There were manifold ways in which East Germans retained areas of relative freedom of action (*Handlungsspielraum*), distanced themselves from the regime's demands, even to some extent constituted brakes on its activity. And 'resistance', in a more general, pervasive sense—the manifold refusals of everyday life, the retention of standards and morals which challenged the pressures imposed from above—sustained patterns of alternative culture which ultimately helped, under specific historical circumstances, to explode the regime from within.

5

THE CREATION OF A NICHE SOCIETY? CONFORMITY AND GRUMBLING

THE Germans have long had a reputation, whether deserved or otherwise, for political obedience.[1] Allegedly, Germans—more than any other nation—tend to be rather conformist and to elevate obedience to authority above the dictates of conscience or civic courage (*Zivilcourage*). While this generalization about a supposed national character is clearly oversimplistic, certain variants enjoy some currency with respect to East Germany. It is frequently maintained that, among Eastern European states, the population of the GDR was the most docile in character, the least 'uppity' (*aufmüpfig*), a fact supposedly requiring some explanation. One not entirely flattering version, current for quite a while among some West Germans, was that all those with initiative and spirit fled the GDR while it was still possible, prior to 1961. A rather more academic and scholarly approach to the question was popularized in the notion of a 'niche society', which gained widespread currency with the publication of Günter Gaus's book, *Wo Deutschland liegt*.[2] On this view, East Germans came to terms with the pressures and demands of their regime by leading a double life of outward conformity combined with private authenticity. The net effect was stabilizing, even

[1] The fact that prejudices about a set of German national characteristics are by no means either dead or without influence in high places was underlined by the leaked memorandum by Charles Powell, private secretary to the then British Prime Minister Mrs Thatcher, of a meeting at Chequers on 24 Mar. 1990, reprinted in Harold James and Marla Stone (eds.), *When the Wall Came Down: Reactions to German Unification* (London: Routledge, 1992), 233–9. The six academic participants present at the meeting distanced themselves from the bald presuppositions about 'attributes' which supposedly formed 'an abiding part of the German character', including '*angst*, aggressiveness, assertiveness, bullying, egotism, inferiority complex, sentimentality . . . [A] capacity for excess, to overdo things, to kick over the traces . . . [A] tendency to over-estimate their own strengths and capabilities . . . [T]he conviction . . . [of] a deep moral and cultural superiority . . .' (234). But such views clearly held some sway among British politicians at the time of unification, as the later remarks—which were to occasion his resignation—of the then Secretary of State for Industry, Nicholas Ridley, revealed.

[2] Günter Gaus, *Wo Deutschland liegt* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986; first published by Hoffmann and Campe Verlag, 1983).

though the conformity was less than enthusiastic. This hypothesis is certainly very suggestive, and has the advantage of integrating analysis of political structures with social history; but, as we shall see, it requires a considerable degree of historical qualification.

This chapter will, then, seek to explore the extent to which at least a degree of popular compliance, if not active support, for the GDR was achieved, and will examine the history, nature, and preconditions of the alleged 'niche society' in which many East Germans appear to have led relatively sheltered lives. The following chapters will trace the extent to which many East Germans were in fact far less docile, less obedient to authority, less prepared to conform, than had previously been evident, at least as far as Western observers were concerned.

The claims of the state and the worries of everyday life

A primary aim of the East German regime was to produce good socialist personalities, wholeheartedly committing their energies to the greater good of the community and the socialist state. In contrast to the *laissez-faire* attitudes of Western capitalist democratic states, the East German regime operated a proactive social psychology, assuming that social engineering could actively change character types, attitudes, and personalities. The goal of producing the 'new man' (*den neuen Menschen*) was pursued through a variety of means, which shifted in emphasis over time. Policies were to a degree mutually contradictory—and none, in the event, was ultimately successful.

The regime pursued a combination of policies for the transformation of personality. First, there was the materialist view—to be found in Marx—that an alteration of the material conditions of existence would inevitably lead to an alteration in social consciousness. Thus the abolition of the capitalist socio-economic system and class structure would supposedly entail a corresponding change in consciousness on the part of the people. Such a view lay at the heart of a large part of East German denazification policies, for example. Since the communists adhered to a structural theory of fascism, they could argue that once the material base for Nazism had been abolished, Nazi views and attitudes would go away—and thus the former 'small Nazis' who were willing to throw themselves into the building of socialism could be readily accepted as members of the new society. Changes in relationship to the means of production were not always enough, however, as the SED soon discovered.

The regime subsequently devoted a considerable amount of time to analysing and seeking to affect the attitudes of different social classes. A range of social policies were directed at particular groups, providing sops for material discontent at different times. Organizational measures were also employed to try to foster a sense of community spirit, of working for a larger whole and a better future, in order to transform perceptions of the role of individuals in society. As we have seen, the whole of society was deeply penetrated and structured by state institutions and organizations, from work brigades to women's groups, from activities in the FDJ to the League of Culture or the German–Soviet Friendship Society. There was simply no escaping, in an organizational sense, the experience of 'belonging to the community'. Not that this necessarily had the desired effects either, as we shall see.

At the same time a rather different, more idealist view complemented the strictly materialist approach with respect to social conditions determining consciousness. This idealist view could also be found in Marx: the notion that the ruling ideas of the age were the ideas of the ruling class. In the GDR, which was considered for the most part to be in a process of (variously defined) stages of transition, it was necessary to employ a battery of ideological means of education, indoctrination, and propaganda to change people's views. State control of education was a priority right from the earliest stages in the Soviet zone of occupation: denazification of teachers was infinitely more thorough than that of doctors, for example; the abolition of denominational schools, the squeezing out of religious education, and the reorganization of the education system were major priorities. Ideological influence and the induction of a Marxist-Leninist world-view began in kindergarten, and could not be escaped, in the guise of compulsory weekend schools, evening courses, and comparable activities, even in adult life. State control of the media led most people to a generally cynical view of the newspapers, although Erich Honecker continued to take this very seriously and maintained close personal control over the contents of the official SED newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, to the very last. Those who skipped the slogans in the press could hardly ignore the banners in the streets, across public buildings, hung from motorway bridges: the ubiquity of ideological proclamations was part of the physical as well as mental landscape of East German socialism. Censorship operated for books and magazines, with varying degrees of severity at different times; but the battle over television was finally given up, there being no foolproof means of stopping people from tuning their sets to Western channels. The possibility

of watching Western television, which became ever more widespread from the 1970s, meant that there was an alternative source of information and debate which somewhat counterbalanced the regime's own attempts at complete, blanket ideological influence.

