

## INTRODUCTION



# The Banalities of East German Historiography

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For the first decade after the demise of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), professional and popular interest in East German history focused on two broad themes: the forms of power and repression exercised by the ruling elite, and the varieties of dissent and resistance to Communist rule. During this “first wave” of investigation following the opening of the archives, scholarly and public attention fell on spectacular events such as the mass uprising of June 1953 or the construction and fall of the Berlin Wall; the dictatorial, supposedly “totalitarian” nature of the state and its ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED); “high politics” and the significance of Soviet domination, i.e., the formal institutions and structures of power; as well as the threat or use of physical force—symbolized above all by the sinister activities of the State Security Service (Stasi).<sup>1</sup>

Other aspects of life in the GDR were viewed primarily through this lens, with an overwhelming focus on the ways in which people either collaborated with or sought to resist the demands of this highly ideological regime. As a result, interest in the churches or in creative writers and artists, for example, was often limited to their relationships with the regime, their infiltration or cooption by the Stasi, or their contribution to sustaining or undermining the power of the SED. A feverish and often sensational search for former Stasi informers (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*, or IMs)—often with little regard for the exact nature of their collaboration—seemed at times to be a belated attempt to make up for inadequate denazification after 1945.<sup>2</sup>

A gradual move away from this type of top-down, politically inflected, often morally accusatory and triumphalist approach started to emerge in the mid 1990s, as scholars began to broaden their scope and turn to East German society itself as a serious subject of inquiry. These new studies posed the types of questions typically associated with traditional social history, looking at social

policies and social developments, as well as at the experiences of social groups such as industrial workers and middle-class professionals, women and youths, writers and artists. Just as this approach began to gather steam and produce substantive results that provided a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between state and society, a “third wave” of studies emerged, influenced by questions associated with the “new cultural history,” which relied on the insights of anthropology and linguistic theory. Here the focus of attention was the subjective experiences of “ordinary” East Germans and the possibility of their “agency.” It was, above all, scholars working in North America and the United Kingdom who addressed such issues, with an eye to private life and domesticity, material consumption, power in all its guises, perceptions, identities, and discourse.<sup>3</sup>

The boundaries between these “waves” were more porous than this brief, schematic overview suggests; in fact, there was a great deal of overlap among them, both in terms of substance and the actual appearance of individual studies.<sup>4</sup> The general trend has nevertheless been a move away from an almost exclusive focus on high-level “politics” and repression toward one that looks at sociocultural developments at the grassroots level, “everyday history,” and questions of agency. This has been accompanied by a broadening of chronological coverage. While many of the initial studies focused on the early decades of the regime under SED leader Walter Ulbricht, more recent ones have looked at its last two decades under Erich Honecker or, in rare cases, the entire forty-year history of the GDR. Some scholars have also adopted a more innovative use of sources, eschewing written documents produced by the regime in favor of a variety of sociocultural artifacts.<sup>5</sup> In short, the historiography of the GDR over the past twenty years has mirrored at breakneck speed the trajectory of postwar historiography more generally, which saw a gradual move away from the “political” to the “social” and then, in turn, to the “cultural.”<sup>6</sup>

### **The Peculiarities of Totalitarian Theory**

Out of these various approaches has emerged a major scholarly debate that has come to dominate the field of East German studies—arguably to its detriment. At the heart of the discussion is a deceptively simple question: was the GDR a totalitarian regime in fact as well as in theory? Measured by the various models used to characterize such entities, East Germany—a marginally sovereign state dependent on the USSR for its existence, whose leaders employed Soviet-style methods of rule and provided the mere trappings of democracy in the absence of sustained popular legitimacy—was clearly “totalitarian.” Or so it would seem to have been at first glance. Even those who are critical of the concept admit that the regime possessed most, if not all, of the objective traits

associated with the term, i.e., rule by a single party or elite that dominated the state machinery; that centrally directed and controlled the economy, mass communication, and all forms of social and cultural organization; that espoused an official, all-encompassing, utopian (or, depending on one's point of view, dystopian) ideology; and that used physical and mental terror and repression to achieve its goals, mobilize the masses, and silence opposition—all of which was made possible by the gradual buildup of a vast state security service.<sup>7</sup> But this was more than a mere dictatorship or run-of-the-mill authoritarian regime relying on single-party rule and repression to do away with genuine political pluralism, guaranteed civil rights, an independent judiciary, and the rule of law. The rulers of totalitarian regimes aspired to complete control of *all* aspects of political, social, economic, and cultural life.

Overviews of the post-Wall historiography routinely claim that “totalitarian theory” enjoyed a renaissance following the demise of state socialism, but this is not accurate. What those who assert this are referring to is the alacrity with which many “first wave” studies referred to East Germany as a totalitarian regime outright—or by employing a variety of euphemisms, all of which suggested that the GDR was a place where “society” had lost all forms of autonomy vis-à-vis the state and thus become a mere reflection of the “political.”<sup>8</sup> Yet, the increasing invocation of the term *totalitarian*—or some analogous concept, such as Alf Lüdtke’s *durchherrschte Gesellschaft* (thoroughly ruled society)<sup>9</sup>—did not, in itself, constitute a renaissance of this “theory,” in the sense of a theory being a set of principles that *explain* a given phenomenon. The term was merely resuscitated, i.e., it once again became a handy label used to describe what was supposedly the essential nature of the GDR. What it—or some variant—helped explain about East Germany remained less clear.

But that is not the main reason why the term *totalitarian* and its use provoked a backlash and came under such vigorous attack by the “sociocultural” historians active during the “second” and “third waves” of GDR-related research. As Peter Grieder argues in a spirited defense of the “theory” as a “tool of historical scholarship,” those who reject the term object above all to its politicized nature, moralistic tone, and misuse for conservative political ends; its failure to recognize “agency” or even genuine support on the part of the masses, who are viewed as helpless victims; its static view of developments under such regimes; its uneven focus on the similarities and not differences among various types of “totalitarian” states; its overemphasis on repression as the main stabilizing factor; its neglect of political and social conflicts; and, most important, its tendency to conflate goals with achievements and actual practices.<sup>10</sup> Given the variety of effective limits on official power structures, critics argue, the regime was unable to achieve total control and implement its policies as planned. To cite only one example: the SED may have controlled the media and had a monopoly on the means of communication—a prominent feature of most

totalitarian models. But what did that mean in a state where one could, in the privacy of one's home, tune in every evening to West German television and radio?<sup>11</sup> Critics of the term argue, in short, that even as a descriptive label, the "theory" is not useful—or accurate.

These are legitimate objections, but they deserve qualification and further elucidation. It is true, for example, that critics of the term *totalitarian* regard it as a relic of the acerbic ideological Cold War struggles of yore. This makes it politically laden and thus, for some, "academically suspect."<sup>12</sup> Grieder and others have responded to this by pointing out that its pedigree predates the postwar period—but that is beside the point. It is difficult to deny that "totalitarian theory" pinpoints a number of striking similarities between fascism and communism. That, in itself, is not problematic. What is problematic is the subtext of such comparisons—and much of this increasingly tired scholarly controversy revolves around subtexts. In short, the implication is that communism and fascism were cut from the same cloth, that they were two sides of the same coin. That was one point that proponents of the theory were trying to make in a Cold War effort to discredit communism by equating it with fascism—and it is exactly that to which critics of the theory object, namely, its politicized use during the 1950s and 1960s, and then again since 1989–90. (Comparison does not mean equality, Gary Bruce reminds us, but the thrust of *this* comparison seems clear enough.)<sup>13</sup> Critics seem to fear that this not only constitutes an invidious attempt to discredit state socialism for political purposes—but, more important, that it does so by running the risk of relativizing fascist crimes (i.e., genocide) by placing both regimes on an equal plane. In essence, they charge, the theory classifies in order to condemn.

Grieder notes that the misuse of a theory for political purposes does not mean that the theory is incorrect. Again, the similarities between these two types of regimes are undeniable. But what does that mean exactly? What is the heuristic value of this observation? What light does this shed on issues of historical and historiographical significance? As other scholars have pointed out, there is also a great deal of similarity between the bombastic building projects in the 1930s in Moscow under Joseph Stalin and in Washington, D.C. under Franklin Delano Roosevelt.<sup>14</sup> But that is not an argument but rather an observation—and one whose significance is not altogether clear. Besides, the dissimilarities and the significance of those dissimilarities—which totalitarian theorists tend to neglect—are arguably just as important. In the end, what should be determinative when judging the usefulness of a theory or term are their explanatory power and the types of questions they can be used to address and answer. To point out similarities and dissimilarities is not enough.

Other objections to "totalitarian theory" are more weighty, because they call into question the very substance of the claims its proponents make. Grounding their criticism on archivally rich studies that focus on everyday life at the

grassroots level, scholars active during the “second” and “third waves” have demonstrated that the intentions and goals of the regime did not automatically translate into practice. There were, in fact, a number of limits that served as an effective check on regime power. They included the weight of past traditions, relatively independent institutions such as the churches, and the overburdening of—and infighting among—party and state officials. But the most forceful criticism of the totalitarian model along these lines points to its failure to take into account the myriad of everyday possibilities for nonconformist, autonomous action and “agency” on the part of “ordinary” East Germans—behavior that not only set distinct limits on the regime’s ability to translate its goals into practice, but that could even lead to partial modification of regime policy. Relations between “state” and “society” were asymmetric, in other words, but not entirely one-sided.

