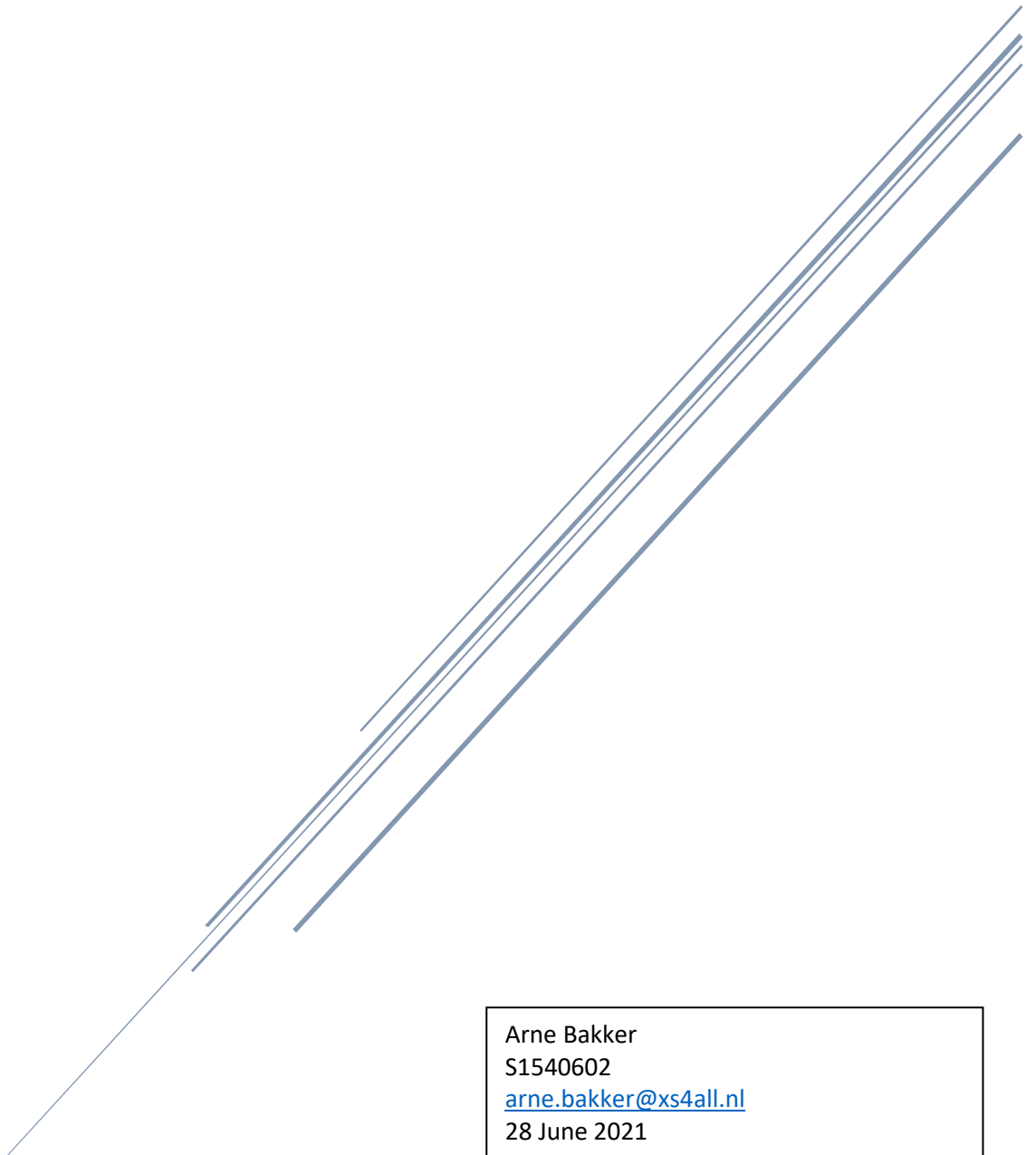


REAL EXISTING SOCIALISM

The German Democratic Republic: a fiction by the Sozialistische
Einheitspartei Deutschlands



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Introduction

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) represents a failed alternative to western democracies. The supposed ideals on which it was founded can still inspire people today. A society in which solidarity was the foundation. People worked and cared for each other. Greed and inequality that defined the centuries of history before would be gone. It is almost cruel that a social experiment based on such apparently beautiful principals would fail so miserably. For some the GDR was a living hell of unjust persecution. The state could and would follow the steps of everyday citizens just going about their day. The GDR is riddled with contradictions in the principles it was founded on and the reality of everyday life.¹ This makes the history of the GDR so interesting and confusing at the same time.

This fact has proven to be difficult for historians. The nature of the historian is to look for an encompassing narrative to take all these different notions in account. Of course the dangers of an encompassing narrative are known to historians, but the focus on a certain part of a history can lead to a distorted image of the GDR. After the fall of the Berlin Wall most of the research on the GDR focussed on its repressive nature. Positive aspects of GDR history were not taken in to account, leading to an image of the GDR as 'Stasiland'. For some former East-Germans, who had lived a good life in the GDR, this image was unrecognizable. The denial in earlier historiography of the positive side of life in the GDR led to the phenomenon *Ostalgie*. Former East-Germans longed back to their lives in the GDR.² This image has since been corrected with historical research on various topics, such as everyday life in the GDR.³ The broadening of the choice of subjects has been insightful. But as is with any history, some parts of it have still been underexposed. Popular belief is that the public sphere in the GDR was absent because of the extensive use of censorship by the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED).⁴ Since mainstream media in the GDR were uniform in content, they were not deemed useful in historical research. This has led to

¹ Christoph Kleßmann, "Rethinking the Second German Dictatorship", in: *Dictatorship as experience: towards a socio-cultural history of the GDR*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999) 370.

² Wolfgang Emmerich, "Cultural Memory East v. West: Is What Belongs Together Really Growing Together?" *Oxford German Studies*, Vol. 38 (2009) 251.

³ Katrin Kohl, "Conceptualizing the GDR – 20 Years After", *Oxford German Studies*, Vol. 38 (2009) 266.

⁴ Anke Fiedler & Michael Meyen, "'The totalitarian destruction of the public sphere?' Newspapers and structures of public communication in socialist countries: the example of the German Democratic Republic", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 37 (2015) 385.

research focussing on western media or groups that were in opposition of the GDR state.⁵ But just the fact that the mainstream media were censored does not mean they are any less part of the GDR history.

There is an hiatus in the historiography of the GDR that calls for more research. Other historians have called for more research on the mainstream media of the GDR. Especially content analysis on the socialist press of the GDR is very limited.⁶ Also the role that propaganda played in GDR society needs more research.⁷ Jan Palmowski has done some very valuable research on the GDR in which he tries to include all the different notions that exist on GDR history. In his book *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR 1945-1990* he explores the theory of public and private transcript in relation to GDR society. He specifically argues how the notion of heimat, as a flexible term that resonated with all Germans, was combined with the values of socialism to create a more appealing national identity for the GDR citizens.⁸ By using the theory of public and private transcript, first introduced by James C. Scott, he shows how all the different narratives on the GDR can be made part of one convincing argument. His outstanding book is the motivation to further explore the theory of public and private transcripts on the GDR. In short, the public transcript encompasses the mores of the public realm. In other words the customs, values and behaviours accepted by a particular group or in a particular setting. The first chapter in this thesis will explain the theory further and show its use in this research. To accommodate the earlier mentioned hiatus in GDR historiography, the subject of this thesis will be the content, credibility and distribution of the public transcript in the GDR, using the state paper of the SED *Neues Deutschland* as the main source, so that the following research question can be answered: How was the idealized portrayal of the German Democratic Republic created and used in the propaganda by the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands in 1981?

⁵ Anke Fiedler & Michael Meyen, *The totalitarian destruction of the public sphere?*, 389.

⁶ Anke Fiedler & Michael Meyen, "The steering of the press in the socialist states of Eastern Europe: the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as a case study", *Cold War History*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2015) 452.

⁷ Christoph Classen, "Thoughts on the Significance of Mass-Media Communications in the Third Reich and the GDR", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, no. 8, vol. 3-4 (2007) 558.

⁸ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life In the GDR 1945-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 110.

Neues Deutschland was the most read paper in the GDR, and would have been part of the daily life of many East-Germans.⁹ Almost all editions of the paper would have one page dedicated to the capital Berlin. This section was called *Aus der Hauptstadt*, and sometimes *Aus der Hauptstadt und den Bezirken*. For this thesis the section has been studied for the whole year of 1981. The choice of this particular section is of course related to the choice of the public transcript as subject. To further understanding in how the public transcript functioned in GDR society it is necessary to have sources on various topics. The articles in the section *Aus der Hauptstadt* showcase the life in Berlin. In the SED's portrayal the GDR was the nation of real existing socialism, and in *Neues Deutschland* the capital was portrayed as the centre of socialism. The articles in this section have subjects such as interviews with Berliners, journalists visiting workplaces, commentaries on political or cultural events, articles on museums and historical landmarks, and more. This makes it a fertile source for analysing the public transcript. After studying all articles published in the year 1981 they have been sorted on recurring themes. The choice of the year 1981 has to do with the relaxation of hard socialist ideals and the focus on satisfying the needs of GDR citizens in return for civil obedience charismatic for the 1980's GDR. This creates an interesting gap between the idealized socialist politics of the SED and the reality of everyday life in Berlin.

The first chapter of this thesis will elaborate on the terms public and private and how these terms relate to the society of the GDR. This will include insight in the position of the SED in GDR society based on historical literature, and how citizens of the GDR could make use of the public transcript for their own good. The second chapter concerns a global overview of the values and worldview of the SED as presented in the paper. This serves to show some global lines which were part of the core of the public transcript. The third chapter will expand on how the public transcript was made credible. Which tactics were being used to make the propaganda believable? The fourth chapter focusses on the distribution of the public transcript in the GDR society. How did the SED make the public transcript inescapable in everyday life? The fifth and last chapter shows how the way GDR society was organized contributed to a good reception of the public transcript in GDR society.

⁹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Neues Deutschland." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 28, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Neues-Deutschland>.

1. Public and Private in the German Democratic Republic

The title above immediately presents two problems that need clarification. First, what is meant by the terms public and private? And secondly, how will these terms translate to the society of the GDR? The terms public and private can be used in various forms. Anyone reading this will have his or her own conception of what is meant by public and private. It is important to acknowledge the different meanings with their own (implicit) assumptions and connotations. This thesis will focus on the public part of the GDR society, but since public and private work as a pair, an explanation of the framework in which these terms operate is needed.¹⁰ There are two fundamental meanings of public and private. The first makes a distinction in terms of visibility. Here private means hidden or withdrawn, whereas the opposite term public means open, revealed and accessible. Another distinction can be made in terms of collectivity. Here private connects to the individual, and finds the collective, in the form of the public, as opposite.¹¹ These two fundamental meanings are combined in how the distinction, in both thought and practice, is made in modern culture: the private realm of an individual's personal life on one hand, and anything outside of this is considered to be public.¹² This is the distinction of public and private that will be used in understanding the GDR society.

Even though in theory a clear distinction between public and private can be made, in any case reality will prove to be more complicated. This is especially true for the East-German state. It is no secret that the GDR, led by the SED, inserted itself deeply within civilian society. Most notorious is of course the Stasi, officially named *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*: the secret police of the GDR. The East-German state infiltrated every aspect of society including politics, economy, law and culture.¹³ The Stasi had the means of closely following the moves of any individual citizen. Many historical works have shown just how extensively the state and its functionaries reached into the community, affecting almost any

¹⁰ Jeff Weintraub, *The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) 3.

¹¹ Idem, 5.

¹² Idem, 20.