Much of the SED's efforts were wasted: the realities of everyday life tended to belie the propaganda put out by the regime. For at least the first few years after the collapse of Nazism, personal worries tended to predominate.

For one thing, there was a widespread reaction against involvement in any sort of politics, against sticking one's neck out again, in the light of the recent experience of punishment for having supported the previous regime. This might nevertheless be tempered with pressures to engage in new political compromises, more for pragmatic reasons of personal advantage than genuine political commitment. Many leapt to join new political parties to disguise their previous political records; there then followed the predictable witch-hunt of tainted individuals in various organizations. And in any event the choice of party might reflect considerations other than the party's ideology and policies. As one perceptive observer living in the Soviet zone put it at the time:

> I intended never again to get involved politically, but let myself be signed up as a member of the SPD, as I did not like the Sovietized KPD, and the CDU, which is a resort of former members of the Stahlhelm, inactive Nazis, and other people keen to run with the tide, seems to me less than viable. In the SPD, which is basically made up only of former members, mainly farmers and workers who never joined the NSDAP, they are very cautious in relation to newcomers such as myself.[3]

This particular new convert to the SPD was very soon disillusioned by the merger and the communist domination of the new SED; it was all too clear that the Russians dominated the German communists, and the latter, with Russian backing, dominated former SPD members. More generally, the gaps between rhetoric and reality were only too obvious in the following years. For many ideologically uncommitted East Germans, politics became a matter solely for cynical manipulation or critique.

Furthermore, in the devastated conditions of the first years after defeat, sheer personal survival was the main preoccupation for most people.[4] This

[3] Correspondence between Max Berger and Hans Arnold Plöhn, Institut für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ), ED 170, letter of 21 Nov. 1945.

[4] Cf. e.g. the autobiographical accounts collected in the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich; e.g. Walburg Lehfeldt, 'Wie konnte das geschehen? Erlebnisse einer Deutschen in Polen und in der russischen Besatzungszone, 1932–1950' (IfZ, MS 348), 93–155, which makes no attempt at answering the question posed in the title of 'how could it happen', but rather provides innumerable details of the hardship and sufferings, the begging and illnesses, the attempts to gain enough food and outwit the allegedly plundering and raping Russians, before a final flight to Bremen in West Germany in 1950. Similarly, Dr Karl Lerp, 'Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben. Für seine lieben Geschwister und Geschwisterkinder aufgeschrieben' (IfZ, ED 173), describes how the years from 1920 to 1939 were 'unsere glücklichsten und sorglosesten Jahre'; indulges in a degree of self-pity about how his weight dropped from 70 to 50 kg while interned by the British, to some extent compensated for by the very interesting company with whom he shared his internment (including the former Croatian envoy who had many intriguing tales to recount of meetings with Hitler, Goebbels, and other party bigwigs); and then gives nothing but practical and personal details concerning the reconstruction of his life in the Soviet zone after his release. This kind of partly self-pitying, partly self-heroizing tone is found in innumerable biographical and autobiographical accounts of the period, and relates to the simultaneous lack of adequate 'reckoning with the past'. For a more literary version, see e.g. Christian Graf von Krockow's rendering of his sister's experiences in *The Hour of the Women* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991, trans. from the original German *Die Stunde der Frauen* by Krishna Winston).

was a period when millions were resettling from lost homes in the eastern territories, when returning prisoners of war were seeking to be reunited with often scattered or decimated families, when there were intense personal traumas and tragedies to be resolved. There were around 3.6 million refugees in the Soviet zone in 1946, seeking food and shelter, competing with local communities for scarce resources. Added to the strains of social integration of populations with often very different dialects, cultural, and religious characteristics, was sheer hunger, exacerbated by the fact that the winter of 1946–7 was one of the harshest of the century. *Hamstern*, a combination of bartering and scavenging for food, was a major preoccupation for the vast majority of people, often alongside the problems of accommodation in conditions of great overcrowding and simply seeking to keep warm. These were essentially existential concerns, rather than questions to do with specific political ideologies. And as one socialist, Dr Karl Schultes, who was still actively working in the Soviet zone, put it in October 1947 in a letter to a friend in America: 'The economic misery and the sheer lack of food, quite apart from the massive coal deficit, will make it extremely difficult for the democratic forces to win over the population.'[5]

Material concerns were accompanied by more general worries about the future of Germany. Rumours were rife, making rational planning for the future relatively difficult. For example, in February 1946 the rumour was circulating in the area of Lübtheen in the Soviet zone that the English would soon come and oust the Russians, so that people were less willing to commit their energies to building up the economy according to Soviet plans, with deleterious effects on agricultural production, general *Aufbauwilligkeit*

[5] IfZ, Nachlass Karl Schultes (Bundesarchiv Signatur NL 185, IfZ, ED 188/5), letter of 25 Oct. 1947.

(willingness to build for the future), and so on.[6] To quote Schultes again, this time in a letter to a friend in Palestine:

> . . . Germany's situation and future is really so uncertain that I am afraid there will still be considerable difficulties and reversals. For with the situation as it is today, the democratic idea cannot seriously consolidate itself and grow roots. Right from the start, it is severely discredited by the variety of opinions and heavy foreign burdens, but above all by the great material distress of the population.[7]

Uncertainty about the future, combined with material distress, could hardly provide firm foundations for any sort of stable political reorientation for the mass of essentially apolitical Germans.

Even after the formal creation of two separate and opposing states in 1949, there were for many years continued rumours about the immediate possibility of another war. Throughout the 1950s, whether rightly or wrongly, people saw the future of the 'German question' as still wide open. This only began to change after the building of the Wall, and was eventually consolidated by the conclusion of *Ostpolitik*.