Those who discuss such behavior invariably invoke Alf Lüdtke’s concept of *Eigensinn*—which, as David Blackbourn once memorably quipped about E.P. Thompson’s famous phrase “the enormous condescension of posterity,” is a term that seems to have launched a thousand dissertations. But it is also one that remains elusive, which may very well have been the intention of Lüdtke, who himself emphasizes its “ambiguity” (*Vieldeutigkeit*).<sup>15</sup> *Eigensinn* has nevertheless—or perhaps for that very reason—become one of the most popular concepts used to describe a wide range of behavior in East Germany, all of which suggests that the so-called masses were not just passive victims, but that they had “agency.”<sup>16</sup> The latter did exist in the GDR, and many people were indeed able to work the system to their own advantage, even if not all of this behavior was necessarily heroic. The larger point is that power relations were far more complex than the simple “state vs. society”—“regime vs. masses”—“rulers vs. ruled” dichotomies have suggested. In fact, the essays in this volume—which look at health and medicine, food and sport, work and leisure, as well as perceptions, memory, ideology, and culture—all serve to help break down those traditional but misleading dichotomies.

Though originally employed by Lüdtke with respect to industrial workers, the term *Eigensinn* has now been applied to almost all social groups in the GDR—and even to entire regions.<sup>17</sup> This inflationary use of the term has not led to greater conceptual clarity. *Eigensinn* refers first and foremost to willful behavior—*Widerborstigkeit*, *quertreibendes Verhalten*—that allows individuals to demarcate a space of their own.<sup>18</sup> Regardless of its meaning, whenever an author doffs his or her cap to Lüdtke by dropping the word (or some variation thereof) en passant, the reader has some vague and fuzzy feeling of what is meant—or at least thinks that that is the case. According to Lüdtke himself, it is an attempt to go beyond the black-and-white, “either-or” categories of obedience and opposition. Instead, it has become a blanket term used to designate almost any type of resistant or nonconformist behavior in the GDR—becom-

ing in a sense what the problematic term *Resistenz* once was for the Third Reich.<sup>19</sup> In short, it has come to mean everything and, one could argue, nothing at all—beyond the obvious fact that many East Germans had “agency” and that the regime was thus not able to achieve total control.<sup>20</sup>

Rejecting this criticism of totalitarian theory as a straw man, Grieder argues that no one has ever claimed that these regimes were able to achieve complete control. Merle Fainsod, he points out, even spoke of “inefficient” totalitarian rule in his classic study of Soviet rule in Smolensk.<sup>21</sup> That is a fair point. But critics of the theory may be excused for reaching the conclusions that they do about the claims made by the “totalitarian school” given the locution of its practitioners, who favor terms such as *all-powerful* and *all-knowing, omniscient* and *omnipresent*. Writing specifically about East Germany, Klaus Schroeder has unequivocally stated that the regime enjoyed “all-embracing and unlimited, i.e., total, power.”<sup>22</sup> This is the type of unrestrained rhetoric to which critics have responded—and that they have rightly rejected.

Faced with an onslaught of criticism over the past decade and a half, some totalitarian theorists have begun to scale back their claims. They now admit, for example, that total control was the aim, not necessarily the reality.<sup>23</sup> In response to criticism about the “static nature” of the theory and its failure to take into account change that took place over the course of these regimes, some have now introduced a series of “hyphenated qualifiers,” including ones that try to distinguish among different historical phases, e.g., “late-” or “post-” or “bureaucratic-” totalitarianism.<sup>24</sup> Greater pliability as a descriptive term represents some progress, but one wonders what is left of the “theory” if it is reduced to a model of intentions, and what its purpose and use is if so many variations of the term are not only possible, but now even considered by its own proponents to be necessary. Just as important, it is not clear that this type of revision helps salvage the theory in terms of its explanatory power. Grieder asserts that “it can help *explain* as well as *describe* certain polities,” but does not then specify what it is exactly that it explains.<sup>25</sup>

But that is not all: the totalitarian paradigm does not address a whole range of issues that fall beyond its guiding interest in dictatorship and repression. It fails to capture key aspects of everyday life, and gives short shrift to the role played by mentalities and cultural traditions. There was much to life in the GDR that had deeper roots in German history, with echoes and variations in the Federal Republic; at the same time, other major developments there were not unlike those taking place in the other industrial states of postwar Europe—on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Besides failing to tackle the import of this fact, the theory does not explain, or even address, the ways in which East Germans—besides being constrained and formed by the conditions in which they lived—made sense of their own lives, responded to challenges, and adapted to changing conditions. On questions and issues such as these hinge

the kinds of interpretation and approach that are adopted—and the totalitarian approach has proven sorely lacking and unfit for the task.

Even if the descriptive and analytical power of totalitarian theory suffers from severe limitations, we should nevertheless be wary of throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. In the first place, the resurgent use of the term, whatever its limitations as a concept and as a descriptive label, has sparked a robust debate about the precise nature of the East German regime. To that extent it has served a useful purpose. But this debate has become sterile, as the same arguments for and against are presented over and over again. Moreover, the discussion itself has become more and more meanspirited, marked by a disturbing tendency to mischaracterize the arguments of one's adversaries, as well as engage in ad hominem attacks and self-righteous moral posturing. This has cut both ways: besides imputing unsavory political motives to those who adopt the term, critics either ignore or deny the more nuanced arguments and valuable observations that the members of the "totalitarian school" make about modern forms of extreme dictatorship. To suggest, for example, that the latter are trying to relativize Nazi crimes by collapsing all distinctions between the two German dictatorships, or that they categorically deny the possibility of agency under such regimes is absurd (though it is true that they do tend to limit their discussion of this to oppositional behavior that is primarily political in character).

Those who brand the GDR a "totalitarian" state make similarly unfair assertions. They suggest that those who call that characterization into question are not only naïve, (n)ostalgic apologists for a monstrous but "ideologically correct" regime, but are also trying to "whitewash" East German history: by trivializing the level and extent of repression, or by "cherry-pick[ing the] attractive aspects of socialism," such as the social welfare benefits, the purported emancipation of women, and the alleged advances made toward the creation of a more egalitarian society. This is a distortion that involves cherry-picking of its own.<sup>26</sup> Such accusations often assume a tone of moral superiority, as if only those who consider the GDR to have been a totalitarian state have realized that it was repressive.

In the end, the main message of the totalitarian school seems to be an obvious one—though no less true for being banal: East Germany was a disagreeable and unpopular dictatorship whose leaders employed repressive methods in order to remain in power. But which scholars have ever denied that? It may be true that many of those who question claims about the totalitarian character of the East German regime, or who focus on the more socially "progressive" aspects of the regime, may still harbor some residual longing for the socialist project. These are often the same scholars who reacted allergically to the crass "triumphalism" in the West that greeted the demise of state socialism in the East.<sup>27</sup> But their view of the GDR as a place that cannot be reduced to the term *totalitarian* does

not stem from some misplaced support for the leadership and its ham-fisted methods, but arguably rather from a lingering sympathy with “ordinary” East Germans and a sense of disappointment about the way in which “real existing socialism” really existed.<sup>28</sup> That does not mean that they are apologists for the regime, that they justify or ignore the repressive aspects of the regime, or that they “flirt with exoneration.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, no compelling evidence has been offered in support of such claims—which often involve similarly unfounded insinuations about the political motivation and sympathies of those who criticize the totalitarian model. Like most scholars, those on both sides of this debate have political and moral biases that color their views. But what should matter most are the *questions*, and the answers to those questions. It should be possible to discuss these issues without resorting to character attacks.

Whatever its very considerable limitations, and despite its many permutations, totalitarian “theory” can help get at important questions. Because of the way in which it tries to characterize the basic features of modern dictatorships, it can be used as an ideal type with which to compare the empirical evidence, leading to questions about why the regime corresponded—or failed to correspond—to that ideal. In other words, the model can help us to frame important analytical questions about both the nature of state socialism as well as the character of state-society relations in East Germany, such as the extent to which the regime was able to achieve its total claims to reshape society and control the so-called masses.<sup>30</sup>

That is a central question. But it is not the only, or even the most important, question about the history of the GDR. In fact, it is precisely other types of questions that reveal the very serious limitations of totalitarian theory: questions about historical dynamics and change, for example, or ones about individual subjectivities, i.e., about values and norms, and the extent to which and the ways in which the latter became internalized. Getting at motivation, popular opinion, and beliefs is among the most vexing challenges for historians of the GDR, as it is for students of any state that lacks an open public sphere or functioning civil society. It is extremely difficult to measure beliefs and evaluate behavior in a place that has no free elections, uncensored media, or reliable opinion surveys, one permeated by the fear of real or imagined state terror. It is just as difficult to ascertain the motivation of the “true believers” and others who embraced the system. Did they too only go along as part of a “tricky trade-off” in which loyalty and freedom were given in exchange for social and material security, the motivation often ascribed to the vast majority of East Germans?<sup>31</sup> Or perhaps they were mere dupes who suffered from “false consciousness.” That would be something of an irony in a self-styled Marxist regime.<sup>32</sup>