¹³ Sigrid Meuschel, "The Other German Dictatorship: Totalitarianism and Modernization in the German Democratic Republic" *Thesis Eleven*, Number 63 (2000) 54.

aspect of daily life.¹⁴ One could argue that the distinction between public and private would lose its use in a society as closely monitored by the state as the GDR. The society of the GDR can be seen as a honeycomb state, where the lines between public and private were blurred beyond recognition in a 'multiplicity of little honeycomb cells of overlapping and intersecting elements in the GDR networks of power and organisation.'¹⁵ But concluding that there was no private realm in the GDR because the state interfered in the personal life of its citizens would be too simplistic. The policies of the SED were not without consequences. The overbearing state control had inevitable effects on how its citizens would interact with the state, and in a broader sense, with the public sphere.

To understand how citizens of the GDR interacted with the public and private sphere, it is logical to look at how in an ideal socialist society, which the GDR claimed it was, these spheres were conceptualized. Marx had his own ideas about the public and private sphere. The problem with the private sphere was that it was controlled by the necessity of labour. Therefore there was no real intimate, personal sphere. Only by rational planning of the economy would it be possible to create a personal sphere free of economic functions.¹⁶ Marx argued further that once the people were freed of capitalist oppression, they would not even need a personal sphere. The people would regain their nature as social beings, making the personal sphere obsolete.¹⁷ If these ideals were truly realized in the GDR, the public and private distinction in this thesis would be problematic. But as is the case with many ideals, reality forces to compromise, as was the case in the GDR. Contrary to how Marx envisioned the public and private spheres in a socialist society, the private sphere was to prosper in the GDR.

The citizens of the GDR had very limited possibilities to influence the politics of the state. The very limited political life that existed in the GDR was smothered and suppressed by centralization and bureaucratization.¹⁸ Rousseau already noticed how under a bad government, where the general will had no influence in politics or policy, the citizens tended

¹⁴ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 12.

¹⁵ Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 14

¹⁶ Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere", in: *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993) 19.

¹⁷ Paul Betts, *Within Walls*, 6.

¹⁸ *Idem*, 14.

to turn away from political life and focus on their personal life.¹⁹ In a more recent example, reports from the Third Reich on the state of the peoples moral concluded how the mass mobilization of the population paradoxically led to a withdrawal into privacy for many citizens.²⁰ Such was also the case for the GDR. The ever growing state presence in society led to the need for a relatively free private life for many citizens. The SED also recognized the growing need for a private life for its citizens, even though this did not align with their ideology.²¹ One of the reasons the personal sphere could develop in the GDR was because of the constant concessions the SED had to make in return for civil obedience. The SED never had enough popular support to solely base their legitimacy and decision making on. Apart from a small portion of the population who were communists and supported the SED, the majority of the population was forced to follow the party's will.²² The fact that in a relatively short time span uprisings occurred in the GDR in 1953, Hungary and Poland in 1956, and Prague in 1968 showed that the acceptance of socialist rule was not guaranteed.²³ Another important factor that has to be taken in consideration concerns the other half of Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Every success of the FRG could be used to delegitimize the SED rule. Especially on the economic terrain the FRG was outperforming its eastern half.²⁴

The need for approval of the GDR by its own citizens, who could simply look at their western neighbours for a comparison, is crucial in the interaction between the GDR state and its citizens. Under Erich Honecker, the General Secretary of the SED from 1971 to 1989, multiple social concessions were made as a 'way out' under the critical view of the GDR citizens. Social policy became preventative crisis management.²⁵ It can be seen as a new sort of social contract between the state and its citizens: civil obedience in return for increased consumption and relaxation of the hard socialist ideals.²⁶ To make things more complicated for the SED the East-German politics were understandably highly influenced by the Soviet

¹⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract", in: *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Susan Dun (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002) 221.

²⁰ Paul Betts, *Within Walls*, 12.

²¹ *Idem*, 14.

²² Christoph Kleßmann, *Rethinking the Second German Dictatorship*, 2.

²³ *Idem*, 370.

²⁴ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 1.

²⁵ Christoph Kleßmann, *Rethinking the Second German Dictatorship*, 370.

²⁶ Luminita Gatejel, "Appealing for a Car: Consumption Policies and Entitlement in the USSR, the GDR, and Romania, 1950s-1980s", *Slavic Review*, vol. 75, no. 1 (2016) 127-128.

Union. The GDR was keystone in the Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.²⁷ The SED had to find the right balance between pleasing the Soviets with hard-line communist policy and providing their own citizens with enough economic and materialistic comfort to not lose their support, while at the same time constantly being outperformed on this terrain by the FRG.

The international relations described above illustrate the difficult position for the SED. In this thesis the focus is on the interactions within the GDR, between the state and its citizens. Other historical research has already shown that the citizens of the GDR were aware of their bargaining position and how to use it. The new social contract meant that for the SED to legitimize its own rule, it had to improve the living conditions and increase the availability of consumption goods.²⁸ This new contract has also been called socialist consumerism.²⁹ Even though the promises kept the population satisfied, there was one fatal flaw: throughout its existence the SED constantly fell short of the promises it had made to its citizens.³⁰ It is in this discrepancy between the promises and reality where citizens had the power to demand things from the SED.

The fact that citizens can demand changes from a totalitarian and repressive government is a fascinating topic. Unsurprisingly, it has been the topic of some historical research. Citizens could force authorities to listen to their demands, if these citizens could claim the state was not fulfilling its socialist promises. An illustrating example of these interactions are the *Eingaben*. As a right secured in the constitution of the GDR citizens could send *Eingaben* to government institutions, concerning a complaint, request or suggestion.³¹ The government was required to properly process and answer the *Eingaben*. Both the government as its citizens took this form of official protest very seriously and millions of *Eingaben* were registered and processed. The most interesting part of this history is that even the Stasi, known in popular culture as a fierce institution of control and repression, received many of these complaints from citizens.³² As long as citizens used socialist rhetoric

²⁷ Konrad H. Jarausch, "Beyond Uniformity: The Challenge of Historicizing the GDR", in: Dictatorship as experience: towards a socio-cultural history of the GDR, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999) 10.

²⁸ Luminita Gatejel, *Appealing for a Car*, 124.

²⁹ Paul Betts, *Within Walls*, 9-10.

³⁰ Luminita Gatejel, *Appealing for a Car*, 145

³¹ Meike Flöss, "De Stasi als Ombudsman" (master's thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2017) 4.

³² Idem, 5.

as the basis of their complaints, there was a good chance something would be done about it.³³ The fact that interaction between the state and its citizens was institutionalized and widely used is the reason that the GDR is being described as a participatory dictatorship.³⁴

In this thesis the interaction between the state and its citizens will be further analysed. Not so much a specific form, as the *Eingaben*, will be the subject, but the socialist rhetoric used by both the state and its citizens. The interaction between the state and its citizens using socialist rhetoric is best understood in terms of public transcript and private transcript. This is a concept put forward by James C. Scott in his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. For this thesis the concept of the public transcript is most relevant. Basically the public transcripts provides a set of rules and guidelines to follow while being in the public sphere. The dominant party in a society can, by controlling the public sphere, create an appearance of how its subordinates would ideally see the dominant party.³⁵ Each outward use of power, like celebrations, rituals, ceremonials or public punishments, are a symbolic gesture of domination to reinforce the hierarchical order.³⁶ By making sure everyone in the public sphere follows the same script, an appearance of unanimity is created.³⁷ Even if the public does not believe in the expressions put forward by the public transcript, simply performing the script is a means of demonstrating that the given system of domination is stable, and here to stay.³⁸ Opposite of the public transcript, the private transcript describes how people can give their own personal meanings to these expressions of power.

Historical research has shown how this theoretical framework can be useful in understanding the GDR society. In his book *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR 1945-1990* Jan Palmowski looks closely at how the SED tried to construct a national identity. He specifically argues how the notion of *Heimat*, as a flexible term that resonated with all Germans, was combined with the values of socialism to create a more appealing national identity for the GDR citizens.³⁹ The SED tried to make this

³³ Paul Betts, *Within Walls*, 15.

³⁴ Meike Flöss, *De Stasi als Ombudsman*, 7.

³⁵ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (London: Yale University Press, 1990) 50.

³⁶ *Idem*, 45.

³⁷ *Idem*, 55.

³⁸ *Idem*, 66.

³⁹ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 110.

national identity inescapable in everyday life by making it part of the public transcript. By forcing citizens to interact with this national identity on an everyday basis, the SED hoped to instil some of the socialist values on its citizens. In his work Palmowski uses the framework of public transcript and private transcript to better understand if the efforts of the SED of instilling a socialist national identity on its citizens actually worked. He concludes that the identity of a socialist heimat helped to maintain a socialist rule by asserting that the party's domination was unavoidable. However the idea of a socialist heimat remained sufficiently flexible for citizens to develop their own, personal meanings that were distinct from the party's ideals.⁴⁰ These personal notions of heimat, the private transcript, were to remain after the fall of the GDR. The public transcript, where the socialist heimat was embedded, quickly disappeared.

The SED could not convince the citizens of the unavoidability of its domination without the 'hard' instruments of power like the Stasi. But the fall of the Berlin wall showed that these instruments lost its effectiveness once the SED lost its 'soft' power, in other words, when the citizens of the GDR stopped accepting the everyday power relations.⁴¹ This soft power, in other words the public transcript, will be the main subject of this thesis. Historical research on the GDR has already shown that the domestic sphere was no fait accompli, but had to be fought for by engaged citizens pushing the state to make good on its promises of equality and prosperity for all.⁴² The example of the *Eingaben* shows a specific way how citizens could take on the power of the state. This thesis will focus on the other side of the interaction, namely the side of the state. Palmowski uses the distinction between the public and private transcript to shed light on the effectiveness of the constructed national identity, and at the same time proves that the concept of public and private transcript works well in the GDR society. What is missing in the historiography on the GDR is a thorough analysis of what the public transcript actually is. To better understand the power relations in the GDR this thesis will try to explain what the public transcript consisted of, how the script was built up to be believable, and how the script was distributed within the GDR society.

⁴⁰ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 110.

⁴¹ *Idem*, 310.

⁴² Paul Betts, *Within Walls*, 16.

2. Real Existing Socialism

In an attempt to analyse the history writing on the GDR, Konrad Jarausch wrote in 1999 that there were basically two sides in historiography: one side took the communist propaganda at face value and considered the East-German society thoroughly politicized, while the other side saw the GDR as a failed experiment, and tried to recover the noble aims of socialism from the debris of its admittedly imperfect realization.⁴³ Jarausch called on historians to finally historicize the GDR and come to terms with the many contradictions in GDR society.⁴⁴ In another attempt to analyse the history writing of the GDR Katrin Kohl wrote in 2009 again that historians had to accept the multi entity of GDR society and that there was not one narrative that could take everything in account.⁴⁵ She called for an anthropological approach to the history of the GDR.⁴⁶ Palmowski's work on the GDR has shown that the theory of public and private transcript is very useful in portraying the different narratives and contradictions embedded in GDR society. In describing the workings of the public transcript this thesis wants to add to this process in historiography concerning the GDR.

To further understanding of the position of the public transcript in GDR society it is necessary to make an attempt to describe what the transcript consisted of. The use of the word 'attempt' is on purpose. The public transcript is a way of describing what could and could not be said in public. What actions were accepted, and which actions one could better not perform in public. It also contains all the subtle ways East-Germans would interact with each other, the state, its ideals and worldview. To claim that this chapter will describe all of this, or to claim that it is even at all possible to write down a complete catalogue of how East-Germans would interact with each other in the public sphere would be misleading. Furthermore, to understand the functioning of the public transcript it is not necessary to describe and analyse the complete vocabulary of the public transcript. The power of the public transcript is in its vagueness and flexibility. This chapter serves to show the global

⁴³ Konrad H. Jarausch, *Beyond Uniformity*, 4.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, 5.

⁴⁵ Katrin Kohl, *Conceptualizing the GDR*, 268.

⁴⁶ *Idem*, 270.

lines the transcript followed, which where applicable in any specific context. To achieve this certain values idealized by the SED are highlighted, and illustrated by one or two examples.