Hopes were often raised, only to be dashed, with sometimes unexpected consequences as far as popular opinion was concerned. After rising expectations with Western triumphs in the Korean War and hopes of a mass demonstration in the elections of 1950, disappointment set in. The Americans, rather than Hitler—or even the Russians—seem to have been the focus of considerable popular criticism at this time, for apparently leaving East Germans in the lurch. As a report on popular opinion in the 'eastern zone' of October 1950 put it: 'Along with a sense of complete helplessness goes, increasingly, a feeling of having been abandoned . . . [the blame for division] is not placed with Hitler or total defeat in war, but rather, above all, with the compliant politics of Roosevelt *vis-à-vis* Stalin, which led to the Potsdam Agreement, and thus to the surrender of the whole of eastern Europe to the Russian system.' The sentence could often be heard that 'The Americans delivered us up to the Russians, and the West shoved us off . . .'.[8] This feeling of having been effectively abandoned by the West was consolidated after the Geneva Conference. As a Western report on opinion in the zone suggested, the population were experiencing 'a deep sense of disillu-

[6] Berger–Plöhn correspendence, letters of 3 Feb. 1946 and 29 June 1953. In the wake of the June Uprising of 1953, there was a rumour in the same area that reunification would come soon, but the precondition would be a currency reform, with the consequence that people were spending all their savings on consumer durables in the expectation that money would rapidly become as worthless as in 1923. Similar rumours continued to circulate well into the 1950s, including in the confused months of 1956.

[7] Nachlass Schultes, ED 188/6, letter of 2 Dec. 1947.

[8] IfZ, Fg 44/2, 'Ostzonaler Stimmungsbericht nach den Wahlen vom 15.x.1950'.

sion. Above all, any trust in the USA has been completely shattered . . . In general therefore, there is an air of resignation and passivity.'[9]

War and peace continued to be major worries of the East German people, related of course very closely to questions of the standard of living and relations with the West. With the alleged benefit of hindsight, it is sometimes difficult to imagine oneself into the mind-set of those who, in the 1950s, very vividly feared the imminence of another world war. Yet the records show that this was a major fear for many East Germans. It perhaps became of declining salience in the period of stabilization and improvement in relations between the superpowers and the two Germanies in the late 1960s and 1970s; it reappeared with a vengeance in the unofficial peace initiatives from the late 1970s and through the 1980s.

When the Nationale Volksarmee (NVA, National People's Army) was founded in January 1956, there appears to have been widespread disapproval. An analysis by the trade union (FDGB) opens with the typical introductory paragraphs stressing how everyone allegedly supports the NVA 'for the reason that our Republic and our achievements are most dangerously threatened by the fascist and militarist forces of West Germany'.[10] It then goes on to reveal the real extent of popular disquiet. 'A large proportion of the population are wavering, because among many colleagues there is still a lack of clarity about the real character of our National People's Army.' Fears of loss of family members were combined with a dislike of the notion of Germans shooting on Germans, and a well-founded suspicion that rearmament was at the expense of popular living standards. Individual examples of specific comments are given from a number of factories: 'If everyone rearms and we form an army, then there will only be war and we don't want war'; 'Who is going to pay for the rearmament, and what about our standard of living that we were promised'; 'We don't want German to shoot on German, and if we form an army, what will happen then'; 'As usual it's the small fry who will have to pay for it, while the big fish will be drinking to their own good health'. In a factory manufacturing bras in Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz), which employed around 280 mostly older women workers, many of whom had lost their menfolk in the Second World War, there appears to have been almost total hostility: 'We destroyed all the weapons in 1945, now they are being made again. We are not going to give up our sons.' In another report, young people and the intelligentsia are identified as holding pacifist sentiments in

[9] Ibid., 'Die politische Lage in der DDR' (n.d., probably 1955).

[10] FDGB, 2672, Information No. 4, 'Stimmung der Werktätigen zur Schaffung der Nationalen Volksarmee' (20 Jan. 1956).

principle; women as fearing most for their husbands and sons.[11] And, of course, the majority of non-communist East Germans would have infinitely preferred a united Germany. As one individual put it, 'We would rather have "free elections" in the whole of Germany than a people's Army'.[12] The widespread popular conversion in the Federal Republic to faith in NATO and strong Western defences against the perceived threat of communism was not paralleled in East Germany.

The national question was obviously of almost overriding concern. With the passage of time West Germans were progressively ever less interested in the East, prepared to turn westwards, become good 'Europeans' and forget about the 'other Germany'. While in the 1950s reunification ranked as one of the most important problems for West Germans, by 1983 less than 5 per cent accorded it such significance. The decline was more marked among young people than old.[13] This was not true for those left stranded on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain. Attempts to retain links with relatives in the West, to receive visitors and gifts from the West, to gain visas and hard currency for travel in the West, were constant aspirations for large numbers of East Germans. Given the imbalances in size of population and patterns of migration, only one-third of West Germans had relatives in the East, while as many as two-thirds of East Germans had relatives in the West.[14] Lack of political freedom was clearly also a massive factor in popular opinion. This lack of freedom was not so much, or not solely, a question of political forms—a significant proportion of the German electorate had after all voted for the dismantling of Weimar democracy—but rather a question of personal freedom to travel, to discuss, to make choices. 'National' identification was hence not only a matter of a sense of national identity, which faded far faster in the West than the East, but also a matter of the desire for freedom.

Given the material affluence of the West, grumbling about the standard of living was of course virtually inseparable from the national question. As one would-be wit among the workers is alleged to have complained: 'Before, we had a princely state and workers' prices—now we have a workers' state and princely prices.'[15] Throughout the entire history of the GDR, people made unfavourable comparisons with the standard of living in the West. This was the driving force behind western migration in the 1950s, and, combined

[11] FDGB, 2672, Information No. 6. [12] Ibid., Information No. 4.

[13] D. P. Conradt, *The German Polity* (London: Longman, 3rd edn., 1986), 49.

[14] Lutz Niethammer, 'Erfahrungen und Strukturen. Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der Gesellschaft der DDR', in Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr (eds.), *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 100.

[15] FDGB, 2672, Information No. 10.

with a dislike of the repressive atmosphere of the GDR, provided a continued motive for people to abandon homes, homeland, families, and all that was near and familiar, in favour of a risky escape to an uncertain future, right through until the mass refugee flights of the summer and early autumn of 1989. The population haemorrhage at times of porous borders—until 1961 and in the summer and autumn of 1989—of course posed an explicit challenge to the legitimacy of the regime, ultimately eventuating, in the context of other factors, in its final collapse. But for the best part of forty years material shortages were taken for granted as an unavoidable aspect of life, and, well aware of the population's material disquiets, consumerism was a repeated tactic of the rulers to attempt to allay popular discontents.