The written sources produced by the regime not only provide a distorted portrait of prevailing opinion (as do any sources), but they also distort the very way in which we write about the GDR, not least concerning questions about



motivation and beliefs. Because these reports and analyses tended to highlight critical commentary and “undesirable” behavior—and to allude to popular support in empty-sounding, formulaic phrases that most scholars pass over with a derisory shake of the head—one could gain the impression that the overwhelming majority of East Germans rejected the regime root and branch.<sup>33</sup> The challenge is to get beyond the inexact and impressionistic, to locate the indirect indicators that shine a light on inner values, beliefs, mentalities, and subjectivities, on what East Germans “really” thought, on the extent to which they embraced socialist ideology and values—and then to determine what this tells us, in turn, about larger issues of historiographical significance, such as the reasons for the stability and longevity of state socialism, or about how Germans left their fraught genocidal past behind them and reentered the community of more or less “civilized” and peaceful nations (at least vis-à-vis their neighbors) after 1945.<sup>34</sup>

The written archival record has proven to be more useful in getting at these issues than many researchers had suspected when first entering the former East German archives. “Truth” was not only spoken to power, at least at the grassroots level, but also assiduously recorded in official “public opinion” reports and analyses, petitions, and, most candidly, the minutes of factory, collective farm, and communal meetings—documents that are, in many respects, much richer than the lurid, sensational, and often misleading ones found in the Stasi files that researchers and journalists swooped down upon with alacrity when the archives were first thrown open in 1990. The minutes and petitions are especially valuable because they allow us to hear the voices of ordinary East Germans, and thus help us get at many of the main sources of everyday discontent. What is much harder to ascertain in the archives is, again, “genuine” expressions of loyalty and support, for the stilted phrases (*Floskeln*) used to describe loyalty and support simply do not ring true.<sup>35</sup>

## History as Comfort Food

Broad concepts are useful starting points, as long as one remains aware of the potential dangers they pose. The inherent risk of “naming” or “labeling” the GDR totalitarian—or, for that matter, any of the terms used to capture the regime’s intrinsically “oxymoronic” character (e.g., “welfare dictatorship,” “participatory dictatorship,” etc.)—is that the label becomes the content.<sup>36</sup> That is to say, placing it in a fixed category can lead to a static view of something—in this case the GDR—that did indeed change over time. Reification, in other words, runs the risk of impairing our understanding, as well as limiting our ability to recognize nuance and change.

Just as important, no single concept captures the complexity of the GDR. Since 1989, scholars have devised numerous terms to characterize the regime

and its defining elements in a pithy, often playful way. Each of these terms—including the ones mentioned in the preceding paragraph—reflects differing methodological and theoretical approaches, as well as contrasting political and even moral agendas. And like the parable of the blind men and the elephant, each only describes a single component or cluster of components and thus misses the larger picture—often by neglecting other important elements that call the characterization at hand into question. Jürgen Kocka, for example, has referred to the GDR as a “modern dictatorship” because of the possibilities for greater social mobility, heightened gender equality, and a decrease in social inequality.<sup>37</sup> Leaving aside the “unmodern” aspects of the regime (which he does not deny), there is a good deal of evidence that calls into question even the “modern” elements identified by Kocka. For example, women were subject to continuing discrimination in terms of earnings and career possibilities and were thus not as “emancipated” or as “equal” to men as official propaganda suggested. In addition, the possibilities for social mobility for both men and women dried up in the 1980s, a development that contributed to the very demise of the GDR by heightening dissatisfaction with the regime.

None of this means that we should abandon the search for useful concepts and labels, but that we must remain aware of the pitfalls they involve and understand that they are only the beginning of a discussion and not the endpoint. In the end, it is perhaps easier to say what the GDR was *not* than to say what it was.

Another question that has attracted a good deal of scholarly attention concerns the extent to which the GDR was a mere “footnote of world history,” as the East German author Stefan Heym dismissively commented after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Hans-Ulrich Wehler revived this idea in the final volume of his monumental *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*. Claiming that the postwar socialist state was only useful as a foil with which to compare the Federal Republic, Wehler consigned the GDR to the dustbin of history as a “failed” state, a mere “satrapy” of the Soviet Union that had no lasting influence on international developments—or even on German history itself.<sup>38</sup> Scholars have taken issue with Wehler’s provocative thesis, arguing that the GDR was historically significant for a number of reasons. According to Donna Harsch, it played an important role in several of the “major stories” of the twentieth century, including the history of Germany itself, the history of communism, and the history of women in the public sphere. Others have suggested different reasons for its importance, e.g., that its very demise demonstrated that Germans too are capable of carrying out a “successful” democratic revolution.<sup>39</sup>

This may all be true, but it seems superfluous to argue about whether the GDR was historically significant—especially if the implication is that only “significant” states and societies are worthy of serious historical analysis. Leaving aside the disturbingly normative aspect of such a question (which is no

surprise coming from the leading proponent of the *Sonderweg* [special path] thesis, which essentially asked why modern Germany had not been more like France or Great Britain) and the inherent difficulty in determining what is “significant” (in what respect and for whom? The GDR was certainly significant for millions of Germans): if the “proper” subject of history is the study of past human behavior in all its guises, the “big questions”—such as how and why societies change, or how power is organized and exercised—can fruitfully be asked of *any* historical entity or formation. After all, it is the types of questions one poses, as well as the cogency of the answers that one offers in response, that should count in the end—not the amount of destruction and suffering wrought by a given group or regime, or their “success” or “longevity” (what standard is used to measure or judge such imponderables anyway?). To claim otherwise seems to suggest some sort of unspoken agenda, political or otherwise—and to come perilously close to engaging in a form of history as written by the victors. The Third Reich is not historically more significant than the GDR because it left behind “mountains of dead” and not “mountains of files and dossiers.”<sup>40</sup> It is the questions that one is interested in addressing that determine the significance of a regime, event, person, or development. That much would seem obvious.

A different controversy has erupted over the use of the term *normalization* to describe developments in the GDR during the “middle period” of the 1960s and 1970s. In essence, those who have employed the concept are interested in getting at individuals’ subjective perceptions of the political, socioeconomic, and cultural circumstances in which they found themselves. More specifically, they are interested in looking at how East Germans “came to terms” with life in the GDR, especially after the construction of the Wall, i.e., the extent to which certain norms, rules, and expectations regarding patterns of behavior became internalized or routinized—and may have come to be seen as somehow “normal” as they became more predictable over time. The “internalization” of norms and values is difficult to measure, of course. But to ask how East Germans came to perceive certain modes of life as “normal” and predictable is not a statement suggesting that life in the GDR was itself “normal.” To be clear: no claim is being made about what constitutes a “normal” society. The term is intended to be neutral and does not suggest that East Germans just resigned themselves to their lot, for feelings of distance and alienation no doubt coincided—in greater or smaller measure, depending on the person and the given situation—with a growing sense of what was now “normal.”<sup>41</sup>

But what is the heuristic value of such a concept? In the first place, it can help us better understand which factors, besides repression, contributed to the stability of the East German regime—an issue that has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention since the demise of the GDR. At the same time, it suggests one way in which to examine the actual substance of a claim frequently

made but rarely demonstrated with evidence: that East Germans chose—or learned—to “accommodate” themselves to the regime after the possibility of escape to the West had more or less disappeared following the construction of the Berlin Wall.<sup>42</sup> Accommodation *with* the regime should not be equated with support *for* the regime. Gauging the latter is, in fact, one of the greatest challenges facing historians of the GDR—not only in terms of ascertaining actual levels of support (for the reasons discussed in the previous section), but also in terms of having to justify why this is a worthy scholarly enterprise without some hidden political agenda. Investigations of popular support for the National Socialist regime have become a staple of the historiography, yet those who examine similar questions about the GDR are, depending on their arguments and findings, subject to accusations of secretly sympathizing with the regime—as if the suggestion that the GDR enjoyed some level of popular support were tantamount to a ringing endorsement of state socialism, the Stasi, and the Berlin Wall.<sup>43</sup>

To investigate or point out those aspects of life in the GDR that enjoyed widespread support is not automatically an attempt to whitewash or relativize the appalling aspects of the regime, though that may be the intention of some scholars. But if one is interested in getting at the central question of, say, regime stability, this is a legitimate and necessary area of inquiry—as long as one avoids clichés. Recent research has shown, for example, that those social benefits that were purportedly most popular—such as low-cost housing, free childcare, and subsidized foodstuffs—were among the most important sources of discontent because of insufficient availability and chronic scarcity, especially during the early decades of the GDR before Erich Honecker decided to place greater emphasis on the satisfaction of material desires and well-being.<sup>44</sup>