The values and global lines portrayed in the public transcript are closely linked to the idea of the GDR national identity. From this identity certain values arise, which then serve as a basic script to follow in the public sphere. An good overview of the global lines and values followed in the public transcript can be found in an article on the 28th of April, noting the different reasons why workers need to demonstrate on the 1st of May:

Für Frieden und Sozialismus, für die Politik zum Wohle des Volkes! Für den bewährten Kurs der Hauptaufgabe, der Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik! Für die neue Friedensinitiative der Sowjetunion und der sozialistischen Staatengemeinschaft — gegen imperialistische Hochrüstung und gegen die Raketenpläne der NATO! Für aktive Solidarität mit allen antiimperialistischen Kräften!⁴⁷

A first element is the international context in which the GDR is placed. The GDR is portrayed as a peaceful socialist society which is constantly being threatened by the imperialistic forces west of its borders. The only thing that protects this peaceful society from a devastating war is socialism. The horrors of the last war are still a collective trauma for the GDR society. How could anyone oppose the one thing that is preventing living through these horrors again? Efforts to strengthen socialism are often placed within this framework. When speaking in public places, the speaker will usually explain how his subject relates to the bigger picture of socialism. If his subject strengthens socialism, it is also an necessary part to ensuring lasting peace.⁴⁸ A new war can be prevented by instilling the socialist values on every citizen in the GDR:

Die politisch-moralische und physische Stählung der Bürger, insbesondere der Jugend, die Ausprägung ihrer patriotischen und internationalistischen Haltung sowie ihre Befähigung zur Lösung von Aufgaben im System der Landesverteidigung seien

⁴⁷ Neues Deutschland Druckerei und Verlag GmbH, Franz-Mehring-Platz 1 10243 Berlin: *Neues Deutschland*, 'Kampfdemonstration am 1. Mai', 28/04/81.

⁴⁸ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Antifaschisten vermittelten ihre reichen Kampferfahrungen', 22/09/81

unerläßliche Voraussetzungen, um die Verteidigungskraft der Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Macht weiter zu stärken.⁴⁹

This theme can very often be seen in the articles in *Neues Deutschland*. It was not only in articles on political matters, but is mentioned in articles concerning any subject. Take for example the next article describing a meeting of composers and musicologists. A reporter of *Neues Deutschland* is present to report on the meeting. At one point the politics of the SED are being discussed, and the following quote can be read in the paper:

Wir können nur einstimmen in den weltweiten Protest gegen die Machenschaften jener aggressiven Kreise der USA und der NATO, die mit unvergleichlichem Zynismus die Menschheit an die Möglichkeit eines Atomkrieges als eine gottgewollte, selbstverständliche Sache gewöhnen möchten.⁵⁰

Even composers and musicologists must have felt the need to express their thoughts on the threat that is facing the GDR. It can be read as an example of a thoroughly politicized society, or as an essential part of the public transcript.

Another aspect following the existential threat facing the GDR, is the expression of thankfulness for socialism, and in extension the SED, for protecting the peace. Anything can, and often will be placed in context of thanking the state and its policies. Take for example this quote from a GDR citizen:

Wir bekamen die schöne neue Wohnung und besitzen einen Kleingarten am Kaulsdorfer See. Für die Tochter und den Sohn halben wir die Lehrverträge bereits in der Tasche — eine gute Zukunft liegt vor ihnen. Das alles verdanken wir unserem Staat und seiner konsequenten Politik des Friedens.⁵¹

After mentioning his content with his house and the education of his kids, these good developments need to be placed in context of the state and its policies. This is very common in the articles in *Neues Deutschland*. In an article on published on 31 December a citizen is asked about his expectations for the new year. After he says some things about work, the reporter ask how he looks at the next year in relation to his private life: “1981 privat? Wir

⁴⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Die Fruchte unserer Arbeit gedeihen nur im Frieden’, 10/11/81.

⁵⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Beratung der Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler’, 26/11/81.

⁵¹ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Unsere junge Hausgemeinschaft geht am Sonntag früh gemeinsam zur Wahl’, 13/06/81.

sind gut über die Bunden gekommen', denke ich. Besonders freue ich mich darüber, daß unser Staat auch 1981 seine gute Entwicklung erfolgreich fortsetzen konnte."⁵² Without really saying anything about his personal life, the interviewee immediately falls back on a general statement on the good deeds of the state.

Building further on the thankfulness to the state and its policies, another element featured prominently in *Neues Deutschland* is showing how good the GDR takes care of its citizens, and in doing so showing that the thankfulness expressed by its citizens is justified. Not unsurprisingly for a socialist state, *Neues Deutschlands* often mentions the excellent working conditions for the workers:

Schließlich sei noch vermerkt, daß den 1400 Mitarbeitern vorbildliche soziale Einrichtungen wie Kantine und Speiseraum, Kosmetik- und Frisiersalon, eine Betriebsarztstelle mit Arzt, Schwester, Physiotherapeuten sowie Gymnastik- und Frauenruheräume zur Verfügung stehen.⁵³

Often when articles describe a certain workplace the excellent facilities that the workers can use are mentioned. Another aspect that is often mentioned is the availability of free warm meals for every worker.⁵⁴ But even better than listing facilities and the number of hot meals, is to let the GDR citizens explain themselves why workers have it so good in the GDR: 'Beruf und kinderreiche Familie lassen sich im Sozialismus gut vereinen, erklärte sie. Alle ihre Kinder sind tüchtig im Beruf und in der Schule. Ein Ergebnis auch der sozialpolitischen Maßnahmen, die unsere Partei beschlossen hat.'⁵⁵ In the same article another worker compares working in the GDR and working in a capitalistic society: 'Ein Leben ohne Arbeit ist wie ein Leben ohne jeden Sinn. Im Kapitalismus sind für viele Jugendliche Lehrstellen Wunschtraum. Ich habe ein Ziel, bekräftigte sie, eine sichere Perspektive, und dafür lohnt es sich, das Beste zu geben.'⁵⁶

Workers are in very good hands in the socialist state of the GDR. To amplify this point *Neues Deutschland* often shows how the GDR takes care of less fortunate workers who have to live with disabilities. In the GDR children with hearing disabilities can still enjoy their

⁵² *Neues Deutschland*, 'Geborgen in Gesellschaft, Familie und im Kollektiv', 31/12/81

⁵³ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Das Nachtleben in einer großen Einkaufsstätte', 08/01/81.

⁵⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Wohnungsbauer geben für Qualität ihrer Arbeit zwei Jahre Garantie', 03/02/81.

⁵⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Die Kunden zu jeder Tageszeit gut versorgen', 22/05/81.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

education to the fullest, with adapted educational courses funded by the state.⁵⁷ People with any disabilities are at home in the inclusive GDR society, as an article advocating for equal treatment for people with disabilities shows.⁵⁸ Similarly the elderly are a group that can expect to be taken care of in the socialist society of the GDR.:

Mehr als 1,5 Millionen Stunden Nachbarschaftshilfe, die in 1980 durch Mitglieder und Helfer der Volkssolidarität in Berlin für ältere Bürger geleistet wurden, sind eine große solidarische Leistung. (...) Auch die rund 1,7 Millionen Mark, die im Herbst vergangenen Jahres durch die Listensammlung erbracht wurden, seien Ausdruck der Verbundenheit der Hauptstadtler mit den Veteranen der Arbeit. 4800 Rentner wurden von 1360 Hauswirtschaftspflegerinnen betreut, und mehr als 9000 erhielten täglich ein warmes Mittagessen.⁵⁹

The quote above shows another essential part of the public transcript: solidarity. Solidarity is what keeps the socialist society of the GDR together. It's the reason why the state takes such good cares of its citizens. At the same time it's the reason why citizens take good care of each other. This is an example of one of the paradoxes embedded in GDR history. The state claims it takes cares of all its citizens, while at the same time mobilizes citizens in the name of solidarity to do it themselves. By making solidarity, like helping your neighbours in the example above, part of the public transcript of the GDR, the state can then claim this example as proof of its efforts to care for its citizens. A good example of this is the 'Mach Mitt!' competition. Housing communities, companies, neighbourhoods and any other type of organization are encouraged put in hours of voluntary work. This can mean any type of work, like cleaning up a park, digging trenches for water utilities, or gardening public spaces. An article estimates that with the building of new housing facilities in Berlin the citizens of Berlin have built and maintained more than one million square meters of public parks.⁶⁰ Looking at the estimated value put on this voluntary work in another article, the 'Mach Mit!' competition seems like an integral part of the GDR's economy:

⁵⁷ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Neue Spezialschule für schwerhörige Kinder', 22/01/81.

⁵⁸ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Axel wird gewiß sein Leben meistern', 12/02/81.

⁵⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Die Veteranen der Arbeit werden aufmerksam umsorgt', 13/03/81.

⁶⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Viel Grün vor der eigenen Haustür', 24/06/81.

Die „Mach mit!“ -Leistungen der Bevölkerung unserer Hauptstadt zur Pflege und Instandhaltung der Wohngebäude sind von 88,4 Millionen Mark im Jahre 1976 auf 134,8 Millionen Mark im vergangenen Jahr gestiegen. Diese Tendenz hält an, wie die Halbjahresbilanz 1981 zeigt. 76 Millionen Mark stehen auf diesem Gebiet bereits wieder zu Buche.⁶¹

This feeling of solidarity is not limited to the GDR society. An important part of the GDR identity and thus public transcript is the importance of the international solidarity with the other socialist countries around the world. An example is an article on a craftsman who travels to war torn Vietnam to help set up a shop. His efforts are seen as an important contribution to the solidarity effort of the GDR around the world:

Daß ich als privater Handwerksmeister an Solidaritätseinsätzen in Freundesland beteiligt sein darf, zeugt von der hohen Wertschätzung, die das Handwerk in unserem Staat genießt. Eine Tatsache, die auf dem X. Parteitag der SED erneut Ausdruck fand.⁶²

This quote brings together some earlier points made in this chapter. The craftsman is honoured to be part of this solidarity movement, he mentions that his work is highly valued in GDR society, and all this thanks to the SED. Not only the GDR's own citizens value the solidarity highly, they also receive international recognition, in this case from a delegation from South Africa:

Die Repräsentanten der Befreiungsbewegung brachten zum Ausdruck, wie hoch sie die Solidarität der DDR auf allen Gebieten schätzen. Wenn sie das Wort Solidarität hören, sagten sie, dann denken sie immer an die DDR. Sie dankten den Bürgern unserer Republik für die gute Unterstützung ihres gerechten Kampfes.⁶³

This chapter serves as a global overview of important values in GDR society, based on the articles in *Neues Deutschland* from the year 1981. The paper illustrates GDR society as something precious and widely appreciated and at the same time as something fragile and threatened. The constant threat of the imperialistic forces in the world, mainly the USA and

⁶¹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Rutschlage für Reparaturen', 15/08/81.

⁶² *Neues Deutschland*, 'Berliner Handwerker helfen bei Solidaritätseinsätzen', 30/07/81.

⁶³ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Zehn Stunden war der Alex ein Forum der Solidarität', 29/08/81

NATO, is used as a framework for making the socialist ideals vital for lasting peace. Opposing socialism is opposing peace. It is the SED and her socialist politics that stand between this ideal, socialist society and the evils in the world. Within this society socialism brings good in the form of solidarity. Together the people make live better for themselves and each other, while the SED guards that the socialist ideals are upheld. This is in short the idealistic image that *Neues Deutschland* portrays throughout its articles of the GDR. The fact that most, if not all, is propaganda by the ruling party does not mean it is irrelevant for the GDR citizens, and in extension, for the historiography on the GDR. This idealistic image is essential to the public transcript in society. Earlier in this paper the example of the *Eingaben* was described. Research on the *Eingaben* shows that the GDR citizens were very vocal in voicing their complaints. An individual in the GDR could complain, for example to the Stasi, about his living conditions only if he could make a well-founded complaint within the idealistic world of the SED. If this person could demonstrate how the state was neglecting its socialist duty to take good care of its citizens, real change could happen. This would make the idealistic world portrayed in the propaganda suddenly very real for GDR citizens.

