half a page in long hand, but often, however, two or three pages.

Is this not a rather straightforward case? Someone who tried 'to make do' and 'get by', thereby making use of possibilities to make some extra money. But the cooperation with the MfS also provided more: constant recognition by the respective liaison officer, and occasionally, by his superiors as well. Of course, the writing testified also to the sense of T. that he had some 'influence'. While reading his reports, I could not help but get the impression that it might not be primarily what he reported that mattered to T. It seems that at least as important for him was—to do this writing. Did he 'internalise' workings of state and party by his doings?

Afternote:

What do these individual cases show? First, I want to underline the fact that these examples are chosen at random. I have not done any systematic scrutiny in a wider array of similar materials. On the contrary, I found them during the vagaries of doing research in archives and among those who were ready to testify on 'their' past. Thus, these vignettes bear every mark of the irregularities that cannot be detached from 'tracing' the past. In other words, this is nothing but a case of ordinary research.

Still, cases like the ones outlined here allude to the room for manoeuvre which, at least, these particular individuals recognised or, to some extent, seized and shaped, if they did not actually create, by the way they went about the tasks they wanted or had to fulfil. By this token, these cases reference the multiple techniques and styles of pursuing 'projects of one's own'. They also reveal the enormous range of viewpoints and temporalities that people pursued, obviously at the 'same time'. Moreover, however, they serve to illustrate encounters and practices in and through which people not only survived, but also gained satisfaction, if not pleasure. In all of these cases,

people cooperated with given settings, if not with the powers that be. In one way or another, they cooperated with authorities and policies of the GDR, and not just the informal informant to the Stasi, but also the worker in the spinnery or the mechanical engineer in the countryside. In fact, it was less a matter of direct cooperation, but rather the striving of the many to do a good if not better job. Their energy and, to some extent, their enthusiasm in 'not giving up' at work served to sustain if not propel the existing socio-political order of the GDR.

However, in what ways and to whom such forms of behaviour can be rendered as 'normalisation' is, at least in my view, impossible to ascertain. To turn this around: since these cases can be summed up as examples of 'normalisation' notwithstanding their stark differences, the question returns: what, then, does 'normalisation' actually reveal about historical actors and both their ways of behaving and of making sense of what they did or tried to do?