With an eye to the latter development, those scholars who have worked on the question of “normality” have made less persuasive claims about a supposed “growth of individualism” during the later decades of the GDR, one that involved “an enhanced focus on the fulfillment of individual goals.” According to Mary Fulbrook, the “collective spirit” of the early decades was “displaced in the course of the 1960s and ’70s by a retreat into individualistic concerns, with a growing focus on home, family and private gain.”<sup>45</sup> It is unclear that such “collective spirit” was really ever as widespread as this suggests—or as official propaganda and rose-colored reminiscences that bathe the early years in a haze of nostalgia about camaraderie, solidarity, and optimism about bright socialist horizons might lead us to believe. In fact, many ordinary East Germans—not least the industrial workers and farmers in whose name the SED claimed to rule—remained doggedly resistant to the blandishments and collectivist propaganda of the regime from the very start. Moreover, if there was indeed creeping “individualism,” above all in terms of everyday consumerist and materialist proclivities, its growth was only one of degree: a focus on one’s own personal

and material interests was very much in evidence from the earliest years of the postwar socialist state—abetted not least by the many economic deficiencies of state socialism itself.<sup>46</sup>

Regardless, the claims about “hidden agendas” are reminiscent of the debate about efforts to “historicize” the Third Reich, which revolved around the question of whether it was legitimate to apply to the history of the Nazi period the same types of questions, dispassionate approach, and methods that historians would apply to any other area of historical inquiry. In many respects, the debate devolved into a *dialogue des sourds* because of the understandable passions it raised. The subtext of the critique voiced by those who objected to this approach seemed to be a fear that a “normalization” of methodological treatment” (Ian Kershaw) might lead—whatever the intention of those originally calling for this approach—to an insidious relativization of Nazi crimes. The main objection voiced by Saul Friedländer, the most vigorous critic of this approach initially advocated by Martin Broszat, was that the unique genocidal policies of the Nazis made it impossible to approach this period in a “normal” way in any sense of the word. In other words, the enormity and specificity of Nazi crimes placed the period outside the bounds of long-term trends in modern German history; moreover, they forbade an investigation of “normal,” everyday life because of the danger that this would lead to misplaced empathy for those who had not suffered themselves under the regime. This was morally questionable, Friedländer argued, given the extreme suffering of those who did.<sup>47</sup>

Similar concerns seem to animate those who object to a historical treatment of “everyday” life or other “normal” developments in the GDR—unless, that is, they have to do with repression, complicity, or active resistance. The message seems to be that it is morally dubious to examine everyday “normality” in a place where life was worse than dismal and often criminally *abnormal* for many others. But if that were the case, it would also mean that one should not be able to write about “everyday” life in, say, the northeast of the United States during the 1950s, given the pervasiveness of Jim Crow in the South at that time. Again, this is not to collapse distinctions: Jim Crow laws and Stasi persecution were not akin to the Holocaust (though the former do invite comparisons to the Nuremberg Laws, as some African Americans in the United States commented themselves at the time).<sup>48</sup> But it seems curious to forbid certain types of questions about, or certain approaches to, certain regimes and certain eras because of certain other developments that took place there—as long as those developments are integrated into any such analyses and not ignored.

At the end of his life, Timothy Mason, the great British historian of Nazi Germany, wistfully regretted that he had failed to realize that race—and not class—was the answer to “the central question of what the Nazi regime was really all about, what its main aims were”—and that this failing had proved to be, in his opinion, an insurmountable shortcoming in his lifelong effort to come to

terms with National Socialism.<sup>49</sup> Those who have tried to move the discussion about the history of the GDR beyond the theme of repression would do well to bear Mason's disheartening realization in mind. Repression did permeate all aspects of life in the GDR. As Gary Bruce has put it, "One can no more place a boundary around the Stasi than one can encircle a scent in a room," and it must be incorporated into any history of East Germany, as Phil Leask explicitly does in this volume in his examination of how humiliation and the arbitrary abuse of power was used to isolate enemies and inculcate discipline, especially among the party loyal.<sup>50</sup>

Documenting the criminality of the regime and its leadership is important and valuable in itself, and it has been the subject of numerous studies. But one must nevertheless ask how that endeavor advances historical debate, and to what questions of scholarly significance it leads. Questions about how repression and terror worked, or failed to work, in practice are important for getting at questions of regime stability, as are questions about why certain people worked for the Stasi, why they reported on family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors, often with enthusiasm. Repression may perhaps be the centerpiece of GDR history—but it is not the end of the story. And it does not explain everything. In fact, what it might explain is sometimes the exact opposite of what one might expect. As Leask paradoxically suggests in his essay, the very policies of repression that the SED used to maintain power may have served, in the end, to undermine its very power.

Was East Germany "totalitarian"? Was it a mere "footnote" of world history? Was it "normal"—or even really "German," given its slavish dependence on Moscow? These questions have become the banalities of East German historiography—history as comfort food for those most interested in moralistic posturing. The *Sonderweg* theory, whatever its shortcomings, tried at least to grapple with a series of important questions about the rise and roots of National Socialism. The historiography of the GDR has, by contrast, tended toward the provincial: as a quick look at the footnotes will reveal, many investigations make little effort to relate their findings to developments outside of East Germany or to issues of greater historical and historiographical importance. This is not surprising, given the rush that greeted the sudden opening of the archives two decades ago, the unprecedented decision to forgo the thirty-year rule that limits access to historical records, as well as the "publish-or-perish" pressures imposed by academe. Graduate students eager to demonstrate their bona fides as historians have produced a flood of often hastily published dissertations that are saturated with archival material, but that, in the words of Sebastian Haffner in a different context, tend to "dump their index cards in the lap of the reader"<sup>51</sup>—or that, under the professional pressure of having to demonstrate the utter originality of one's own findings and arguments, fail to give adequate credit to or mischaracterize those of other scholars. This has

sometimes been the result of careless or dubious scholarly practices.<sup>52</sup> But the provincial nature of East German studies has found expression in other ways as well, above all in the general failure of some scholars—especially German-speaking ones—to take into account work on the GDR not produced in their own language.<sup>53</sup> This is surprising, given the internationalization of scholarly publications, conferences, and controversies, as well as study in countries other than one's place of birth—a development that casts some doubt on dubious claims about the existence of distinctive “national” perspectives on the GDR, even if there is some variation in emphasis from country to country.<sup>54</sup>

What we need, then, are fresh and innovative approaches, above all to the available source material, both written and nonwritten. As Monica Black has commented:

Something that has often struck me about East German (and West German, for that matter) historiography is that we have no version of *The Cheese and the Worms* or *The Return of Martin Guerre*. Why this is the case is not obvious, though the simple answer, of course, would be that no one has yet found such a story to write about. I think the issue is different, and lies less with the kinds of sources we have available than with the ways we tend to approach them and the questions we put to them; if we have no work commensurate with that of [Carlo] Ginzburg's or [Natalie Zeman] Davis's, the problem, I think, is not that our sources puzzle us, but that they do not, in fact, puzzle us enough.<sup>55</sup>

In fact, a number of scholars working in North America and the United Kingdom (including Black) have already published rich, archivally based studies that take a more nuanced, less categorical “sociocultural” approach to the history of the GDR, one that has already led to important insights and stimulated novel questions and hypotheses.<sup>56</sup>

All of this has opened new horizons for the study of the GDR, state socialism, and other modern authoritarian regimes—as the essays in this volume demonstrate. Taken together, they demonstrate the fruitfulness of a variety of sociocultural and sociopolitical approaches to the history of East Germany by exploring physical and psychological aspects of life in the GDR, as well as diverse everyday responses at the grassroots level to the well-known political and economic parameters of dictatorship. In so doing, the essays suggest fresh ways of interpreting life behind the Iron Curtain. And, rather than just challenging totalitarian theory on its own ground, or restricting themselves to negative theoretical critiques of that paradigm, they address key issues in East German history from a range of theoretical perspectives, looking at the many ways in which East Germans themselves changed over forty years in negotiating the conditions of life behind the Iron Curtain. The essays in this volume eschew the polarized political and moralistic debates of the past two decades, and instead turn their attention to the ways in which East Germans were themselves

both constituted by the physical and cultural, as well as political, parameters of life in the GDR—and, in turn, contributed to the ways in which East German history itself unfolded.

To paraphrase EP Thompson's famous dictum, East Germans were themselves present at the GDR's making.<sup>57</sup> They helped shape the worlds in which they lived, even as they were themselves formed by the circumstances and periods into which they were born. At the risk of stating a truism, how they viewed the regime they helped mold very much depended on their own perspective, perceptions, and sensibilities.

### What We Now Know: Fresh Approaches to the History of the GDR

The rich research that has taken place since the fall of the Wall and the subsequent opening of the former East German archives has chipped away at a number of myths about the GDR—tenacious ones that nevertheless still enjoy wide scholarly and popular currency. Where scholars might have expected to find evidence of female emancipation, for example, they instead found continuing sexist discrimination. Where they had expected to discover generous welfare benefits guaranteeing a modicum of social and material security, they often found shortages of housing, childcare, and even the most basic of foodstuffs. Where they had expected to unearth signs of grassroots solidarity, they found social cleavages and divisions.