3. Building up the public transcript

If a citizen of the GDR was well spoken in the language put forward in the socialist propaganda by the SED, it was possible for these citizens to use this for his or her own benefit. This does not mean that every citizen in the GDR saw the socialist rhetoric just as propaganda. A study on the public and private debate within the society of the Soviet Union puts forward an interesting point. The author mentions that historical research on authoritarian dictatorships often has the implicit notion that the people living under this rule are established as naturally oppositional.⁶⁴ In this thesis the values and worldview of the SED are described as idealistic and propagandistic, which can imply that the GDR citizens saw right through it. The reason for this description is the agreement within historiography that there was a considerable discrepancy between GDR society in the official view of the SED and reality. For this reason the terms idealistic and propagandistic are justified. This thesis is not for making the point that every GDR citizen saw the world described by the SED just as propaganda, and as a way to communicate with the state to benefit him or herself.

On the contrary, research on the propaganda of the SED has shown just how effective it could be. The propaganda was able to influence the imagination, the attitude towards life and the worldview of large parts of the population.⁶⁵ The ideology of the SED served the purpose of highlighting, organizing, selecting and eventually processing events into a fiction.⁶⁶ If done well, this fiction could be very convincing. Take the example of the paper *Neues Deutschland*. It was the most read paper of the GDR, with millions of subscribers. Why would so many East-Germans subscribe to a paper filled with socialist propaganda? There are two answers to this question. First, it was possible for readers to become aware of the objectives and mechanism of the propaganda, and read between the lines to form his or her own opinion.⁶⁷ Secondly, it is very plausible that a part of the readers believed most of what they read in the paper. It is probably best illustrated as a scale. Some readers would have

⁶⁴ Juliane Fürst, "Friends in Private, Friends in Public: The Phenomenon of the *Kompaniia* among Soviet Youth in the 1950's and 1960's, in: *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia*, ed. Lewis H. Siegelbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 231.

⁶⁵ Michael Meyen & Anke Fiedler, "Journalists in the German Democratic Republic (GDR)", *Journalism Studies*, no. 14, vol. 3 (2012) 321.

⁶⁶ Anke Fiedler & Michael Meyen, *The steering of the press*, 454.

⁶⁷ Anke Fiedler & Michael Meyen, *The totalitarian destruction of the public sphere?*, 836.

believed everything, some parts of it, and some would not believe a word of what they read. Most importantly, it cannot be denied that for a large part of the population the idealistic view on GDR society played a large role in their lives. In this chapter the various ways the SED tried to make this view on society believable is analysed. How did the SED make the public transcript, in which its values and worldview were embedded, realistic and convincing?

A means to the goal described above, and used many times in the articles of *Neues Deutschland*, is highlighting the long history of the socialist movement and its values in German history. For example in relation to certain buildings in Berlin:

Auch das heutige Kreiskulturhaus „Prater“ in der Kastanienallee ist ein geschichtsträchtiger Ort. Seit 1852 ist das Gelände beliebter Treffpunkt der Arbeiterfamilien. 1922 fand dort der erste deutsch-sowjetische Artistenball statt, dessen Erlös der Roten Arbeiterhilfe zufließt.⁶⁸

Placing the socialist movement far back in history, preferably somewhere in the nineteenth century, is very common in the articles. Often when a certain building or area in Berlin is mentioned in the paper, an interesting fact concerning the long socialist history of the city is mentioned.⁶⁹

In next example on the history of a theatre group, the article starts in the 17th century: 'Zu Colin an der Spree war im Jahre 1618 viel Volks zu einem aufsehenerregenden Spektakulum auf den Beinen. Wandernde Komödianten brachten: „Ein sehr anmuthiges Spiel von der blinden Liebe, oder wie mans deutsch nennt, von der Löffelei.“'⁷⁰ After explaining the rich traditions of theatre in Berlin, the article shows how these traditions again flourish in GDR society:

Unsere elf Spielstätten, die jährlich mehr Besucher haben, als Berlin Einwohner zählt, bewahren die Tradition ihrer großen Vorbilder. (...) Mit Leasings „Nathan der Weise“ begann 1945 ein neues Kapitel der Theatergeschichte Berlins.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Die Handwerkerfiguren in der Kastanienallee', 03/01/81.

⁶⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Ein Sommernachtsball unter den Kastanienbäumen', 12/08/81.

⁷⁰ *Neues Deutschland*. 'Gepfefferte Couplets vor den Toren der Stadt', 18/02/81.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

Another article describes the founding of a socialist organization in the economically troubling year of 1917 in which the workers of Berlin helped each other. The paper notes that this is just a small part of the rich socialist history of Berlin: 'In Berlin gab es Dutzende solcher Verbindungen der Arbeiter. Für Kindervolksküchen, Obdachlose und auch für fröhliches Beisammensein, das allerdings seltener, wurden Pfennige zurückgelegt.'⁷²

The multiple articles on the rich socialist history of Berlin are showing the readers of *Neues Deutschland* that the nation of the GDR is not something completely new. On the contrary, the socialist ideals on which the GDR is founded have long roots in German history. By showing how the GDR is simply a continuation of existing traditions explains why the nation of the GDR is the logical next step in history. Of course it is not uncommon for news articles on a certain subject like a building or organization to start by telling the reader something about its history. But it is no coincidence either that many articles on a historical matter have the implicit suggestion that socialism is well founded in German history and traditions. Sometimes the socialist worldview is clearly visible in a historical interpretation. Take for example the next quote from an article on the history of a water tower in Berlin:

Viele Bewohner am Prenzlauer Berg beispielsweise mußten Tag für Tag ihr Wasser am Stadttor von Fässern privater Wasserhändler holen. Erste Versuche zu einer Trinkwasserleitung gab es zwar schon 1572, als eine Gesellschaft „Gewerk der Wasserkunst“ mit dem Rat einen Vertrag über den Bau einer hölzernen Wasserleitung abschloß. Jeder Bürger hatte 20 Taler zu berappen. Doch schon nach sieben Jahren war sie größtenteils verfallen. Spätere Versuche, das Projekt wieder aufzunehmen, scheiterte am Desinteresse der Kurfürsten.⁷³

It almost shows an very early example of the socialist ideals. The citizens of Prenzlauer Berg had to get their water from private water merchant under less than ideal conditions. To improve this situation, the citizens all contributed to the building of a water tower. This public utility would mean an improvement for all citizens. In the end the project failed, mainly because the political elite, the prince-electors, were not interested in the needs of the citizens.

⁷² *Neues Deutschland*, 'Pfennig-Schrank vom „Meizer Eck', 05/08/81.

⁷³ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Die langem Kerls mit dem Wasserkopf', 28/03/81

A different aspect of the historical narrative in *Neues Deutschland* concerns a previous dictatorship, namely Nazi-Germany. In the next example the history of a certain school in Berlin is portrayed:

1892 wurde sie als Zweite Handwerksschule eröffnet. Sie erhielt damals die Aufgabe, das Zeichnen und Entwerfen kunstgewerblicher Arbeiten zu üben. 1905 kamen in der Ausbildung zum Beispiel figürliches Zeichnen, Schriftzeichnen, Modellieren und Ziselieren hinzu. (...) Mit dem Machtantritt des Faschismus wurden der Vorsitzende des Studentenrates, der Kommunist Richard Hartwig, verhaftet und die antifaschistischen Lehrer Walter Heisig und Fritz Steinert entlassen. Nach der Befreiung öffnete die Schule mit Hilfe der Sowjetischen Militäradministration bereits im Oktober 1945 wieder ihre Pforten. Damit begann eine neue Etappe ihrer Entwicklung.⁷⁴

This article starts again with the long history of socialist tradition within German society. The rise of fascism in the 1930s is seen as a disruption of these traditions. Within the socialist society of the GDR these traditions can again prosper and grow. Another article about a small workers theatre group starts by appreciating the socialist ideals being promoted in a certain play. In describing the history of the group the long traditions of these socialist ideals are again featured prominently. Using the same narrative as the article mentioned above, the Nazis are seen as a disruption of these traditions. But after the war, and under socialism, the theatre group was in 1949 performing once again.⁷⁵

So far the historical narrative of the GDR sees the socialist society as a continuation of existing traditions and the logical next step in German history. This process was only temporarily disrupted by the Nazis. A few other important elements to strengthen the public transcript using a certain historical narrative can be found within the articles of *Neues Deutschland*. One of these aspects concerns the constant need to prove how much of an improvement life in the GDR is in comparison with earlier times. A recurring theme is how in earlier times the workers were suppressed in fulfilling their cultural and literary needs. In an article on the history of a Berlin library it is explained how in the 19th century, through

⁷⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Farbige Kompositionen in den Wohnvierteln', 09/04/81.

⁷⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Wo Lessing und Schadow Gast waren', 04/08/81.

careful selection of the reading material, the political elite tried to satisfy the literary needs of the citizens:

In Anlehnung an die Volksküchen der Armen wurden sie auch „literarische Suppenküchen“ genannt. In ihnen sah die feudal-bürgerliche Gesellschaft die Möglichkeit, das wachsende Bedürfnis der Arbeiterklasse nach Bildung oberflächlich und eingeschränkt zu befriedigen, das Volk im Geiste des preußischen Staates zu erziehen.⁷⁶

The workers could read, but only literature that the political elite thought safe: ‚Ein Zuviel an Bildung war von den Herrschenden nicht erwünscht, denn Lesen kann politisches Interesse wecken.‘⁷⁷ In the socialist society of the GDR the workers can finally cultivate all their cultural and literary needs. An almost ironic observation in the historical narrative of the SED, as they had more or less the same reasoning as the ‘Herrschenden’ to control the political education of its citizens.⁷⁸

Another often made comparison between GDR society and history is closely connected to the last observation. Not unsurprisingly, the place of workers in society is featured prominently in the public transcript. Not only the ability to enjoy the cultural and literary richness of German culture, also the conditions in which these workers are able to live and work are featured prominently: ‘Sie reicht bis in das vorige Jahrhundert. 1870 hatte in der heutigen Puccinistraße in Berlin-Weißensee der Unternehmer C. Müller eine neue Fabrik gebaut. Dieser Betrieb war wegen seiner schlechten Arbeitsbedingungen bald als eine „Knochenmühle“ berüchtigt.’⁷⁹ After this the article mentions the many modern adjustments made in the factory to better the life of the workers. Even though they have it much better now, the collective working in the factory tries to continually improve the working conditions: ‘In einem Rationalisierungsprogramm sind umfangreiche Aufgaben festgelegt, die Schritt für Schritt verwirklicht werden. Daran ist das gesamte Kollektiv beteiligt.’⁸⁰ The socialist politics of the GDR did not only make the workplace a better place for workers, it has also improved entire neighbourhoods. An article describing the history of

⁷⁶ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Hauswirtempfehlung für eine Ausleihe nicht nötig’, 21/04/81.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸ Christoph Kleßmann, *Rethinking the Second German Dictatorship*, 371.

⁷⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Weshalb das Gummiwerk eine Wanderfahne erhielt’, 27/08/81.

⁸⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Weshalb das Gummiwerk eine Wanderfahne erhielt’, 27/08/81.