On the other hand, East Germans were not entirely undifferentiated in their opinions: there was not simply a blanket condemnation of the East and adulation of all things Western. Some opinion poll surveys carried out by specialized institutes of opinion research for the SED are highly revealing in this respect. Since these surveys were carried out not for publication, but rather for identification of real problems which the party sought to address, there are no obvious attempts to dress up the results in the regime's typical tones of blatantly dishonest optimism when information was intended for public consumption. With all due caution with respect to popular suspicions and the sorts of answers people in a dictatorial regime are likely to give to opinion poll questions, the results are nevertheless of considerable interest.

In 1969, on the basis of a survey of 11,419 schoolchildren aged between 14 and 19, the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the SED found that around three-quarters of young people 'recognize with no reservations or with only weak reservations our values and goals, 10 to 20 per cent have, despite a basically positive attitude, rather greater reservations, and 5 to 10 per cent have a negative attitude of rejection'. The results of the 1969 survey confirmed those of previous years since the building of the Wall.[16] Younger classes of schoolchildren were on the whole more positive in their opinions than older; and children at the EOS (the equivalent of academic sixth-form colleges) were more positive than those at the less academic, vocational schools (POS). As the report notes, the 'usual hypothesis' (which they allege they wish to discard but is clearly introduced for serious consideration) runs along the following lines:

[16] IfGA, ZPA, IV A 2/2021/370, 'Kurzfassung über Probleme und Folgerungen zur Bewußtseinsentwicklung Jugendlicher in der DDR, die vom Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung anläßlich der "Umfrage 69" vorgelegt wurden', 2, 3.

'Younger pupils are less aware of problems, "naïver" than older ones, pupils from EOS schools behave in a more goal-oriented manner, pretend more, are less honest than children in vocational schools . . . Attitudes towards the army, the party, work with the FDJ, community work, and critical engagement with bourgeois ideology and mass media are always more negative in vocational schools than in the EOS.'[17]

The report notes some interesting patterns of differentiation in the opinions of the young people who were surveyed. For example, 86 per cent professed to be 'proud' of the GDR and 90 per cent 'claim to love the GDR as their fatherland', for a variety of reasons—among which the GDR's economic performance and political circumstances did not feature strongly. Only one-third of young people were prepared to respond positively to the suggestion that the development of the standard of living, or the 'opportunities for free political activity' might be a reason for GDR patriotism, while nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) gave as a reason 'secure career prospects and the variety of possibilities for development'.[18] In response to a question about the GDR media, the survey found that: 'The most positive attitudes relate to sports programmes. Political information is judged in much less positive terms. Only 40 per cent are completely of the opinion that radio and television give accurate information on important political events.'[19] As many as two-thirds (67 per cent) openly admitted they preferred Western media (including the dreaded pirate pop station of the 1960s, Radio Luxemburg, clearly the epitome of Western decadence as far as the SED were concerned) over GDR offerings.[20] Such wide contrasts suggest that children were not simply giving the positive answers they assumed would be expected, but were to some considerable degree responding fairly honestly—and with some perceptiveness of realities.

This sort of open-eyed and realistic differentiation is evident also in opinion poll surveys of adults in a range of occupations carried out in the 1970s, with very comparable results. For example, an opinion poll carried out among agricultural workers in February 1976 asking whether the GDR or the Federal Republic was 'better' on a range of aspects found that only just over a third (36.4 per cent) were prepared to say that personal income was better in the GDR than the FRG, compared with 80.3 per cent who thought that social security (*soziale Betreuung*) was superior in East

[17] IfGA, ZPA, IV A 2/2021/370, 'Kurzfassung über Probleme und Folgerungen zur Bewußtseinsentwicklung Jugendlicher in der DDR, die vom Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung anläßlich der "Umfrage 69" vorgelegt wurden', 3.

[18] Ibid. 8. [19] Ibid. 10. [20] Ibid. 11.

Germany.[21] Less than half those surveyed would concede that work productivity, leisure, and housing were better in the GDR (44.4, 44.6 and 47.6 per cent respectively); the rest for the most part diplomatically divided their responses between the 'I can't say' and 'no answer' categories rather than daring to suggest that conditions in the FRG were of the same standard or better than conditions in the GDR. In 1977, similar surveys found nearly three-quarters (72.3, 70.4 per cent) agreeing that 'basic material security (*Sicherheit der Existenz*)' was better in the GDR, and comparable proportions (71.4, 74.3 per cent) agreeing that the GDR was better in respect of social security in the sense of welfare provisions (*soziale Betreuung*), while a mere quarter to a third of those surveyed (27.1, 29.2 per cent) could bring themselves to agree that personal income was better.[22] When asked in 1976 to rate whether certain facilities were 'good', 'satisfactory', or 'unsatisfactory', only 37.1 per cent of residents of the surveyed areas felt that shopping facilities were good, and a paltry 13.7 per cent were prepared to pretend that 'gastronomic facilities' in their area were good, over half (51.7 per cent) quite honestly reporting that they were 'unsatisfactory'.[23]

These sorts of answers suggest that most East Germans, whether still at school or at work, had a fairly clear picture of the advantages and disadvantages of living in the GDR, sufficiently strong to be reflected, even if with some distortions due to the constrained circumstances of a non-liberal regime, through the opinion poll surveys of their Big Brother state. For all the distortions, it is quite clear that considerable numbers of East Germans had well-grounded grumbles about the conditions of life in the GDR. But most of them on the whole kept their grumbling muted and with the passage of time were increasingly prepared to go along with the regime in some form of passive conformity to its structures and rituals. It was this combination of conformity and grumbling, *Anpassung und Meckern*, which, eventually, gained for the GDR the label of a 'niche society'.

Achieving conformity? Compliance and the 'niche society' in the 1970s

By the 1970s, it was common to see well-organized mass parades and mass demonstrations on the occasion of public holidays, such as May Day, or the

[21] IfGA, ZPA, IV B 2/2.023/51, Institut für Meinungsforschung beim ZK der SED, 'Bericht über eine Umfrage zu einigen Fragen der sozialistischen Landwirtschaft (Bereich Tierproduktion)' (27 Feb. 1976).

[22] Ibid. (24 May 1977).