That was only one side of the coin, however. Where they had assumed they would discover silence and quiescence, they found a surprising and widespread willingness to voice criticism, and a remarkable unwillingness to bow meekly to the many onerous demands of the party and state. There was no deafening silence of the lambs; in fact, many bleated quite vigorously. Where scholars had assumed they would find traces of totalitarian terror, they discovered a repressive apparatus that was not as all-knowing or as effective as once assumed, and a regime that was often weak, incompetent, or overburdened at the grassroots level, one whose representatives were either unable or loath to enforce high-level political and economic directives—and one whose policies aimed at total control in all areas of political, economic, and social life but that produced instead a series of unintended consequences that often had little to do with official intentions. Those unintended consequences not only bore directly on the stability *and* ultimate collapse of the regime, but also suggested the very real limits of the East German dictatorship and of its ability to direct society.<sup>58</sup>

One of the most important insights of the past two decades involves, then, the more nuanced manner in which the complex nature of power and state-society relations in the GDR have come to be characterized. The relationship between the “rulers” and “ruled” was indeed an asymmetrical one, yet the latter



were often able to work the system to their own advantage, carving out “spaces for agency and autonomy within a largely paternalistic, coercive, and didactic regime.”<sup>59</sup> In their complementary essays in this volume about anti-fascist narratives and memories, Joanne Sayner and Christiane Wienand discuss various ways in which East Germans refused to parrot the official line, but instead advanced their own understanding of anti-fascism and shaped this for their own ends—ones at considerable variance with those of the regime. Andreas Agocs’s discussion of the First German Writers’ Congress, held in October 1947, similarly looks at the extent to which anti-fascism was more than just a cynical Stalinist tool used by the regime to rally the masses and win support.

Recent research has also led to a partial reconceptualizing of the chronological breaks in East German history, calling into question the extent to which ones traditionally described as major caesura were really as far-reaching as often assumed. Like all states and societies, East Germany changed over time, i.e., it *had* a history. The 1980s were not the same as the Stalinist 1950s—an obvious but essential point often missed by (primarily Western) observers who focus on the contrast between dictatorial and democratic political structures. By the same token, others, in particular younger former East Germans, tend to equate the GDR with its last two decades, i.e., the years of increasing social benefits, of less open and brutal—but therefore more refined—methods of repression and surveillance.

In one way or another, all of the contributions to this volume explore the important ruptures in East German history, looking at when and why they took place, and what their effects were. The extent to which developments in the postwar socialist state represented a dramatic departure from what had come before is another important theme, as is the related issue of continuities across the 1945 divide, i.e., the trends and traditions that survived the war and subsequently shaped the GDR’s social, political, and cultural trajectory.<sup>60</sup> While Mary Fulbrook examines “communities of experience, connection, and identification” to get at ways in which “personal legacies of the past” influenced later developments, Donna Harsch and Jeannette Madarász-Lebenhagen address the dynamic mix of tradition and innovation in health-care practices after 1945, looking in particular at East and West German efforts to combat rampant tuberculosis and chronic cardiovascular diseases. In their respective discussions of dieting and luxury dining in the GDR, Neula Kerr-Boyle and Paul Freedman point to East German consumption and behavioral practices that can be traced to the prewar period. Noting striking similarities between slimming aids and advertisements in Weimar, the Third Reich, and the GDR, Kerr-Boyle examines the resurgence of traditional notions of the female body and beauty in the postwar socialist state, as well as the tenacity of traditional dieting and eating habits—including ones frowned on by officials. Along similar lines, Freedman reminds us that the iconic *Spreewaldgurken*—the pickles

that have become a major symbol of *Ostalgie* since the popular film *Goodbye, Lenin!*—had a venerable pre-GDR, pan-German history.<sup>61</sup>

The role played by prewar traditions is also a focus of Andreas Agocs's discussion of the acrimonious debate and subsequent split that took place during the First German Writers' Congress in the fall of 1947. These exposed rifts and unresolved conflicts among German intellectuals and within Germany's cultural scene that reached back to at least 1933; they were not, in other words, just the result of escalating Cold War tensions. That said, many of the essays, including Agocs's, do explore the sundry ways in which Germany became a focal point of that conflict—not least as a contest in which the postwar successor states vied with each other to demonstrate the alleged superiority of their own policies and ideologies, as well as the flawed practices of their rival: from the staging of state dinners (Freedman) and the most effective ways of dieting (Kerr-Boyle), to the fight against tuberculosis and heart disease (Harsch and Madarász-Lebenhagen).

Pointing out postwar continuities and placing the postwar period in the context of long-term sociocultural developments is not just about driving another nail in the coffin of the comforting “zero hour” legend.<sup>62</sup> They lay bare the formidable challenges to and limits on the implementation and fulfillment of official policies and desires. The SED did not work in a vacuum, for the long shadow that the past cast on the GDR, as well as the Federal Republic, could not but affect developments in both of them. For example, East German leaders may have hoped to introduce more progressive gender policies and practices—for practical as well as ideological reasons—but, as Kerr-Boyle reminds us, they often ran up against tenacious past practices, prejudices, and expectations.

The year 1945 was not the only major chronological watershed in the history of the eastern half of Germany. Others included 1949, 1953, 1961, 1971, and, of course, 1989, the years in which events regarded as important caesurae took place: the founding of the GDR, the first statewide uprising in the Soviet bloc, the erection of the Berlin Wall, the ascension of Honecker, and the implosion of the regime. Many of the essays in this volume explore the extent to which these were truly turning points, asking implicitly or explicitly whether other types of changes—e.g., social, economic, cultural, generational—corresponded to the well-known *political* caesurae. If they did not fit neatly into the commonly accepted temporal divisions, and if the effects of the political breaks did not always extend beyond the strictly political, there is a need to rethink the traditional periodization of the GDR—a challenge also taken up in this volume. In his discussion of official East German rhetoric about Israel, for example, David Tompkins demonstrates that such shifts were not always related to the well-known caesurae. The gradual darkening of the postwar Jewish state's image from one of “friend” to “foe” began in 1950, intensified later

that decade, and then intensified once again in the late 1960s, coinciding with developments not peculiar to the GDR itself, e.g., larger Cold War tensions, anti-Semitic stirrings in the Soviet bloc, and the latter's feverish search for allies in the developing world.

One important reason for reassessing the import and impact of the accepted caesurae is to avoid artificially forcing certain developments into rigid chronological frameworks in a way that does not do justice to the types of changes being discussed or explained. There is a similar need to reexamine some of the blanket statements often made about certain periods, e.g., that the 1960s were a period in which ordinary East Germans came to terms with and accommodated themselves to the regime, that this was a "golden age" in terms of material improvement, that June 1953 represented a turning point in the way officials dealt with workers. It is imperative to ask whether there is actual evidence in support of these assertions; in the absence of evidence they are mere clichés. As I point out in my essay in this volume comparing the behavior of the working classes under the Third Reich and during the GDR, many local officials had been just as solicitous of workers before June 1953, which was one of the underlying reasons that the uprising took place, i.e., as a reaction against efforts to increase worker productivity by raising production quotas.

Whatever chronological reassessments are in order, many changes were indeed linked to the familiar watershed moments. Donna Harsch notes, for instance, that in October 1961, i.e., just two months after the construction of the Berlin Wall, authorities finally introduced obligatory vaccination against tuberculosis despite dogged resistance at the grassroots level—resistance that, incidentally, had its roots in the prewar period.<sup>63</sup> Feeling more confident in the protective shadow of the Wall, they adopted other unpopular policies as well at this time, including compulsory military service and more vigorous campaigns aimed at boosting production levels. But, as Josie McLellan has pointed out, they also introduced more socially permissive policies in an attempt to pacify the population.<sup>64</sup> If the building of the Wall—and this new round of carrots and sticks—did indeed help East Germans, *faute de mieux*, "come to terms" and "make their peace" with the regime, it is important to devise reliable ways in which to measure that process in a meaningful and verifiable way.

Several of the essays identify significant shifts that began in the early 1970s—when Honecker replaced Ulbricht, another transformative moment—and continued into the 1980s. This period, which has received less scholarly attention than the earlier decades of the GDR, is considered to be qualitatively different from what came before, largely because of a vast increase in social benefits, along with a new emphasis on the satisfaction of popular consumer and other material desires. Yet, those were not the only changes. Freedman discusses the introduction of a more "international" dining style at this time, a result of the GDR's increasing openness to the nonsocialist world in the wake

of détente, while Kerr-Boyle explores the reasons why official incitement to diet and even popular dieting practices themselves became more pronounced at this time—in the East as well as in the West. In an analysis of everyday sporting practices, Alan McDougall argues that the last two decades of the GDR witnessed growing frustration and disillusionment on the part of those who played amateur soccer, East Germany's most popular mass participatory sport. Though anger and resentment about shoddy facilities and insufficient state support were nothing new, East Germans were now even less willing to put up with longstanding deficiencies. This suggests an important shift in mentality and behavior, suggestive of the type of ferment from below that would usher in the demise of the regime.