Lichtenberg, a neighbourhood in Berlin, start by describing the neighbourhood in the era before socialism:

Um 1900 begannen sich in der Herzbergstraße und in ihrer Umgebung kapitalistische Fabriken breitzumachen. Arbeitskräfte wurden benötigt und auch einigermaßen billige Wohnungen. So entstanden mit der Industrie die Mietskasernen mit ihren Hinterhöfen. An das düstere Milieu dieser Zeit erinnern die Zeichnungen Heinrich Zilles, der damals in Lichtenberg zu Hause war.⁸¹

Earlier the neighbourhood consisted of cheap housing next to big factories, only to accommodate the capitalistic owners of these factories. Describing the often miserable living and working conditions before the socialist society of the GDR is often done in the articles of *Neues Deutschland*. Not only the paper is addressing this subject. For example an exhibition on historical photos of Berlin could also serve this purpose, another article shows:

Schwartz knipste auch das arbeitende Berlin, zeigte die schlimmste Schwitzbude: Borsigs Maschinenbauanstalt vor dem Oranienburger Tor. Deren Schornsteine schwarzen Rauch über die Spree spien. (...) Fahren Sie zurück zur Baustelle Bahnhof Börse (Marx-Engels-Platz) am Hackeschen Markt, und Sie sehen Bauarbeiter, die schauen selbstbewußt in die Kamera.⁸²

The historical narrative put forward in *Neues Deutschland* shows with many historical examples how the values of socialism are embedded in German history and culture. The systematic oppression that is intrinsic to a capitalist society was preventing workers from fully accessing and cultivating this socialist heritage. Comparing history to the GDR society of real existing socialism shows the improvements are irrefutable. Workers are no longer being exposed to dangerous working conditions. Citizens are able to fully experience culture and literature. The neighbourhoods of Berlin are no longer exposed to factories and their pollution. Looking at history and the GDR, there is no other conclusion than that the quality of life is higher than ever. The GDR and its socialist politics are the logical next step for German society. An inconvenience in this optimistic historical narrative is Nazi-Germany. The solution is to exclude it from the historical narrative, and to approach this sensitive subject

⁸¹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Hinter der Tür Regale gefüllt mit Geschichte', 08/07/81.

⁸² *Neues Deutschland*, 'Die Pferdebahn fährt gleich...', 27/10/81.

simply as a temporary disruption of the evolution of socialism in Germany. The strength of a selective, historical narrative lies in that it is a selection of truths. Working conditions were better in the GDR than 19th century Germany, as were the living conditions in neighbourhoods in Berlin. The SED actively promoted engagement of its citizens with (a selection of) culture and literature. The SED could, through its propaganda apparatus, dictate the content of the public transcript. By inserting some form of truth in the public transcript, the SED also made it more believable. The next part of this chapter will illustrate how the SED made the historical narrative in the public transcript richer and more accessible.

An interesting and effective way that the SED could both expand and give more depth to the socialist historical narrative is by letting society write their own history, of course under the supervision of the state. An example of this is an article telling about how a group of workers working at a lightbulb factory wrote about its history:

Unter dem Motto „Arbeiter machen Geschichte“ geben Bild- und Text-Tafeln Auskunft über die Entwicklung des Betriebes. So veranschaulichen sie die Praktiken der kapitalistischen Ausbeutung im früheren OSRAM-Konzernbetrieb und die Beteiligung der Glühlampenarbeiter am revolutionären Kampf. Insbesondere erfahren die Besucher des Kabinetts Interessantes über den Kampf der Werktätigen des BGW um höchste Arbeitsergebnisse unter sozialistischen Produktionsbedingungen.⁸³

From this quote it is obvious that the socialist point of view of history is well presented in the history of this factory. Another thing this article makes clear, is that the writing of this history was not without some influence from the party and its politics: ‘Die Ausstellung entstand in gemeinsamer Arbeit der Geschichtskommission der Parteileitung des BGW und von Teilnehmern am Weiterbildungslehrgang Marxismus/Leninismus 1980/81 der Betriebsschule.’⁸⁴ The article calls this historical exhibition within the lightbulb factory a ‘Traditionskabinett’. This phenomenon can be found multiple times in *Neues Deutschland*. It seems that any company would have some workers write up its history. Another article shows that these histories were no light reading material. The workers of a certain factory in

⁸³ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Traditionskabinett im Glühlampenwerk’, 08/04/81.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

Berlin have written their history down in three large books, consisting of hundreds of pages. The article mentions that with every page the reader gets closer to knowing the workers of the factory, and prominently features the happiness these workers enjoy in their work. Writing down their own socialist history brings these workers together.⁸⁵ It seems that besides writing down the history of a company within the socialist narrative, an additional goal was to make the workers feel more connected to their company.

The two goals of writing down a socialist narrative and deepening the connection the workers feel for their company is also illustrated in the example of a factory specializing in electrical products:

„Unsere Geschichte schreiben wir selbst.“ Wenn Arbeiter des VEB Bergmann-Borsig Berlin diesen Satz vor kurzem in ihrer Betriebszeitung zitierten, dann hat er gewissermaßen doppelte Bedeutung. Einmal deshalb, weil die Energiemaschinenbauer mit ihren Leistungen an der Geschichte unserer Republik mitgeschrieben haben. Zum anderen, weil sie jetzt unmittelbar dabei sind, all das zusammenzutragen, was sie selbst erlebt haben.⁸⁶

Of course socialist workers would have found it a honour to be able to contribute to writing down the history of their socialist republic. But probably more convincing on a personal level was to encourage people to write down their own part in their companies history. By appealing to this personal history workers would be more encouraged to writing this history, and at the same time contribute to expanding the socialist narrative on history. There is no doubt that these history writings would be supervised in some form by the SED. Through the exhibitions on these various histories the SED could actively engage workers with their socialist heritage.

These ‘Traditionskabinetten’ were not only used for pushing the socialist narrative. In addition to the work of Palmowski mentioned earlier, who wrote how the socialist ideals and notions of German ‘heimat’ were combined to make the GDR national identity more appealing to the general public, the articles in *Neues Deutschland* show that ‘heimat’ was also an recurring theme in these histories. Especially under Honecker the socialist heimat

⁸⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Brigadechronik in dicken Bänden’, 22/07/81.

⁸⁶ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Chronik derer, die Geschichte machen’, 22/10/81.

became an important part of the public transcript between the state and party on the one hand, and the citizens on the other.⁸⁷ An example that illustrates this is an article on students of a veterinarian school:

In einer dreibändigen Chronik haben Studenten der Ingenieurschule für Veterinärmedizin in Beichlingen, Kreis Sömmerda, die vielhundertjährige Geschichte des Ortes mit seinem Schloß festgehalten.⁸⁸

That fact that the school is located within the castle is a motive for the students to write down the history of the castle. At the same time it seems excessive for students learning to be veterinarians to write an extensive three part history on a German castle going back several centuries. The need for historical depth in the GDR, a country which in 1981 is celebrating its 32nd birthday, seems to be very high. This could also play a role in the next example, where a pharmacy in Berlin has an exhibition in its shopwindows illustrating its rich history: 'Einblicke in die Geschichte der Pharmazie geben die Mitarbeiter der Heinrich-Klaproth-Apotheke in der Leipziger Straße. Das Verweilen vor dem Fenster lohnt.' The focus on history was not limited to companies only, as the next example shows:

Zu einem Spaziergang über die Schloßinsel Köpenick laden bis Ende September jeden Freitag um 15 Uhr die Mitarbeiter des Heimatgeschichtlichen Kabinetts des Stadtbezirks ein. In einer einstündigen Führung informieren sie unter anderem über die wechselvolle Geschichte des Schlosses.⁸⁹

As with the 'Traditionskabinetten' within certain companies, apparently some neighbourhoods within Berlin had their own 'Heimatgeschichtlichen Kabinett', which function was to illustrate the rich German history and make sure that visitors would interact and identify with this history.

A notable observation regarding these different companies and organizations that are concerned with history is their names. After reading just some editions of *Neues Deutschland* one of the first things that catches the eye of the reader is the multiplicity of certain names that are connected to socialism. Parks, neighbourhoods, companies,

⁸⁷ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 110.

⁸⁸ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Dreibändige Chronik über Schloß Beichlingen', 18/06/81.

⁸⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Nach dem Spaziergang zum Kammerkonzert', 07/07/81.

organizations, anything that can be named, has a high probability of getting a name that is related to socialism. The reason for this also becomes clear from reading the next part of an article in *Neues Deutschland*, about two youth organizations receiving new names:

In Feierstunden wurden am Freitag der Jugendbrigade Klug vom Wohnungsbaukombinat Berlin die Urkunde zur Namensverleihung „Unteroffizier Klaus-Peter Seidel" und dem Jugendklub in Hönow die Urkunde für den Namen „Unteroffizier Egon Schultz" übergeben. Vertreter der neuen Namensträgerkollektive versicherten, daß sie alle Aufgaben im Geiste ihrer Vorbilder lösen und sich jederzeit des Ehrennamens würdig erweisen werden.⁹⁰

Klaus-Peter Seidel and Egon Schultz were two soldiers of the *Grenztruppen der Nationale Volksarmee* (NVA) that had been shot and killed while guarding the Inner German Border during an successful escape attempt by a NVA-deserter. The two youth organisations that would now carry their name had the task to keep their honour high. Another article of *Neues Deutschland* shows the connection between these given names to the socialist narrative on history: ‚Als die Schule vor fünf Jahren den Namen des sowjetischen Chefkonstruktors Tupolew erhielt, wurde ein mit viel Liebe gestaltetes Traditionszimmer eingerichtet.’⁹¹ After the school in this example had been given the name of a socialist hero, they created an ‘Traditionszimmer’, comparable with the earlier mentioned ‘Traditionskabinett’. Giving an organization, in this case a school, the name of a socialist hero to carry also came with the obligation to express the socialist ideals this person stood for. Giving out the names of socialist heroes had two functions: it reinforced and spread the socialist narrative on German history, while at the same time explicitly carried the obligation to the name bearers to express the socialist ideals embedded within this socialist narrative.

This chapter tries to illustrate the strengths of the socialist historical narrative that is essential to the public transcript, based on the articles in *Neues Deutschland*. If propaganda can be seen as fiction, the quality of this fiction determines the effectiveness. Even though based on only *Neues Deutschland* the reception of this fiction cannot be measured, it does show that the SED used several ways to build up this narrative in a believable way. By showing how far back the socialist traditions go in German history, this narrative implicitly

⁹⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Verpflichtende Namen für Jugendkollektive’, 07/03/81.

⁹¹ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Im Fachkabinett steht das Triebwerk einer TU’, 21/10/81.

underlines the legitimacy of GDR. Even though the state is only 32 years old in 1981, it is thoroughly grounded in German history. The many examples of improvements, regarding working conditions, the quality of life, or the high cultural engagement of GDR citizens, shows that socialism has only brought improvements, and thus is the next logical step in the development of German society. The fascist politics of the Third Reich are seen as a disruptive element in this long development of German society. A consequence of this narrative is that the GDR and the Third Reich are pictured here as opposites, as the one disrupts the other. Being the opposite of the Third Reich is of course never a bad portrayal. Part of the effectiveness in the socialist fiction of the SED is that it is based on some form of truth, but very much amplifying the socialist ideals by selectively choosing which subject in history to cover in the articles of *Neues Deutschland*.

Interesting is how the creation of the historical narrative in the public transcript is not a one-sided conversation. The SED actively encouraged companies, youth organisations, schools and others to contribute to the socialist narrative. By making society put their own work into the socialist narrative the historical dimension gained richness and believability. Another important aspects for the SED is the hope that on a personal level, these creators of the socialist narrative would gain an emotional connection to it. To strongly encourage the development of this narrative, any organization could be awarded to carry a honorary name of a socialist hero. This name came with the obligation to uphold the socialist values this person stood for. Practically, this meant the creation of many 'Traditionskabinetten' or 'Traditionszimmers', which can be seen as part of the many small transmitters of the public transcript.

3. Distributing the public transcript

Interaction is key within the theory of the public transcript. By interacting with, and not actively opposing to the public transcript the status quo was being reinforced. This probably would not be on the mind of the everyday GDR citizens just trying to live his or her life. For the individual citizen the compromise was relatively small. Simply by adhering to the public transcript set out by the SED a citizen could keep the state and party from interfering any more in their lives. Most GDR citizens would have known what the state and party were capable of and it would be a small sacrifice to keep these forces away.⁹² Especially considering that, excluding maybe a small personal circle, every citizen had to make this decision to follow the public transcript on its own. A paper like *Neues Deutschland*, as with any other media in the GDR, would never inform about the actual state of public opinion on the SED or its socialist politics.⁹³ Maybe most GDR citizens were fierce socialists. There was simply no way easy way of knowing. The absence of this knowledge on how other citizens thought about the socialist politics combined with the relatively small personal sacrifice that was adhering to the public transcript, the odds were in favour of the SED. This chapter will further examine how the SED tried to distribute the public transcript in GDR society.