[23] Ibid., IV B 2/2.028/40, Institut für Meinungsforschung beim ZK der SED, 'Bericht über eine Umfrage zum gesellschaftlichen Leben und zur Arbeit der Nationalen Front in den Wohngebieten' (7 July 1976).

anniversary of the death of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. As well as those actively participating—marching past in FDJ uniform or whatever, carrying the official banners—there would be the well-behaved crowds who turned out to stand on the pavements and cheer the marchers along. For most of those participating, this would be a classic case of outward conformity. One turned up with one's work brigade, was seen to be there by the boss, and after a decent interval disappeared to the beer garden to have a drink with colleagues and friends. It was also, as Stefan Wolle has suggested, a form of mass public humiliation (*Demütigung*), a visible obeisance to one's lords and rulers.[24] These rituals were a public display of subordination, of subject status. And it was in these public rituals that the first open challenges to authority were to come in the later 1980s, with the carrying of unofficial banners in the Olof Palme peace march of 1987.

It took some time before this mass conformity, this outward and visible sign of willing subordination to domination, could be achieved. It also took considerable organizational work on the ground. A report dated 14 May 1956 from the Plauen SED leadership to the Central Committee of the SED complains that the participation in the demonstrations of 1 May was smaller than in the previous year, due to poor organization. It comments that 'Among the demonstrators there lacked, above all, the necessary enthusiasm[!]' and adds that there was even evidence of 'enemy activities', with swastikas being hung on garden fences, and 'small quantities of leaflets, particularly anti-Soviet propaganda' being repeatedly dropped via balloons.[25] Similarly, a report on party work in Berlin in 1955 bemoans the 'great gaps in the political-organizational leadership of the masses by the party. This was particularly evident in the demonstrations on the occasion of 8 May. Party organizations were not even able to prevent a relatively large exodus from the marching ranks of demonstrators.'[26] Given the context—the ruins, the rubble, the grey and dismal atmosphere a mere ten years after the end of the war—it was scarcely surprising that there was little spontaneous enthusiasm expressed in parades. Achieving outward conformity was more a matter of party discipline and control of the masses than

[24] Stefan Wolle, 'Der Weg in den Zusammenbruch: Die DDR vom Januar bis zum Oktober 1989', in Eckard Jesse and Armin Mitter (eds.), *Die Gestaltung der deutschen Einheit* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Schriftenreihe Band 308, 1992), 75–6: 'In the annual rhythm of the calendar the party paid homage to itself. The stupid rituals strikingly symbolized the rigid inflexibility of the system. The essential heart of the secular liturgy consisted in the collective humiliation of the masses in face of their rulers. The goal, as with every liturgy, was, so far as possible, to exclude all individuality and critical rationality.'

[25] IfGA, ZPA, IV 2/5/968, report of 14 May 1956.

[26] SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/975, 'Einschätzung der Lage und des Standes der Parteiarbeit in Berlin' (20 May 1955).

inward conviction on the part of the population. In general one could suggest that the 1950s were characterized by sufficient uncertainty about the future, combined with the still open border with West Berlin, for most people to maintain a relatively low-profile, wait-and-see stance with little impetus to put oneself out in visible conformity.

The niche society did not so much reflect any real change in attitudes and values, a diminution in what might be called justifiable grumbling, and a growing acceptance of the *status quo*. Rather, it was a product of changing circumstances, changing conditions of action, which produced changes in people's expectations and patterns of behaviour. There never was a 'golden age' in the GDR when the subordinate masses were genuinely content to leave politics to a well-meaning but all-powerful élite and to retreat into private niches, cultivating their gardens (literally as well as metaphorically, given the ubiquitous popularity of the allotments, or *Schrebergärten*, in the GDR as elsewhere in much of eastern central Europe). In so far as there was the appearance of such a situation, it was more or less precisely what the regime under Honecker was aiming at; failing complete commitment to communist ideology and goals, passive conformity and leaving politics to the party was an acceptable compromise. And this compromise was, very nearly, achieved—perhaps for the space of two or three years in the early to mid-1970s, let us say 1972–5.

If this sounds unduly precise and ridiculously restrictive, then it is intended, rather pointedly, to highlight a problem of analysing this phenomenon. What one is pursuing here is effectively an absence, a non-event. One is looking for a period when politics ticked over and the people kept quiet. But what the people felt and thought is only captured, in hindsight, through records, documents, which are social artefacts, political constructions, refracting, to some extent distorting or entirely repressing, the complexities of behaviours, values, and attitudes which go to make up the fullness of 'social reality' at any given time. As we shall see in the following chapters, the records on the whole turn out to be far fuller of complaints, acts of insubordination, and political opposition, than ever previously suspected, at least as far as outside observers were aware. So was perhaps the 'niche society' not so much an accurate description of a passive reality than a reflection of the efficiency of East German security and police forces in repressing unrest, and of East German information control in ensuring that news of incipient revolts rarely leaked out? Was it too a partial chimera of changed modes of reporting in the 1970s, when many series (such as the regional and local party reports, and the trade union reports on public opinion) become extraordinarily bland and positive, revealing virtually

nothing of the vivid depictions of popular opinions which, for all the framing, nevertheless shine through particularly in the reports of the early years? Is the concept of a niche society, in effect, a result of the report-writers in the 1970s telling the rulers what they wanted to hear? Or, on the contrary, is the very prevalence of this *Schönfärberei* in the 1970s rather an indication of the stabilization of the system and the lack of serious worries on the part of the report-writers or their recipients?

In other words, there are some real methodological problems with seeking to identify when, if at all, any sort of a 'niche society' existed in the GDR, let alone trying to write its history. But despite these problems, the issues can be addressed. First, as suggested at the start of this section, patterns of mass conformity—at least on the occasion of public demonstrations—did develop. More people were prepared to adopt modes of behaviour of outward conformity in the 1970s than the 1950s. Thus the history of outward conformity can be written. Secondly, the 'niche society' never encompassed the whole of the population. It can be used as a shorthand phrase to summarize certain aspects of life among certain sections of the population in the GDR. As we shall see in the following chapters, significant groups never conformed, although modes of nonconformity, resistance, and opposition were very diverse and changed over time. The extent to which significant sections of the population were prepared to conform also varied at different times. The conditions under which this preparedness broke down will be the subject of a later chapter; here, we shall be concerned with the construction of widespread popular compliance, not the unexpected collapse of popular obedience in the final months of the GDR's life.