Another promising area for future research on the GDR besides questions of continuities and ruptures is a more systematically comparative approach to its history—a recurrent theme in the essays in this volume. While my own piece compares the behavior of workers under the Nazis and the SED, others focus on the similarities and differences between the GDR and Federal Republic: from the commemoration and memory of the National Socialist past, to health-care, culinary, and dieting practices, to the types of pressure placed on women on both sides of the Wall. What is interesting in this respect, as Harsch and Madarász-Lebenhagen show in their work on disease prevention, is that similar developments and outcomes sometimes came about in the two postwar states—but sometimes for vastly different reasons.<sup>65</sup>

Comparisons between the GDR and the Federal Republic are fruitful and revealing for another reason: with regional variations, they shared similar pre-1945 political, socioeconomic, and cultural traditions. This makes them a valuable case study—or “laboratory”—for examining in a comparative manner the ways in which the capitalist West and Communist East faced challenges common to all modern, industrialized (or industrializing) societies. This was a flawed “experiment,” however, because the two states were not kept in strict isolation—no matter how hard the East German leadership may have tried! As several of the essays suggest, policies in one state often had a direct or indirect influence on those adopted on the other side of the Elbe.<sup>66</sup>

Comparisons of the GDR with the Third Reich and the Federal Republic already exist, of course.<sup>67</sup> After all, the main thrust of totalitarian theory has been to compare communism and state socialism to fascism. Even if “comparing does not mean equalizing” but rather searching for similarities *and* differences, this comparison in particular has tended toward the former, both before and after 1989—even if the more obvious differences between the GDR and the Third Reich are always acknowledged as part of an obligatory nod toward nuance: East Germany did not unleash a world war or commit genocide, it did not have a charismatic leader or enjoy the same type of popularity as the Third Reich, it did not have the same type of impact on gender relations, it did

not come about or even end in the same manner. Yet, the similarities remain obvious enough. Both were one-party dictatorships that used various forms of pressure and propaganda, as well as repression and social goodies—from the plump to the more subtle—to mobilize the masses and keep them in check; both pursued social engineering and reconstruction informed by an official hegemonic ideology; both engaged in “social scapegoating” to rally support for the regime. Similar comparisons have also been made between the GDR and the Federal Republic, but with the emphasis falling in that case on the obvious and essential differences between the two. In brief, the East German dictatorship lacked all of the things that characterized West Germany, as well as other liberal-democratic states and pluralistic societies in the West: due process and a functioning constitution; party competition, democratic elections, and a largely unfettered market economy; an independent judiciary, an uncensored media, and guarantees of basic civil rights.<sup>68</sup>

These are the obvious points of comparison in both cases. But it is also worth asking about the neglected or unexpected similarities and differences. By way of example, let us pose a rhetorical question that is sure to raise some hackles: was the GDR truly more repressive than the Federal Republic—or other Western states, for that matter? To many, the question will seem absurd, if not downright offensive. But it is not difficult to draw up a lengthy list of politically repressive measures that Western states have employed against their own citizens since 1945—from the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the Internal Security Act of 1950, and the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) in the United States, for instance, to Article 21 of the Basic Law and the 1972 Anti-Radical Decree in the Federal Republic, to the more recent anti-terrorism laws.<sup>69</sup> It will be objected that the comparison is unfair because there are “obvious differences.” Such repression was much more widespread and violent east of the Elbe, where the possibilities for redress and reform were also much less limited.

The last two points are essential ones, and the difference may be an important one of degree, in the end. After all, it was not the Federal Republic that saw itself forced to build a concrete wall to keep its citizens from fleeing. But that is little solace to those in the West who have themselves suffered from oppression.<sup>70</sup> Along Foucauldian lines, one might even counter that repression in the West was even more invidious for being more subtle and refined.<sup>71</sup> But one does not have to appeal to Michel Foucault and the disciplining effect of discourse to get at the invidious nature of repression on *both* sides of the Elbe, as those who were members of “out-groups” knew and experienced all too well. Dolores Augustine reminds us that there were distinct limits to East Germany’s “progressive” sexual policies—especially when it came to homosexuals, who suffered from “rampant homophobia” and (like other so-called “asocials”) repression in the GDR.<sup>72</sup> These and other limits as well affected certain groups,

the members of which were considered social outcasts for political, religious, cultural, and other reasons.

The West had pariahs of its own, of course. Surveying the past century, one thinks, for instance, of the Jim Crow laws and other forms of racial discrimination in the United States, as well as the treatment there of Communists, homosexuals, Jews, and other minorities. It is not surprising that some American blacks remarked at the time that the Nuremberg racial laws of 1935 sounded “suspiciously like Miami.”<sup>73</sup> It is also worth recalling in this context the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which began a year before Adolf Hitler came to power and lasted until the year the Munich Olympics were held forty years later. This was a shameful episode in U.S. history—but one should not collapse all distinctions: its exposure did lead to the creation of the federal Office for Human Research Protections.<sup>74</sup>

The GDR does not appear to have been similarly “adaptive,” in light of its ultimate demise. Yet, one wonders whether it might at least have had the potential to be. Some scholars have (longingly) interpreted the Ulbricht reform era as a “missed opportunity” to carry out salutary modifications that might have salvaged the Socialist project—not unlike the musings in American popular culture about how things might have turned out had John F. Kennedy not been assassinated.<sup>75</sup> But in the end, the GDR proved stubbornly resistant to fundamental reform because it did not have the appropriate channels or possibilities for unfettered communication and public debate—or, for that matter, any willingness on the part of its leadership to relinquish even partial control (until it was too late). Sigrid Meuschel has argued that this is why the postwar Socialist state could in the last resort only end in revolution and dissolution.<sup>76</sup>

There are good reasons for posing such questions and making such observations—despite the obvious differences between these rival political and socioeconomic systems. It is not merely to turn totalitarian theory on its head, create false equivalencies, and apply a moralistic *tu quoque* argument in order to condemn the West by comparing it to the East. Pointing to parallels such as the existence of denunciatory acts, police brutality, and a socioeconomic underclass, as well as the disciplining power of moral strictures under both systems, does have heuristic value. Like totalitarian theory, this exercise can help us frame important questions—for example, ones about stability, longevity, and ultimate collapse. In fact, the foregoing discussion raises a series of essential questions related to these very issues: why did Western states enjoy so much more popular legitimacy and support than those in the East? Why, in other words, were the GDR and the other states in the Soviet bloc unable to win the “hearts and minds” of the masses? And why was the capitalist West able to do so? Was it because of the intrinsic appeal of democracy and “basic freedoms”? As Eric Hobsbawm muses, “Just how and why capitalism after the Second World War

found itself, to everyone's surprise including its own, surging forward into the unprecedented and possibly anomalous Golden Age of 1945–73, is perhaps the major question which faces historians of the twentieth century.<sup>77</sup>

It is worth recalling that most East Germans (and other eastern Europeans) had had no, very little, or a decidedly poor experience with and memory of democracy. After all, formal democratic institutions had only existed on what would become East German territory for slightly more than a decade in the 1920s—and they had not been an unmitigated success, to say the least. The reputation of the democratic states in the West was not overwhelmingly positive either in places like Czechoslovakia, for example, which had been abandoned by the Western powers in the late 1930s. Last but not least, the Great Depression had not provided incontrovertible evidence of capitalism's superiority as an economic system.<sup>78</sup> How so many East Germans and their neighbors in eastern Europe came to be so enamored of democracy—not only in the 1980s but also, as recent research about “popular opinion” has found, much earlier—is thus an intriguing question.<sup>79</sup>

An equally intriguing question is why this changes after 1945, i.e., why the West comes to be seen as “superior” in normative as well as functionalist terms<sup>80</sup>—even on the part of those who benefitted least, and suffered most, under prevailing conditions of socioeconomic inequality and, in some countries, institutionalized racism and sexism. One possible reason is that it proved much better able to deliver both necessary and desired material goods—especially to those who “mattered” most in shaping public opinion and the “discourse” of civil society (for is it not true, to paraphrase Judith Butler, that some lives “matter” more than others?).<sup>81</sup> There are other possible reasons. Historical prejudices against the “Russians” and the Soviet Union—fueled for over a decade by Nazi propaganda—may have doomed the Socialist project from the very start in Eastern Europe and the GDR, tarnished precisely for being imposed from without. It could also be that the West simply conveyed a more effective message.

In the United States, even the most downtrodden have learned that they live in “the greatest country in the world”—a place where everyone is “born equal” and has “equal opportunity” in a land of “unlimited opportunities.” They are aware of injustices, of course, but they also imbibe from a young age the hegemonic idea (à la Max Weber) that a failure to “succeed” is somehow a personal failing. This idea becomes hardwired and is perhaps *the* most important factor underlying domestic peace and stability. Was the GDR—to put it crudely—a “worse” place than the United States? One wonders how an African American youth from Detroit, where infant mortality, crime, and poverty rates rival those of many developing countries, might answer this question. But in the end, he or she would most likely not exchange “freedom” and the possibility of “making

it big one day” for more modest material “security.” It could be that totalitarian systems “go against the grain of human nature,” as Grieder contends—or because some forms of propaganda have been more effective than others.<sup>82</sup> It is difficult to demonstrate the validity of either proposition. But if it is indeed the latter, why might that be the case? An answer to that question sheds light on subjectivities, values, beliefs, and mentalities—the subjects of this volume. And an understanding of those intangibles can help us better understand, in turn, why one system proved more tenacious and more resilient than the other. That is indeed a question of central historical significance.

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- Ross, Corey. *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR*. London, 2002.

### Notes

1. The preeminent example of this approach remains Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, *Untergang auf Raten: Unbekannte Kapitel der DDR — Geschichte* (Munich, 1993).