A first observation after reading through the articles of *Neues Deutschland* that can be made is on how visible and accessible the public transcript was in everyday life. In the last chapter the use of certain names of people who had been of great value for socialism was mentioned, in relation to the obligation to uphold the socialist ideals that accompanied it. Another effect of naming a huge amount of companies, housing communities, organizations, streets and more after socialist heroes is the simple fact that in everyday life millions of GDR citizens must use these names. For instance if you take your kids to school at 'der Bruno-Baum-Oberschule in der Heinrich-Roller-Straße' you already mention two socialist heroes, according to the SED.⁹⁴ Or if you read about the opening of a new swimming pool: 'Am Anton-Saefkow-Platz im Neubaugebiet Leninallee/Ho-Chi-Minh-Straße wurde Freitag nachmittag eine neue Schwimmhalle eröffnet.'⁹⁵ Three heroes of socialism are being

⁹² Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 14.

⁹³ Anke Fiedler & Michael Meyen, *The steering of the press*, 468.

⁹⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Die Timurs vom Prenzlauer Berg', 06/02/81.

⁹⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Badefreuden in neuer Halle', 17/01/81.

mentioned just to illustrate where a swimming pool is located. It is not unusual for streets signs to be accompanied by a plaque to tell the story of this particular socialist hero, or an extra explanation in *Neues Deutschland*:

Paul von Essen — sein Name steht auf dem Straßenschild, auf einer Tafel am Haus Nr. 9 und einem Gedenkstein am Rande des stillen Platzes. Geboren am 1. März 1886, Schlosser im Kabelwerk Oberspree, Mitglied der SPD, ein Gewerkschaftssekretär, der selbstlos für die Interessen seiner Kollegen eintrat ...⁹⁶

With the use of so many names that are connected to socialism, it is probably inevitable that some of these are less known by the general public and require some explanation.

It is not surprising that the SED would name some of its streets after persons who had put in great effort for the socialist cause. Surprisingly uncharacteristic, *Neues Deutschland* is even very transparent on why streets and organizations carried the names of socialist heroes: 'Ihr Erbe ist lebendig, in Kollektiven, die ihre Namen tragen, in Schulen, in Forschungsaufträgen der Pioniere, im Leben des Stadtbezirkes.'⁹⁷ In addition to these socialist names many monuments can be found in Berlin. Where the many socialist names embody the positive socialist ideals, most monuments in Berlin seem to underline the high price some people have paid for these ideals:

Für den am 5. September 1917 ermordeten Revolutionär Albin Köbis, der maßgeblich am Matrosenaufstand 1917 gegen die Weiterführung des imperialistischen Krieges beteiligt war, wurde am Freitag an dessen Geburtshaus in Berlin-Pankow eine Gedenktafel enthüllt.⁹⁸

In the quote above the socialist Albin Köbis fought against the continuation of World War I. But the most mentioned culprits are understandably the fascists. Many examples can be found in *Neues Deutschland* of remembering and honouring anti-fascist who had stood up to the Nazi's and paid the highest price possible.⁹⁹ Many monuments honouring fallen anti-fascists can be found in the articles of *Neues Deutschland*. These monuments not only kept

⁹⁶ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Köpenicker Geschichte auf Straßenschildern', 04/03/81.

⁹⁷ Ibidem.

⁹⁸ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Eine Gedenktafel für Albin Köbis enthüllt', 12/09/81.

⁹⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Humboldt-Universität ehrte eine mutige Antifaschistin', 02/04/81.

the memory of the anti-fascist alive, it also had a mobilizing power. When the birthday came of one of the honoured anti-fascists, a ceremony was held and reported on in the paper:

Anlässlich des 60. Geburtstages der antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpferin Marianne Joachim legten am Donnerstag Studentinnen der 1. Pädagogischen Fachschule für Kindergärtnerinnen Berlin-Mitte am Gedenkstein für die Widerstandsgruppe Herbert Baum am Lustgarten ein Blumengebinde nieder.¹⁰⁰

Also larger monuments played an role in remembering, such as the place where in 1945 the capitulation of Nazi-Germany was signed:

Die Gedenkstätte Berlin-Karlshorst, wo in der Nacht vom 8. Zum 9. Mai 1945 die bedingungslose Kapitulation des faschistischen Deutschland unterzeichnet wurde, ist jährlich für Zehntausende Besucher ein Anziehungspunkt.¹⁰¹

Not only the monuments themselves were places of remembering, but their image could also be used to send out the same message, for instance with picturing them on stamps. Every month new special stamps were announced in the paper, often picturing a memorial of an anti-fascist, or embodying another socialist ideal.¹⁰²

Looking at the many socialist names embodying the socialist ideals, or the many monuments illustrating the high prices paid and horrors overcome, it becomes clear that with a simple walk through the centre of Berlin it is inevitable to interact in some way with the public transcript. It seems that the SED must have also realized this, since *Neues Deutschland* often promotes certain pleasant walking routes throughout the city. An article advocating a certain walk never fails to give some interesting historical perspective:

Es fügt sich ein in die Reihe alter Bürgerhäuser des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts. Der 1844 gegründete Berliner Handwerkerverein hatte es 1864 erbaut und später noch erweitert. Sophiensäle nannte man die großen Räume. Sie waren politischer Treffpunkt und zugleich Ort vieler Kampfdemonstrationen des Proletariats. Dort sprachen Führer der Arbeiterbewegung wie August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Paul

¹⁰⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Antifaschistin geehrt', 06/11/81.

¹⁰¹ *Neues Deutschland*, '1,2 Millionen Besucher Gedenkstätte Karlshorst', 20/06/81.

¹⁰² *Neues Deutschland*, 'Sonderpostwertzeichen', 15/01/81.

Singer, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg und Wilhelm Pieck. Zu den besonderen Ereignissen gehörten Parteitage der KPD, die dort stattfanden.¹⁰³

Besides making the city of Berlin closely connected to the public transcript to almost forcing interaction with the people living there, some other ways to distribute the public transcript can be found within the articles of *Neues Deutschland*.

One way the paper sought to inspire its readers with the values embedded in the public transcript was by giving them good examples of socialist citizens. In an often returning column called *Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle* the paper interviewed seemingly at random picked Berliners. In these articles the Berliners had a chance to talk about themselves and the world they were living in. These articles are arguably a good source for analysing the public transcript. It is very possible that the paper picked out the distinguished socialists of the city of Berlin for an interview. It is also possible that some of the interviewees were not hardcore socialists, but when confronted with a journalist of the official SED paper it would be unwise to not follow the public transcript. Furthermore, everything published in *Neues Deutschland* was thoroughly censored, so that even if people would say things at odds with the public transcript, the version that would be published would still follow to public transcript as idealized by the SED. In these articles the interviewees are portrayed as ideal socialists.

„Ich kenne sie schon viele Jahre, und da sind wir einer Meinung im Kollektiv: Wir können nur Gutes über sie sagen!“¹⁰⁴ This is quote regarding a worker at the *Elektro-Apparate-Werken* in Berlin. Concerning all the different articles on these local Berliners, this quote sums it up well: mentioning only good things. There are a few qualities that are highlighted and recurring when looking at these articles. ‘„Er ist rührig, hilfsbereit und hat gute Ideen für ein vielfältiges Leben im Wohngebiet.“ So charakterisiert ihn Werner Ruch, Vorsitzender des WBA 9 im Stadtbezirk Friedrichshain, der Gegend am Frankfurter Tor.’¹⁰⁵ These qualities are attributed to a member of a neighbourhood board. The next quote describes a worker at *Kombinat REWATEX*: ‚Ingrid Lehmann, die lange mit ihm in der Brigade „Luis Corvalán“ zusammen arbeitete, meint. „Auch beim größten Trubel, und der ist

¹⁰³ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Die S-Bahn auf dem Festungsgraben’, 12/08/81.

¹⁰⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Jederzeit für andere da’, 26/08/81.

¹⁰⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, ‘Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Immer an der Rolle sein’, 25/07/81.

hier nicht selten, behält er Übersicht, bleibt ruhig und besonnen."'¹⁰⁶ Another example of the often applied positive qualities is the next quote on a worker at *Berliner Strickmoden*:

Seine Tätigkeit in der Ständigen Kommission für bezirksgeleitete Industrie hat er auch dafür genutzt, den handwerklichen Strickereien unserer Stadt zu helfen, ihre Dienstleistungen für die Bevölkerung zu erhöhen. Was der Abgeordnete anpackt, das führt er auch zu Ende. Wo er hinkommt, ist er neugierig darauf, wie es die Besten machen. ‚Er ist ein Vermittler guter Erfahrungen‘¹⁰⁷

All these workers are competent in their work, come up with good ideas, stay calm facing challenges and are in general friendly and nice people. When these workers do something, they will do it right: „Wenn Bruno etwas anpackt, dann richtig“, urteilte Betriebsteildirektor Karl-Heinz Vollmer.¹⁰⁸

Besides their overall attitude towards life and work there are two other qualities that are often mentioned in these interviews. The first one regards their loyalty to their work. The articles look favourable upon long years of service, as with the article on a police officer in Berlin: ‘Seit nunmehr 17 Jahren ist Eberhard Koehler Angehöriger der VP und seit 1979 Abschnittsbevollmächtigter.’¹⁰⁹ The reason why this is important has to do with the relation a person can build with his environment in this span of time:

Sie betreuen jeweils einen Wohnblock, haben Kontakte zu den HGL-Vorsitzenden und gehen mit auf Streife. Monatlich treffen wir uns zu Schulungen." Rund 8000 Bürger wohnen im Dreh, darunter viele junge Leute. Nicht selten ist Eberhard Koehler in den beiden Kindergärten und -krippen und der Egon-Schultz-Oberschule zu Gast.¹¹⁰

Being grounded and active in the socialist society seems a very important aspect. The SED seems to encourage this behaviour with titles and prizes, for individuals and collectives. This can also be seen in the article in an interview of an editor of a paper and magazine:

Und als gewerkschaftliche Vertrauensfrau der Brigade „Einheit“ besitzt sie Anteil daran, daß der Titel „Kollektiv der sozialistischen Arbeit“ mehrfach verteidigt werden

¹⁰⁶ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Aktivist auch in Uniform‘, 07/07/81.

¹⁰⁷ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Hilft Neuerungen uns Licht‘, 30/05/81.

¹⁰⁸ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Damit der Transport rollt‘, 03/03/81.

¹⁰⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Die Sache mit den Trommeln‘, 27/01/81.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

konnte. „Genossin Riemer, sie erhielt 1979 den Vaterländischen Verdienstorden in Silber, ist immer freundlich und hilfsbereit, genießt Achtung im Kollektiv, behält auch im größten Trubel die Nerven“, meinte Brigadeleiterin Lydia Wolf. „Sie ist äußerst zuverlässig.“¹¹¹

The second quality, that is connected to their long service resulting in awards and titles, is their attitude towards this recognition: ‚Er selbst macht keine großen Worte von sich, der Delegierte zum X. Parteitag der SED, Bestarbeiter, Mitglied der Parteileitung von Steremat und der Kreisleitung der SED Prenzlauer Berg.‘¹¹² Humility is a quality greatly appreciated. It does not matter if a person has a high standing in socialist society with lots of recognition, or works somewhere lower in society, humility is a good quality to have, as the next example of a cook shows, who questions why she would be picked for an interview: ‚„Warum ich?“ Sie mache ihre Arbeit schließlich auch nur wie jeder andere in der Küche. Und offenbarte so noch einen weiteren Charakterzug: Bescheidenheit.‘¹¹³

Of course humility is not a quality only appreciated within socialist society. It would not be a wild assumption to state that in most cases humility is an appreciated quality. But within socialist society it serves another function. One of the most important values in society is solidarity. The reasons these workers go over and beyond to bring quality to their work is not because of the recognition or any awards, it is because there are living in a society based on solidarity. Being humiliated shows there are no other reasons for their good efforts than solidarity. It is an really important quality expressed in these articles. A first example is a baker: ‚Es wurde also, wie für jeden Bezirk unserer Republik, auch für die Hauptstadt ein Bäcker gebraucht, der ein von Getreidemehl freies Brot bäckt. Günter Kraska erfuhr davon. Er sagte sich, hier muß geholfen werden.‘¹¹⁴ In this example a baker in Berlin noticed that around 100 people living in the city could not eat standard bread because of an allergic reaction related to a rare disease. He sees a problem and acts on it, going so far as to dedicate one of his bakeries to make a special kind of bread. He is not the only one helping:

¹¹¹ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Pünktlichkeit — ihre Stärke‘, 02/07/81.