In so far as a 'niche society' existed, it was essentially constructed in the course of the 1960s and 1970s, for a variety of different reasons and with variations according to class and generation. The construction of a 'niche society' was moreover more a matter of transforming the structural frameworks in the context of which people led their lives, and at the same time transforming popular expectations, understandings of 'normality', and related behavioural patterns, than of achieving any genuine ideological conversion of the population. Moreover, the 'niche society' was not a stable construction (although once popularized in Western textbooks, it became a stable element of Western interpretations). It reached its high point around the mid-1970s; but the very factors which had gone to produce a degree of stabilization in the system themselves inaugurated a new lability through heightened hopes and expectations which could not subsequently be fulfilled. Let us examine in turn the different elements which served

to produce the classic conditions for the niche society and its subsequent shifting.

First of all, there were important external preconditions for the spread of conformity. The stabilization of the GDR's international status was a key prerequisite. In 1961, the building of the Berlin Wall closed off the last escape hole to the West; it was now clear that one would have to make the best of things as they were, at least for the time being. And the duration of the time being began to look ever longer, with the conclusion of *Ostpolitik* in 1972 and the apparent permanence of the division of Germany that the GDR's newly won international recognition as a full voting member of the United Nations in 1973 seemed to entail. People felt that they simply had to live in the GDR as it was; if, after all, it was now officially recognized by what had been characterized as the arch-enemies of the capitalist-imperialist West, then the future of the GDR as a separate state seemed to be rather more definite.

Secondly, there were equally important internal political preconditions. The smooth functioning of the state apparatus and the party system were prerequisites. People only conform to patterns and frameworks if these themselves are accepted as relatively stable facts of life, not subject to perpetual challenge and renegotiation. Moreover, smoothly functioning systems of control help to pressurize and incorporate the population, to produce desired patterns of behaviour and suppress others. As we have seen in Chapter 3 above, by the 1970s the functionary system of organization and grass-roots penetration of society appeared to be rather more effective than in earlier years.

Thirdly, whatever people may actually think about a regime or aspects of its policies, over a period of time they start to develop patterns of behaviour which allow them to live within constraints which they cannot realistically hope to alter. They have to develop a *modus vivendi*. A state which is manifestly built on manipulation and lies, intervention and control, will produce subjects who live a corresponding life of pretence, of *Anpassung*. People, after all, have to live the lives they have, and have only once; they have to create the spaces for a degree of personal happiness, privacy, fulfilment, with corresponding compromises if outward conformity is demanded. More than this, and more positively expressed: a state in which there is only one dominant party will, if it lasts long enough, not only attract careerists and political trimmers, but also more genuinely committed individuals who feel that, if they are to achieve anything at all, they must work through the existing power structures and not against them.

Furthermore, the social history of the GDR produced itself a degree of stabilization. There were some groups who genuinely benefited from the regime's policies in different ways, and thus had something of a stake in the system. First, there were those from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds (children of workers and peasants) who had been given educational opportunities and professional advancement way beyond their expectations. The very real social revolution effected in the early years of the GDR, while antagonizing members of the middle classes and children from religious backgrounds, did give a very real boost to significant numbers of others who were offered opportunities never available to their parents.[27] Secondly, there was the impact of Ulbricht's concern with the 'technical-scientific revolution', and of the economic reforms of the 1960s. Finally, there was the developing impact of generational change. A new generation was coming to maturity which had been more influenced by the GDR than by an early childhood in the Third Reich. For the rising generation, certain features of the sociopolitical landscape began to become the taken for granted parameters of life. One had to go through the motions, grumbling if necessary to relieve one's feelings, but conforming in ever-increasing numbers none the less.

There is also another feature of importance, difficult to capture in documentary evidence but of undoubted significance. This has to do with what might be called the 'normality of everyday life'. People who led most of their conscious lives in the GDR—of whom there was a rising proportion in the population by the 1970s—simply took for granted the rules of existence, the shape and colour of their social, economic, and political surroundings. Without contrasts, without the personal *experience* of something different, it is difficult to define the character of one's own surroundings very precisely. As one East German put it, up until her first experience of West Germany after the fall of the Wall she had not realized the GDR was so grey, the buildings so decrepit, the air so dusty, because she had never known anything different.[28] Her only trip abroad before 1989 had been to Poland, which was visibly very much poorer. Her children, born in the mid-1970s, had experienced a happy childhood, with weekend trips to their country cottage, close to a farm where they could visit the cows, and with a garden in which they grew their own vegetables. They had been on camping holidays in the summer, and had enjoyed the sporting and social activities of their youth groups without ever really questioning the political

[27] See particularly the very suggestive essay by Lutz Niethammer, 'Erfahrungen und Strukturen'.

[28] An East German historian in her early forties, personal discussion, Jan. 1994.

constraints. For families such as this, life in the GDR was simply taken for granted, in much the same way as, for example, millions of Britons might concede that, objectively speaking, their income was lower than that of many Americans, but would not on this account chafe in frustration that they could not afford luxury homes or multiple consumer durables.

These tendencies were reinforced by a number of factors in the early 1970s. Honecker's early years were characterized, not only by the resolution of *Ostpolitik* and the new permanence of the GDR, but also by policies aimed at alleviating conditions in the here and now. In contrast particularly to the Stalinist emphasis on heavy industry characteristic of the 1950s, in the 1970s consumerism became an explicit goal of production. More fridges, washing machines, and television sets were produced; and although waiting lists for new cars remained long, ownership of a second-hand Trabi began to become a not unattainable goal. Social policies were prioritized in the proclaimed 'unity of economic and social policy': improved housing conditions, pensions, and maternity benefits were designed both to enhance the population's sense of well-being and to reverse stagnant or declining population numbers. These policies were combined with a new emphasis on building a sense of 'GDR national identity', now that reunification was no longer the avowed goal of the regime: international sporting successes, emphasis on cultural differences, the renewed appropriation of previously ignored or undervalued aspects of German history, were all brought into play in the attempt to inculcate a sense of pride in the GDR. Hopes of a new era under Honecker, characterized by cultural liberalization, were given sustenance by such proclamations as that of 'no taboos under socialism'. Additionally, the newly recognized GDR's participation in the Helsinki process both reinforced its claim to independent international status and raised hopes of a further liberalization of the regime. The great popular interest shown in Basket III of the Helsinki final act was frequently commented on (rather disapprovingly) in official reports.