2. For a more recent specimen, see Hubertus Knabe, *Die Täter sind unter uns. Über das Schönreden der SED-Diktatur* (Berlin, 2007).
3. This was the subject of an innovative series of papers presented at the conference "Writing East German History: What Difference Does the Cultural Turn Make?" University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, M.I., 5–7 December 2008.
4. For example, one of the earliest and most important contributions to the post-Wall social history of the GDR appeared less than half a decade following unification: Hartmut Kaeble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart, 1994).
5. Despite a general neglect of what is described here as the "third wave," useful overviews of the historiography include Rainer Eppelmann, Bernd Faulenbach, and Ulrich Mählert, eds., *Bilanz und Perspektiven der DDR-Forschung* (Paderborn, 2003); Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London, 2002); Beate Ihme-Tuchel, *Die DDR* (Darmstadt, 2002); Arnd Bauerkämper, *Die Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Munich, 2005); Günter Heydemann, *Die Innenpolitik der DDR* (Munich, 2003); Jens Gieseke and Hermann Wentker, eds., *Die Geschichte der SED. Eine Bestandsaufnahme* (Berlin, 2011).
6. For an accessible overview of the postwar historiography, see Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Ann Arbor, M.I., 2006).
7. Early contributions to the emerging debate include Eckhard Jesse, "War die DDR totalitär?" *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B40 (1994): 12–23; Mary Fulbrook, "The Limits of Totalitarianism: God, State and Society in the GDR," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 7 (1997): 25–52. Also see Eckhard Jesse, ed., *Totalitarismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Bilanz der internationalen Forschung* (Bonn, 1996); Achim Siegel, ed., *Totalitarismustheorien nach dem Ende des Kommunismus* (Cologne, 1998); Wolfgang Wippermann, *Totalitarismustheorien. Die Entwicklung der Diskussion von den Anfängen bis heute* (Darmstadt, 1997).
8. See Jürgen Kocka, *Civil Society & Dictatorship in Modern German History* (Hanover, N.H., 2010), 37.
9. Alf Lüdtke, "'Helden der Arbeit'—Mühen beim Arbeiten. Zur mißmutigen Loyalität von Industriearbeitern in der DDR," in Kaelble, Kocka, and Zwahr, *Sozialgeschichte*, 188.
10. Peter Grieder, "In Defence of Totalitarianism Theory as a Tool of Historical Scholarship," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/3–4 (2007): 563–89.
11. Ralph Jessen, "DDR-Geschichte und Totalitarismustheorie," *Berliner Debatte INI-TIAL* 4/5 (1995).
12. Grieder, "In Defence," 565.
13. See Gary Bruce, *The Firm: The Inside Story of the Stasi* (Oxford, 2010), 7. Two classic accounts of totalitarian theory are Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2nd ed., rev. (New York, 1966); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951).
14. See, e.g., Karl Schlögel, *Terror and Traum. Moskau, 1937* (Munich, 2008), 304–27. Also see the essays in Boris Groys and Max Hollein, eds., *Dream Factory Communism: The Visual Culture of the Stalin Period* (Ostfildern, 2003).
15. Alf Lüdtke, "Geschichte und Eigensinn," in Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt, ed., *Alltagskultur, Subjektivität und Geschichte. Zur Theorie und Praxis von Alltagsgeschichte* (Münster, 1994), 19; David Blackbourn, *A Sense of Place: New Directions in German History* (London, 1999).

16. That is especially the case since the publication of Thomas Lindenberger, ed., *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Cologne, 1999).
17. See the perceptive discussion of this term in Christoph Vietzke, *Konfrontation und Kooperation. Funktionäre und Arbeiter in Großbetrieben der DDR vor und nach dem Mauerbau* (Essen, 2008), 26–29.
18. See Alf Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg, 1993), 10–12, 136–43.
19. See Martin Broszat, “Resistenz und Widerstand. Eine Zwischenbilanz des Forschungsprojektes,” in Martin Broszat, Elke Fröhlich, and Anton Grossmann, eds., *Bayern in der NS-Zeit. Herrschaft und Gesellschaft im Konflikt*, vol. 4 (Munich, 1981), 691–709; Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Gerhard Paul, “Resistenz oder loyale Widerwilligkeit? Anmerkungen zu einem umstrittenen Begriff,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 2 (1993): 99–116.
20. Similar arguments are made in Andrew I. Port, “The Dark Side of Eigensinn: East German Workers and Destructive Shop-floor Practices,” in *Falling Behind or Catching Up? The East German Economy, 1945-2010*, ed. Hartmut Berghoff and Uta Balbier (New York, 2013), 111–28.
21. See Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (Boston, 1989), 449–50; Grieder, “In Defence,” 570–72.
22. Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat. Geschichte und Strukturen der DDR* (Munich, 1998), 633.
23. Bruce, *Firm*, 8. Also see Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Stasi konkret. Überwachung und Repression in der DDR* (Munich, 2013).
24. Mary Fulbrook, “The State of GDR History,” *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 38 (2011): 264.
25. Grieder, “In Defence,” 565.
26. For claims about “whitewashing” (*Weichspülung*, *Weichzeichnung*) see Klaus Schroeder’s review of Mary Fulbrook, *Ein ganz normales Leben. Alltag und Gesellschaft in der DDR* (Darmstadt, 2008) in *Zeitschrift des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat* 26 (2009), 178; also see Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk’s review of Mary Fulbrook, ed., *Power and Society in the GDR, 1961-79* (New York, 2009) in *Historische Zeitschrift* 291 (2010): 279. These are cited in Fulbrook, “State of GDR History,” 267. The quote about “cherry-picking” comes from a contribution made by Dolores Augustine on H-German in October 2007 during an online discussion sparked by Gary Bruce’s review of Andrew I. Port, *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic* (New York, 2007) (<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-German&month=0710&week=d&msg=ric35JS88CzrSyQG83Y3nA&user=&pw=>).
27. The classic example of such “triumphalism” remains Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992). Also see Ellen Schrecker, *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History after the Fall of Communism* (New York, 2006).
28. It is true that many of those who deny the totalitarian character of the regime became interested in the GDR for personal reasons: they had traveled to the East before 1989 and often had friends there. If their sympathies lay anywhere, it was undoubtedly with ordinary East Germans and not the leadership and its policies.
29. Gary Bruce made this claim in the review referred to in note 26. The irony is that Bruce comes close to exoneration in his own work when he approvingly cites a claim reminiscent of Hannah Arendt’s “banality of evil” thesis: that those who served such

- repressive regimes were not “sadists,” “fanatics,” or “even evil” does not make such people themselves “more sinister, but rather the state that [they] wanted to serve so unconditionally.” This focus on the character of the state runs the risk of downplaying personal responsibility for individual actions—reminiscent of the way in which Daniel Goldhagen inadvertently let individuals (as well as Adolf Hitler) “off the hook” in his controversial study of the Holocaust. That is, after all, the implication of Goldhagen’s claim that the attempted extermination of European Jewry was the result of some virulent strain of “eliminationist antisemitism” lying dormant since the Middle Ages. See Bruce, *Firm*, 182–83; Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, 1996); Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, 1963).
30. These arguments are made in Port, *Conflict and Stability*, 281–82.
  31. Dolores L. Augustine, “The Power Question in GDR History,” *German Studies Review* 34/3 (2011): 10.
  32. Fulbrook, “State of GDR History,” 265.
  33. Port, *Conflict and Stability*, 274–75.
  34. This last issue is the driving question behind Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945–1995* (Oxford, 2006). Gary Bruce opines, not very persuasively, that the “question of responsibility for crimes ... remains the single most important question of twentieth-century Germany history.” See Bruce, *Firm*, 2. See my contribution in this volume on the question of indirect indicators (pp. 202–3).
  35. Port, *Conflict and Stability*, 274. For a discussion of the special language and phraseology used by East German functionaries, also see Matthias Judt, “Nur für den Dienstgebrauch’—Arbeiten mit Texten einer deutschen Diktatur,” and Ralph Jessen, “Diktatorische Herrschaft als kommunikative Praxis. Überlegungen zum Zusammenhang von ‘Bürokratie’ und Sprachnormierung in der DDR-Geschichte,” in *Akten. Eingaben. Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte. Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag*, ed. Alf Lüdtke and Peter Becker (Berlin, 1997), 29–38, 58–75.
  36. For a useful overview of some of the more popular terms that have been used, see Torsten Diedrich and Hans Ehlert, “Moderne Diktatur’—‘Erziehungsdiktatur’—‘Fürsorgediktatur’ oder was sonst? Das Herrschaftssystem der DDR und der Versuch seiner Definition,” *Potsdamer Bulletin für Zeithistorische Studien* 12 (1998): 17–25; Fulbrook, “State of GDR History,” 260.
  37. Jürgen Kocka, “The GDR: A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship,” in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York, 1999), 47–69.
  38. See Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, 1949–1990* (Munich, 2008), 361, 424–25.
  39. Or as Lutz Niethammer retorted in response to Heym’s comment: “even so: [a footnote] of world history” (*immerhin: der Weltgeschichte*). See Donna Harsch, “Footnote or Footprint? The German Democratic Republic in History,” and Thomas Lindenberg, “What’s in this Footnote? World History!” in *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 46 (Spring 2010): 9–31; Lutz Niethammer, “Erfahrungen und Strukturen. Prologomena zu einer Geschichte der Gesellschaft der DDR,” in Kaeble, Kocka, and Zwahr, *Sozialgeschichte*, 96. Also see the contributions to the online forum (*Lesesaal*) about Wehler’s claims, sponsored in August 2008 by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* ([http://lesesaal.faz.net/wehler/exp\\_forum.php?rid=12](http://lesesaal.faz.net/wehler/exp_forum.php?rid=12)).
  40. Quotes from Kocka, *Civil Society & Dictatorship*, 35.