¹¹² *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Kennzeichen: Zuverlässigkeit‘, 01/10/81.

¹¹³ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Ein Herz für ältere Leute‘, 22/10/81.

¹¹⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Der Mann mit den Extrabrotten‘, 07/03/81.

Für das Verpacken und den Versand der Spezialbrote in die Randgebiete von Berlin hat sich eine DFD-Gruppe bereit erklärt. Die Hauptstädter holen das bestellte Brot aus den Reformläden. Nun läuft alles. Doch Bäckermeister Kraska hat Einfälle. Jetzt ist er dabei, dem Diäta-Werk zur Einsparung von Verpackungsmaterial zu verhelfen.¹¹⁵

This article is a good illustration of how society can work together to help even a relatively small number of people, and in doing so expressing their solidarity.

Expressing solidarity can be done in various ways. One person working at a transportation company thinks of a better system for trucks going in and out a transportation hub, and saves the company and the GDR lots of fuel on a yearly basis.¹¹⁶ Another group of persons dedicate their free time by helping out at a construction site where new houses are being build.¹¹⁷ A retired person goes out every evening to light up the gas streetlamps still being used in some areas.¹¹⁸ In all these examples the persons do this out of solidarity, they expect nothing in return. The woman in the next example works as an doctor in a hospital, and dedicates much of her free time to educate the citizens of Berlin on medical issues:

Gern gesehener Gast ist sie auch im Klub der Volkssolidarität, wo sie schon manchen Vortrag zu medizinischen Themen, die besonders ältere Menschen interessieren, gehalten hat. Ständigen Kontakt hat sie zu den Mitarbeitern des Rates des Stadtbezirkes und der Volkssolidarität.¹¹⁹

Much more examples of these citizens that show no restraint in manners of solidarity can be found in the interviews. As an underlying, motivating message these interviews can be seen to show that there is no excuse for not expressing solidarity with your fellow socialists. It does not matter if you're a baker, doctor or retired, there are always ways to be found to express solidarity. And if that is not possible within your job, there is always free time to be dedicated to this goal.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹¹⁶ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Damit der Transport rollt', 03/03/81.

¹¹⁷ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Auf ihn ist jederzeit Verlaß', 11/02/81.

¹¹⁸ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Zu Hause am besten vor 8 Uhr', 28/02/81.

¹¹⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Stets ist sie schnell zur Stelle', 07/04/81.

There are two other interesting things that can be noted from these interviews. The first one being the position of the workplace in the socialist society in the GDR. The part of this chapter regarding the interviews started with describing the many good qualities of the interviewees that are being shown in the articles. Remarkable is that in almost all these articles, the opinion of colleagues and supervisors is leading. Apparently for a *Neues Deutschland* journalist, the workplace was the obvious way to start if one wanted a good profile on a person. One could derive from this that the workplace was where people were being judged on their socialist values. The many different workplaces in the GDR could then function as a form of social control. This image is substantiated by the next example:

„Wenn man sich im Kollektiv wohl fühlt, macht es richtig Spaß mitzuziehen“, sagte Uwe-Bernd Arndt. „Jeder von uns überlegt, wie dieses und jenes noch verbessert werden kann, wie man noch ein bißchen mehr tun kann als notwendig.“ (...) „Weil wir sicher sind, daß unsere Interessen bei ihm in guten Händen liegen, haben wir ihn vom FDGB als Kandidaten der Nationalen Front für die Berliner Stadtverordnetenversammlung vorgeschlagen.“¹²⁰

A first observation is how in a good functioning workplace workers should help their colleagues if they are not performing at full capacity. A second observation is that the best performing worker can also be selected to represent the workplace in the Berliner politics. Obviously this would have been persons that had expressed their socialist values well. The correcting function of the workplace combined with a direct link to the socialist politics shows that the workplace could be a controlling factor in regards to the public transcript.

The second interesting observation from the interviews is the relation between younger and older workers in the socialist workplace. It seems an important aspect of the veteran workers to inspire and mobilize the youth. The next example is from the article of the baker: ‚Er fördert und fordert vor allem junge Facharbeiter. Und er meint: „Erst, wenn man sagt, Kraska ist gut, aber die, die er mit erzogen hat, sind noch besser — dann bin ich wirklich zufrieden.“‘¹²¹ He does not care that much about his own accomplishments, but he is really happy to see when young people are inspired by his work. In other interviews the

¹²⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Sorgt für Qualitätsarbeit‘, 23/05/81.

¹²¹ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Der Mann mit den Extrabrotten‘, 07/03/81.

same sentiment is being expressed.¹²² The interaction of these worker veterans with their younger colleagues is not limited to the workplace. Other articles mention how experienced workers use their free time to educate the youth¹²³ Some workers use other socialist associations to interact with the youth, for example this 92 year old veteran with his choir: ‚Wir waren auch schon mehrmals im neuerbauten Pionierpalast. Unsere Lieder, unser Kampfeswillen sind bei den Pionieren und FDJlern in guten Händen...‘¹²⁴ It seems part of their solidarity to spread their socialist ideals with the youth. The old veteran is very content with the fact that the youth is present at choir events, and that he sees that the socialist ideals are also present in the youth in the GDR.¹²⁵

The last part of this chapter will analyse the place of culture in the ideals of the SED, and its relation to distributing the public transcript. In the socialist ideology of the SED the engagement of citizens with culture was of the utmost importance. The idea was that by interacting with classical arts citizens would be inspired by the legacy of classical humanism, and because of this would automatically understand the value of socialism.¹²⁶ This legacy of classical humanism is what defines high culture in this chapter. From the founding of the GDR the SED exclusively promoted the interaction with forms of high culture. Seeing as this was not having the desired effect on the citizens of the GDR, the focus shifted towards forms of lower culture, or popular culture, so that a much larger portion of the population would be able to identify with this.¹²⁷ This has to be seen within the frame of the earlier mentioned new social contract that existed between the SED and GDR citizens, where a relaxation of hard socialist ideals and relatively more freedom in certain areas of society were being traded for civil obedience. The SED allowed more popular forms of culture to be present in the public sphere, but the downside of this was that the connection with the values of socialism was more than often vague, or completely lost. In the 1980’s socialist consumerism was well developed, and the emphasis was more than ever on keeping citizens happy than on the socialist values, which translated to the growing presence of popular culture in the

¹²² *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Immer an der Rolle sein‘, 25/07/81.

¹²³ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Sein Beruf ist auch Hobby‘, 05/04/81.

¹²⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Der Senior der Sänger‘, 18/04/81.

¹²⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, ‚Tüchtige Berliner im Dienst für uns alle: Die Mamita aus dem WF‘, 25/03/81.

¹²⁶ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 62.

¹²⁷ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 115.

media.¹²⁸ Nonetheless the articles in *Neues Deutschland* show that forms of high culture, and the engagement of citizens with it, was still featured prominently.

In an article describing the many possibilities that a certain Berlin library has for engaging with culture the article ends with citing various topics:

Ein Blick in das bildnerische Schaffen verschiedener Epochen macht nicht nur Freude, sondern regt auch zu vergleichender Betrachtung an. Ob man sich nun vom Symbolgehalt der Höhlenmalerei in der Urgesellschaft, von lichtüberfluteten Landschaftsschilderungen der französischen Impressionisten oder von den lebenssprühenden Selbstbildnissen alter Meister angerührt fühlt, ganz nach Wunsch kann man auswählen, was die eigenen vier Wände oder den Arbeitsplatz schmücken soll.¹²⁹

Readers of the paper are being encouraged to beautify their homes and workplaces with landscapes by French impressionists or self-portraits from the old masters. Not only individuals were encouraged in their engagement with culture. Through their workplaces workers were being mobilized to actively engage with culture:

1980 verhalfen in der Hauptstadt 246 000 Besucher und Aktive in 61 Großbetrieben, 108 Klein und Mittelbetrieben und 12 Landwirtschafts und Forstbetrieben ihren Festspielen zum Erfolg. Foren und Konferenzen wurden zum Erfahrungsaustausch über die betriebliche Kulturarbeit genutzt. Unter dem Motto „Freizeit, Kunst und Lebensfreude“ dokumentierten die Werktätigen ihre kulturell-schöpferischen Fähigkeiten in unterschiedlichen Ausstellungen, Theater- und Konzertabenden, Filmvorführungen, Tanzveranstaltungen für Jugendliche sowie Matineen für Schichtarbeiter.

By creating a festival in which many companies and their workers are participating to set up exhibitions, theatre plays, concerts and more, thousands of people are actively engaging with culture, and the many more visitors going to these cultural events were also being

¹²⁸ Anke Fiedler & Michael Meyen, *The steering of the press*, 465.

¹²⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Ein Rembrandt aus der Artothek', 17/04/81.

engaged. These large events were often placed within the framework of the cultural development of the GDR society, as a organizer of a chess tournament tells:

Wir Schachsportler wollen uns damit einreihen in die Sportstafette X. Parteitag, um den wachsenden kulturellen Bedürfnissen der Werktätigen unserer Hauptstadt und der damit verbundenen Forderung nach einem höheren Niveau des Wettkampfbetriebes und der Erweiterung der volkssportlichen Aktivitäten gerecht zu werden.¹³⁰

Berlin had a standing committee that oversaw the cultural development of the workers in the capital. According to *Neues Deutschland* the main goal of this committee was 'der weiteren Ausprägung der Arbeitskultur und der Befriedigung der kulturellen Bedürfnisse der Werktätigen.'¹³¹ Expressing the workers culture and satisfying the cultural needs of the workers in the GDR were two different things. Workers culture was best expressed by the legacy of humanism in classical arts, but the needs of the citizens of the GDR were more grounded in forms of popular culture. Even though the growing focus on popular culture in the GDR was not in line with the socialist ideology, it was an opportunity for the SED to interact with its citizens. This interaction could still be used to express the socialist values. With the use of popular culture a much larger audience was being attracted. This presented an excellent opportunity for the SED to instil socialist values on this large group of citizens. The problem was that the connection to the socialist values was less obvious in popular culture. Sometimes forms of popular culture, such as a music quiz and dance night, were being combined with more sophisticated forms of culture. An article explains how at one location visitors could enjoy movies in a theatre, join in on dancing activities and participate in a quiz. At the same time they could listen to a presentation about the connection between music and literature, view modern textile print designs at an exhibition and visit an display on industrial ceramics.¹³²

Not only forms of high culture were used for expressing socialist values. A more often seen way to include socialist values in popular culture in *Neues Deutschland* is by combining fun activities under a socialist theme. Take for example the *Marzahner Frühling*, a week of

¹³⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Brett an Brett mit der Muse Caissa', 24/01/81.

¹³¹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Großer Aufschwung der Volkskunstbewegung', 14/05/81.