But many of these features led only to a short-lived stabilization. Hopes and expectations were raised which could not subsequently be met. Two in particular were of importance as far as the broad masses of the East German population were concerned. One had to do with the standard of living, and expectations of economic improvement; the other related to political liberalization, and specifically the possibility of easier travel to the West and greater access to different media products. The hopes which were raised in the early 1970s led to changed behaviour patterns already in the early 1980s; and they were mightily fuelled by the new signals coming from the Soviet Union in the Gorbachev era. These heightened expectations inaug-

urated the new lability which was the precondition for the mobilization of the masses in the autumn of 1989.

Raised expectations and heightened lability in the 1980s

The year 1975 can perhaps be seen as a turning point. The early Honecker years had aroused great expectations; from the mid-1970s, it became increasingly clear that raised expectations would not be fulfilled.

As far as human rights were concerned, both the Federal Republic's new *Ostpolitik* of recognition and *rapprochement* and the Helsinki Final Act played a major role in increasing the GDR's actual openness to the West, and in nurturing hopes of further liberalization. As a summary to Erich Honecker of a report from the Bezirksleitung Dresden (under the leadership of the reform-minded communist Hans Modrow) put it in August 1975:

> In the report it is pointed out that, at the moment, the interest of many citizens is still directed too one-sidedly at the sections concerning human contacts and information. These citizens have expectations, above all, concerning further extensions of holiday traffic, tourism, family reunions, marriages, and the import of products of the press. There is widespread support for the demand to call a halt to the arms race. And, according to the report, many young people connect this with illusions of reducing or completely abolishing military service.[29]

Comparable comments come from the Bezirksleitung Schwerin in June 1978:

> [It can be] sensed . . . that many citizens have difficulty in the correct evaluation of the specifics of our policies in the interests of peace . . . in this connection the influence of the class enemy is not without effect.
>
> It is still clear that every step towards normal international legal relations between states still leads to illusions with respect to the Federal Republic of Germany, for example concerning travel there or other such matters.
>
> Here we can see that the enemy is still, despite all, using his manifold organizational influences to target citizens, at least as far as problems concerning holiday travel or a sense of nationalism—if only occasionally—is concerned.[30]

The increased cultural and human penetration of the GDR after *Ostpolitik*—the larger numbers of visitors from the West, the massive increase in exposure to Western television and other media—was double-edged in its political implications. On the one hand, it is true that many East Germans now had to view their state as a permanent, internationally recognized entity, and that any end to the division of Germany was now a

[29] SAPMO-BArch, Büro Erich Honecker, J IV A 2/2.030/252, report of 26 Aug. 1975.

[30] Ibid., J IV A 2/2.030/151, letter of 19 June 1978 from Heinz Ziegler, First Secretary, Schwerin, to Erich Honecker.

most unlikely possibility. Unification simply did not seem to be on any realistic political agenda, particularly once the West German CDU came to accept the Social–Liberal coalition's eastern policies. On the other hand, the recognition by the West of the separate existence of an East German state was in part precisely to seek to overcome the barriers to human contact through the Iron Curtain. And this led many East Germans to be both better informed, and to expect continued further improvements in their degrees of freedom and possibilities for contacts with the West.

The economically beneficial *rapprochement* between the two Germanies which was pursued in the early 1980s (and which led to favourable credit agreements which somewhat alleviated the GDR's mounting economic difficulties and international debt mountain) had less welcome domestic political consequences as far as the regime was concerned. As a report from the Bezirksleitung Schwerin put it in April 1986:

> There continues to be widespread support for the willingness to engage in dialogue between the GDR and the FRG, from which part of the population is hoping above all for relaxations of travel restrictions and that sort of thing . . . With the variety of contacts between representatives of the party and government of the GDR and the government of the FRG as well as representatives of the SPD, the opinion is frequently expressed that the FRG cannot be that dangerous after all . . .

In typical fashion, the report continues (putting the blame not on the real opinions of the people, but on hostile influences from abroad, which must be countered with the usual weapons of ideological warfare):

> In innumerable ways one can sense certain effects of hostile ideological diversions. Therefore it is important, when engaging in face to face ideological work, to put the essence of this dialogue into context, and to demonstrate that under no circumstances can such a dialogue make the antagonistic contradictions between socialism and imperialism disappear.[31]

Similar expectations of the possible results of closer relationships between the two Germanies were clearly raised by Honecker's visit to West Germany of 1987. As a report from Frankfurt-on-Oder put it in October 1987:

> The fact cannot be overlooked that among a section of the population of all ages and social classes, there are heightened expectations above all in relation to travel restrictions. This is particularly the case among youngsters, religiously inclined citizens, members of the medical profession and the cultural intelligentsia, as well as tradespeople, artisans, and craftsmen. Such expectations are more or less disassociated from the real situation concerning relations with the FRG and its position with regard to basic questions of the sovereignty and independence of the GDR. Evidence of this is the continuing rise in the number of applications in the third

[31] Ibid., J IV A 2/2.030/240, report of 15 Apr. 1986.

quarter of 1987 for a permanent change of residence to the BRD or Berlin (West), in which connection many individuals express the expectation that it would now be easier to move across to the FRG.[32]

In the context of *rapprochement* between the two Germanies, there was clearly something of an air of expectation, of leavening of the dead weight of separation, of hope for liberalization and increased freedom of movement.

These hopes were given massive impetus, of course, by the accession of Gorbachev to power in the Soviet Union. Widespread expectations of the possibility of increased openness and change within the Soviet bloc countries were sufficiently strong to be reflected even in the most *schöngefärbt* (glossed over and rose-tinted) party reports—an indication, perhaps, that even the local party leaders were becoming increasingly impatient with Honecker's resistance to notions of glasnost and perestroika, and were using their reports to drop broad hints on this front.