41. See Fulbrook, *Power and Society*, especially pp. 1–30. Also see the following exchange: Thomas Lindenberger, “Normality, Utopia, Memory, and Beyond: Reassembling East German Society,” and Mary Fulbrook, “Response to Thomas Lindenberger,” *German Historical Institute London Bulletin* 33/1 (May 2011): 67–98.
42. For a study that calls into question claims about popular resignation and quiescence following the construction of the Wall, see Elke Stadelmann-Wenz, *Widerständiges Verhalten und Herrschaftspraxis in der DDR. Vom Mauerbau bis zum Ende der Ulbricht-Ära* (Paderborn, 2009).
43. See Mary Fulbrook’s contribution to the online H-German discussion cited in note 26.
44. See Port, *Conflict and Stability*.
45. Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, C.T., 2005), 9, 15, 59.
46. See Port, *Conflict and Stability*.
47. The exchange between Friedländer and Broszat is reprinted in Peter Baldwin, ed., *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians’ Debate* (Boston, 1990), 102–32. Also see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (London, 1989), 150–67 (quote on p. 153); Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, M.A., 1988), 90–94.
48. See Jonathan Rosenberg, *How Far the Promised Land? World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam* (Princeton, 2005), 101–28. Also see Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany* (New York, 2010).
49. Tim Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the “National Community,”* ed. Jane Kaplan, trans. John Broadwin (Oxford, 1993), 278.
50. Bruce, *Firm*, 12.
51. Sebastian Haffner, *Zur Zeitgeschichte. 36 Essays* (Munich, 1982), 9.
52. See Port, *Conflict and Stability*, xiii n. 1.
53. A glaring example is Eppelmann, Faulenbach, and Mähler, *Bilanz und Perspektiven*. Only a handful of the more than 2,000 books and articles listed in the bibliography appeared in languages other than German.
54. This claim was one focus of the conference “Writing East German History” mentioned in note 3. For a similar point about this misleading claim, see Fulbrook, “State of GDR History,” 261.
55. Monica Black, “Death and the History of East German Sensibilities,” paper presented at the conference “Writing East German History” (see note 3).
56. Monica Black, *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to Divided Germany* (New York, 2010). Also see, e.g., Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2008).
57. EP Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1966), 9.
58. Andrew I. Port, “The Silence of the Lambs, and Other Myths about the German Democratic Republic,” paper presented at “Past and Future: East Germany before and after 1989,” Munk Centre of International Relations, University of Toronto, 30–31 March 2007.
59. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor, M.I., 2008), 23.
60. The essays in Pence and Betts, *Socialist Modern*, similarly attempt to place the GDR within the longer sweep of German history by emphasizing the supposedly “modern”

- aspects of the DDR. To that end, they emphasize the interplay of tradition and innovation and claim that what came after 1945 was an amalgam of the old and new.
61. See, e.g., Seán Allan, "Good Bye, Lenin! Ostalgie und Identität im wieder vereinigten Deutschland," *GFL German as a foreign language* 1 (2006): 46–59.
  62. For an assessment of 1945 as a major caesura, see the essays in Hans-Erich Volkmann, ed., *Ende des Dritten Reiches—Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges. Eine perspektivische Rückschau* (Munich, 1995). For a more sympathetic view of the term "zero hour," see Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (New York, 2009), 395–96.
  63. In 1929, as Harsch discusses in her contribution to this volume, the city of Lübeck administered batches of the vaccine contaminated by a virulent strain of the bovine bacillus. This led to the death of seventy-two infants, effectively ending such vaccination in Germany until after 1945. Such resistance nevertheless had a long tradition in Germany. See, e.g., Claudia Huerkamp, "The History of Smallpox Vaccination in Germany: A First Step in the Medicalization of the General Public," *Journal of Contemporary History* 20/4 (1985): 617–35.
  64. See Josie McLellan, "State Socialist Bodies: East German Nudism from Ban to Boom," *Journal of Modern History* 79 (2007): 74.
  65. Developments in the primary sector, especially flight from the countryside to the city by East and West German youths, provide another example of this phenomenon. See Andrew I. Port, "Democracy and Dictatorship in the Cold War: The Two Germanies, 1949-1961," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Smith (Oxford, 2011), 634–35.
  66. Also see Udo Wengst and Hermann Wentker, eds., *Das doppelte Deutschland. 40 Jahre Systemkonkurrenz* (Berlin, 2008).
  67. See, e.g., Günter Heydemann and Heinrich Oberreuter, eds., *Diktaturen in Deutschland—Vergleichsaspekte. Strukturen, Institutionen und Verhaltensweisen* (Bonn, 2003); Peter Bender, *Deutschlands Wiederkehr. Eine ungeteilte Nachkriegsgeschichte 1945-1990* (Stuttgart, 2007); Port, "Democracy and Dictatorship."
  68. This is usefully summarized in Kocka, *Civil Society & Dictatorship*, 39, 40, 57; also see Pence and Betts, *Socialist Modern*, 8; Augustine, "Power Question," 13.
  69. These are only some of the more prominent examples. See, e.g., Shane Harris, *The Watchers: The Rise of America's Surveillance State* (London, 2010); Tim Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI* (New York, 2012); Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston, 1998); Gary Marx, *Undercover: Police Surveillance in America* (Berkeley, 1988); Brian Glick, *War at Home: Covert Action against U.S. Activists and What We Can Do About It* (Boston, 1989); Karrin Hanshew, *Terror and Democracy in West Germany* (New York, 2012); Josef Foschepoth, *Überwachtes Deutschland. Post- und Telefonüberwachung in der alten Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen, 2012); Stefanie Waske, *Nach Lektüre vernichten! Der geheime Nachrichtendienst von CDU und CSU im Kalten Krieg* (Munich, 2013). A major conference organized by the German Institute for Contemporary History also explored this theme: "Staat gegen Terrorismus. Demokratie und Sicherheit in Westeuropa 1979-1990," Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, 8–9 November 2012.
  70. As Michael Hunt has written, "Americans went crusading in foreign lands in the name of freedom even as those freedoms significantly narrowed at home. That those who fell victim to McCarthyism lost their jobs and reputations and not their lives and that their numbers were far fewer than those exiled to Soviet labor camps or executed serves to qualify, not invalidate, the comparison and to extenuate, not excuse, the betrayal of

fundamental American political values.” Michael Hunt, *The World Transformed: 1945 to the Present* (Boston, 2004), 72.

71. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, 1977).
72. Augustine, “Power Question,” 6. Also see Sven Korzilius, “Asoziale” und “Parasiten” im Recht der SBZ/DDR. *Randgruppen im Sozialismus zwischen Repression und Ausgrenzung* (Cologne, 2005); Andrew I. Port, “When Workers Rumbled: The Wismut Upheaval of August 1951 in East Germany,” *Social History* 22/2 (1997): 168–71.
73. See note 48.
74. See Susan Reverby, *Examining Tuskegee: The Infamous Syphilis Study and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2009).
75. See, e.g., Herbert Wolf, *Hatte die DDR je eine Chance?* (Hamburg, 1991); Jörg Roesler, *Zwischen Plan und Markt. Die Wirtschaftsreform 1963-1970 in der DDR* (Berlin, 1990); Monika Kaiser, “Die Reformversuche der sechziger Jahre im Kontext der innerparteilichen Richtungskämpfe,” in *Pankower Vorträge* 23/2 (2000): 53–65. For a more realistic assessment, see André Steiner, *Die DDR-Wirtschaftsreform der sechziger Jahre. Konflikte zwischen Effizienz- und Machtkalkül* (Berlin, 1999).
76. Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft in der DDR. Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR, 1945–1989* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992).
77. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991* (New York, 1994), 8. For a similar warning against the assumption that liberal democracy was “destined” to emerge victorious after 1945, see Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York, 2000), 3–6.
78. For such sentiments, see the important memoir by the disillusioned wife of a Czech Communist functionary “purged” and executed following the 1952 Slánský Trial: Heda Margolius Kovály, *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941-1968* (New York, 1997).
79. Equally intriguing is the question of why there has been such “nostalgia,” or *Ostalgie*, for what had been, while it still existed, an extremely unpopular regime—whereas earlier Germans had been able to distance themselves so quickly from another regime that had, in its time, enjoyed much greater support, namely, the Third Reich. Some obvious answers include the difference in the magnitude of the crimes committed by the two regimes, how they initially came about and how they ultimately met their demise, and what came afterward. See my own essay in this volume and, on the topic of *Ostalgie*, Katja Neller, *DDR-Nostalgie. Dimensionen der Orientierung der Ostdeutschen gegenüber der ehemaligen DDR, ihre Ursachen und politische Konnotationen* (Wiesbaden, 2006). On popular support for the Nazi regime, see Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2001); Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005).
80. Kocka, *Civil Society & Dictatorship*, 60.
81. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York, 1993).
82. Grieder, “In Defence,” 584.