For example, the Leipzig party report of June 1987 suggests that although everyone is of course prepared 'to struggle perpetually for the highest daily achievements', nevertheless 'questions are put concerning the realistic nature of tasks set, the continuity of the production process, and the provisions of material and spare parts. At the same time, the question is raised as to whether a more critical approach, such as is current in the Soviet Union, might not help us to progress more quickly.' The report continues to enumerate the very real worries of the population and the local party leadership, concerning energy for heating, lack of quality of goods ('they limit the stability of provisions and lead to irritability among the citizens'), the length it takes to have repairs carried out, the lack of spare parts ('there is increasing criticism of the long waiting periods for fridges because of the lack of thermostats and for vehicle repairs because of a lack of spare parts'), and so on.[33]

A similar commentary comes from Frankfurt-on-Oder in February 1987:

Among comrades and many other politically engaged citizens the speech of Erich Honecker has been understood as a programme for action in 1987. But there are however comments, particularly from members of the intelligentsia, in which comparisons are made with the speeches of Comrade Gobachev . . . For the most part the influence and the intentions of the hostile media are evident here. But there are also voices to be heard from comrades who are unsure of things. . . . Of course superficial comparisons and above all silly assertions are energetically opposed.[34]

[32] SAPMO-BArch, J IV A 2/2.030/254, report of 1 Oct. 1987.
[33] Ibid., J IV A 2/2.030/258, report of 11 June 1987.
[34] Ibid., J IV A 2/2.030/254, report of 27 Feb. 1987.

In Schwerin in December 1988 the same sorts of sentiments are recorded: 'the expectation was frequently expressed that our society should permit more openness and freedom of opinion'; people were following the developments in the USSR, Poland, and Hungary extremely closely. At the same time, increasing numbers of people were expressing their desire to leave the GDR.[35] Within a year of this report being compiled, they were of course—entirely unexpectedly—able to put these hopes and expectations into practice.

It is clear from the above that the West German policies of increasing human and political contacts between the two German states were having noticeable effects on the aspirations of the East German population. So too were the new initiatives taken by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, while the Federal Republic recognized the GDR as a legitimate discussion partner, engaging in party political contacts at the highest levels and receiving Erich Honecker as a distinguished guest of state, it could hardly be predicted that the GDR would simply crumble and disappear within the foreseeable future. Indeed, had the Federal Republic recognized the GDR's full sovereignty and ceased to accord automatic rights of citizenship and residence in the West to East German citizens, the GDR might never have crumbled at all—and would certainly not have collapsed so fast. Thus although there was in certain circles an air of heightened expectation, beginning with developments *vis-à-vis* the West in the early to mid-1970s and encouraged by the new winds blowing from the East in the later 1980s, the prevailing pattern among East Germans was one of general compliance with the rules of the political game which people within the GDR felt they were constrained to play.

How did people conceptualize the kind of double life they were leading? A number of concepts were current. For example, there was the notion of *freiwilliger Zwang*—'voluntary coercion'. If one simply wanted to avoid trouble, it was better to do voluntarily what one was going to be forced to do anyway. Another such phrase was that of *bequemes Schweigen*, having an easy life by keeping quiet. This did not necessarily mean that people were not critical; but such criticism was often expressed in the sublimated form, for example, of political jokes, which allowed a ventilation of feelings and a sense of solidarity among those enjoying the joke while posing little real challenge to the regime. (Question: 'When you die, would you rather go to a capitalist hell or a socialist hell?' Answer: 'A socialist hell of course. You get roasted in the flames of hell in both cases; but in a socialist hell, there is

[35] Ibid., IV B 2/14/70, 'Rat des Bezirks Schwerin, Informationsbericht für Okt./Nov. 88' (6 Dec. 1988).

a shortage of matches, they've run out of wood, and the Devil is not working at the moment.')[36] The circumvention or manipulation of rules, the sense of human solidarity in muted oppression, the retreat into the pleasures and problems of private life, were all modes of long-term survival in what appeared, for most people, to be a permanent political situation. In what was quite clearly an ultimately repressive state, it took considerable courage and conviction to speak out directly on matters of conscience.

All this suggests that the regime's polices of (to put it neutrally) socialization and education, or (more pejoratively) indoctrination, were to little effect, despite the massive resources poured into propaganda. In other words, what we have been examining here is *not* the way in which the state successfully 'indoctrinated' or (less pointedly) 'socialized' its subjects, but rather the ways in which it sought to achieve their outward compliance. And this achievement is in many ways infinitely less remarkable than the other side of the same coin; the conditions under which subjects refused, in different ways, to offer up their compliance, to acquiesce in their own subordination. More important than positive indoctrination in achieving conformity was the paucity or absence of institutional bases for the articulation of countervailing views, for at least a limited form of 'civil society' or supportive non-state-controlled environment in the context of which to debate and critique the regime. This, however, as we shall see in Chapter 8, was to develop in the course of the late 1970s and 1980s. For the most part, discontent and opposition was effectively contained or fragmented. It is to the misfits, the nonconformists, the proponents of different outlooks—in short, to those who, in the now famous words of Rosa Luxemburg, 'thought differently' (*die Andersdenkenden*)—that we now turn.

[36] For this and other examples, see Karl-Dieter Opp and Peter Voß, *Die volkseigene Revolution* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993), 91–3; see also Arn Strohmeyer, *Visa-frei bis Hawai* (Frankfurt-on-Main: Eichborn, 1990).

6

MODES OF POPULAR DISSENT

ONE fact was evident throughout the GDR's history: a lot of people did not like the GDR. That there was mass discontent with the political constraints and material shortcomings of life in the GDR is indisputable. This was both externalized and reified in official views, which almost automatically attributed very diverse expressions of protest to the 'class enemy' (usually expressed as an individual, with references to the *Klassenfeind*, the *Tätigkeit des Klassengegners*), allegedly steered from the imperialist-capitalist West. But in reality there were many, often quite conflicting, bases of discontent within the GDR itself, frequently sparked by unfavourable comparisons between West and East but certainly based more on authentic experience than on manipulation by alleged enemy agents.

There was clearly a major difference between the Third Reich and the GDR in this respect. The Third Reich was at least in origin carried on a tidal wave of enthusiasm which, even if never characteristic of a majority of the population, was sufficiently widespread and genuine to provide Nazism with a basis of popular support never enjoyed to such an extent by the communist regime in the GDR. The early years of the Third Reich were, moreover, characterized by improvements in living standards for many sectors of the population, combined with a return to full employment, a restoration of a degree of national pride, and a sense of movement upwards and onwards. At least among significant sections of the population these trends, combined with a carefully tended presentation of Hitler as the charismatic Führer, did much to provide a real basis of support for the regime. There was nevertheless a significant proportion of the population in Nazi Germany who, right from the start, were characterized rather by degrees of disgruntlement, grumbling, and partial or sporadic nonconformity.[1]

[1] On patterns of popular opinion and political culture in the Third Reich, see particularly the seminal works by Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); *Hitler* (Harlow: Longman, 1991); and also e.g. Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany* (London: Batsford, 1987).