¹³² *Neues Deutschland*, 'Gewürzt mit Paprika', 07/01/81.

festivities to celebrate the coming of summer in a certain Berliner neighbourhood. The week starts off with a ball for classical music and disco's for the youth. Other activities include minigolf, a bowling competition with fun prices, and the younger children can watch children shows, play games and tinker.¹³³ The festival looks to be fun for anyone. But there is always a main event that is related to socialism, as with the case of the *Marzahner Frühling*: 'Zu den Höhepunkten am Sonnabend zählen die feierliche Vereidigung von Soldaten auf dem Sportplatz in der Heinrich-Rau-Straße, der Auftritt des „Erich-Weinert-Ensembles" der NVA sowie das Männerchor-Konzert mit 120 Mitwirkenden.'¹³⁴ Comparable to the festivities of the *Marzahner Frühling* another neighbourhood in Berlin celebrates the end of summer, with accessible and fun activities for everybody. But the festivities of the *Köpenicker Summer* are not without a socialist theme. Besides the activities there is a parade based on the legend of a local hero called *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick*. In 1906 he put on a Prussian uniform and with the help of some soldiers under his 'command', confiscated a large sum from the city's treasury: 'Reich ist er dadurch nicht geworden, aber preußischen Untertanengeist hat er der Lächerlichkeit preisgegeben.' It makes fun of the Prussian mentality to follow orders, and in extension the militarism of that age. Another example of these accessible forms of cultural events under the banner of socialism is the *ND-Pressesfest*, a festival organized by *Neues Deutschland* to celebrate 'der Kultur und Unterhaltung, des Tanzes und des Sports.'¹³⁵ The activities include 'eine Wasserparty und eine Familienmatinee.'¹³⁶ The theme of the festivities is 'die Solidarität mit den um Frieden und Freiheit kämpfenden Menschen aller Erdteile...'¹³⁷

This chapter serves to examine some ways that can be found in the paper *Neues Deutschland* of how the public transcript was distributed within the society of the GDR. The first observation was about the accessibility of the socialist narrative in society. The examples of the street names and monuments in Berlin show that the socialist narrative was inescapable in everyday life. The SED made the space in Berlin socialist, and by doing so forced all Berliners to interact with it. Most street names were to remember certain socialist heroes and the ideals that they lived by, while the monuments seem to concentrate on the

¹³³ *Neues Deutschland*, "'Marzahner Frühling" lädt zu Musik und Tanz', 16/05/81.

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, 'ND-Pressesfest am 20. Und 21. Juni, 15/05/81.

¹³⁶ *Neues Deutschland*, 'ND-Pressesfest am 20. Und 21. Juni, 15/05/81.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*.

high price some had paid to stand by these ideals. The fact that throughout 1981 several articles in the paper suggest nice walking routes through the city, and casually mentioning places of socialist significance, suggests the SED was aware of the effect a socialist environment could make on people. Another way the public transcript was distributed was by showing good examples of socialist citizens. The many interviews in *Neues Deutschland* with seemingly random Berliners showcase the same qualities a good socialist should have: capable at his or her job, calm under pressure, loyal to his or her job, being humble and always showing solidarity with his or her fellow workers. The fact that every time colleagues were the source of these qualities, implies that workplaces could function as form of social control, where workers should show their socialist qualities. Another interesting point seems to be the obligation of veteran workers to inspire and motivate their younger counterparts. Of course the expression of all these qualities in the largest paper of the GDR is another important method of distributing the public transcript.

The traditional focus in socialist ideology on classical arts and humanism to inspire people to become socialist is also present in the paper. Often exhibitions, art installations and other forms of high culture were subject of the articles, and citizens were being encouraged to engage with this either by addressing the individual in the paper, or by organizing large cultural events through the many workplaces in Berlin. But the presence of forms of popular culture are also present in the paper. Examples can be found of a combination of the two, where a quiz or dance is adjacent to an exhibition on some higher form of art. But more common were the cultural events catered to a broad audience, and placing them under the banner of socialism. This means that even the examples of playing minigolf or going to a pool party, were made part of a socialist celebration. By attending and participating in these events, people implicitly accepted the status quo. The SED purposefully made everything about socialism, and by doing so made the socialist public transcript inescapable in everyday life. Over and over people in the GDR had to accept this socialist public transcript, and in extension of this also accepted the power the SED had over the socialist society.

4. Organizing society

The public transcript can be seen as a form of communication. The values that are embedded within this transcript are being transmitted by the SED to the GDR society. In the last chapter some ways that the SED tried to transmit the socialist public transcript were examined. This chapter aims to focus on the other end of the transmission, and look more closely at how GDR society was organized so that the message would be well received. From the many articles in *Neues Deutschland* on various topics it is possible to highlight some of the organizing aspects that would be beneficial for the reception of the public transcript in GDR society. A first observation can be made on how people are being addressed in the paper. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, *Neues Deutschland* often encouraged people to take interesting walks through Berlin. A few times in 1981 they organized their own walks, and invited readers of the paper to join in. The same invitation can be found multiple times in the paper, the blanks were to be filled in by the reader: 'Unser Kollektiv ... (Brigade, Hausgemeinschaft, FDJ- oder Pioniergruppe) nimmt mit etwa ... Wanderfreunden an de ND-Wanderung am 27. September teil.'¹³⁸ Another example regards the possible visitors to a sport event: 'So finden Familien, Brigaden und Hausgemeinschaften zu gleicher Zeit Möglichkeiten, sich an Turnieren und Wettkämpfen der verschiedensten Sportarten zu beteiligen.'¹³⁹ The paper preferably refers to the organizing forms specific to a socialist society, and not so much to the individual. The terms used are often family, brigades and housing communities. An effect this could have on readers is that they start to look at society in the same terms as dictated by the paper. But it is not only the fact that readers are often addressed in these terms, more interesting is that *Neues Deutschland* provides examples on how these organizing forms should behave.

Take the example of housing communities. In an article in January on a newly constructed housing block, a few families moving into a new flat are the subject of an article. After listing the many new facilities in their neighbourhood, the article describes how they started living together:

¹³⁸ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Teilnahmemeldung', 09/09/81.

¹³⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Den Wellenmachern und Eismeistern zugeschaut', 18/04/81.

Man begann mit dem Nächstliegenden, stellte einen Reinigungsplan für jeden Aufgang auf, begann die Altstoffe zu erfassen. Wandzeitungen informierten, wie die HGL sich Ordnung, Sicherheit und Sauberkeit im Haus vorstellt. Auch reifte natürlich der Wunsch, sich zu geselligen Veranstaltungen zu treffen. Im Keller eignet sich ein Raum, um dort einen Hausklub einzurichten, schlugen Mieter vor.¹⁴⁰

The main theme of the article seems to illustrate how well these families work together. In harmony the families live and work together. Another article in April also illustrates how a socialist housing community should function:

Was macht eigentlich eine Hausgemeinschaft aus? Man kennt einander, sorgt für Sauberkeit im und vor dem Haus, spricht über Freuden und Sorgen, nimmt teil an allem, was in der Welt und im Kietz geschieht. Und die Rentner fühlen sich geborgen, weil sich auch Nachbarn um sie kümmern.¹⁴¹

These articles illustrate the emphasis in *Neues Deutschland* of giving examples to the readers of the paper on how they should function well in a socialist society. They take care of each other and their homes, but also make sure that there is quality time with each other. Almost the same choice of words as in the previous two examples can be found in June:

Was eine gute Hausgemeinschaft wert ist, zeigt sich an vielen Beispielen. Da wird die Umgebung des Hauses saubergehalten, werden Verschönerungsarbeiten und Reparaturen von den Mietern durchgeführt, wird so manches dafür getan, daß man sich wohl fühlt. Und man feiert gemeinsam.¹⁴²

Knowing that the content of *Neues Deutschland* was determined by the SED it is probably no coincidence that throughout the year the same kind of article can be found. The articles amplify certain qualities that every housing community should have according to the SED. Keeping the house clean and tidy, make sure that repairs are carried out, take care of your neighbours and bond together as a community. It is plausible that by addressing readers of *Neues Deutschland* in terms of brigades and housing communities, they themselves also started to see society in these constructions. The emphasis on this would then make them

¹⁴⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Mit dem Grün vorm Haus begann das Miteinander', 29/01/81.

¹⁴¹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Was sich hinter einer Zahl verbirgt', 09/04/81.

¹⁴² *Neues Deutschland*, 'Damit man sich wohl fühlt', 10/06/81.

more recipient for the public transcript, in this specific case the examples of how housing communities should live.

Another group that deserves special attention in *Neues Deutschland* is the youth of the GDR. There are a few notable ways of structuring society that can be found in the paper that would be beneficial for the public transcript. The importance of learning the youth socialist ideals is illustrated in a speech being given to new students of the Humboldt Universität in Berlin:

Gerade in einer Zeit zugespitzter internationaler Klassenauseinandersetzungen sind wissenschaftlich begründete politisch-weltanschauliche und moralische Positionen im Sinne des Klassenstandpunktes der Arbeiterklasse notwendiger denn je.¹⁴³

Instilling socialist ideals on the youth started from a very young age. One way children could learn about the importance of socialism was by letting them work. An article describes how children from a certain school worked on a field of a thousand square meters by planting seeds. The children, aged between seven and eleven, are learning good qualities such as discipline, diligence and order. Besides these learning these qualities, the children discover that hard work makes them content and proud, according to the article.¹⁴⁴ Other articles describe how children from a certain school make preparations for a day of solidarity. For months they have been preparing to raise funds for the solidarity fund, for example by making art and then selling it:

Ein Abend, wie man ihn an vielen Schulen und in Klubs der Wohngebiete erleben kann. Er ist ein Ausdruck dafür, daß der Gedanke der Solidarität schon bei den Jüngsten fest verwurzelt ist. Solidarität wächst nicht zuletzt in solchen Stunden.¹⁴⁵

Other means of learning children about socialism is by letting them interact with veterans:

Der Antifaschist Arnold Munter erzählt Pankower Pionieren aus seinem Leben. Der Vorsitzende- des Kreiskomitees der Antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer In Berlin-

¹⁴³ *Neues Deutschland*, '5000 neue Studenten an der Berliner Alma Mater', 09/09/81.

¹⁴⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Keine Winterruhe im Schulgarten', 04/02/81.

¹⁴⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Kleine Künstler mit Engagement', 11/02/81.

Pankow nahm als Arbeiterjunge (dritter von links) an einer Demonstration während der Novemberrevolution 1918 teil.¹⁴⁶

Other examples found are a sport competition in which young children and army personnel participated, so that the values of the army can be passed down on the youth.¹⁴⁷ Or the many organisations concerning socialist responsible holiday activities for children.¹⁴⁸

Parents are also repeatedly made aware that their children should develop into good socialist. One article starts by painting a picture of children at a playground. The parents are watching their young children play. According to *Neues Deutschland*, even at that young age parents should think about their future profession. The article states that mothers and fathers that care about their children, make sure to encourage their talents and interest in a possible future job.¹⁴⁹ Parents are made aware that even at a young age, their kids should be working towards developing the right skills for their future job. And the state can help:

Am Freitag, dem letzten Schultag vor den Herbstferien, erhalten die Jugendlichen der 10. Klassen ihre Bewerbungskarten, Diesen 14 000 Schülern stehen in unserer Stadt Ausbildungsplätze in 172 Berufen zur Auswahl. Die Mehrheit der Mädchen und Jungen hat sicher schon die richtige Wahl getroffen und dafür die Ratschläge der Eltern, der Pädagogen, der Betriebe und Berufsberatungszentren genutzt.¹⁵⁰

The examples above show that children are interacting with the socialist ideals from a very young age on. Parents are made aware of the fact that if their children are going to succeed in the socialist society, they should start thinking about their future jobs at a young age. The state can help by finding the right choice in the form of organizing career guidance.

By organizing career guidance through various organisations the SED can have further influence on these children and their parents. This is an example of how the SED organized society. From the articles of *Neues Deutschland* it becomes clear that this was not limited to the education of children. On the contrary, the level of organisation in the GDR society is very high. An article in December on the earlier set targets for that year shows how many

¹⁴⁶ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Lebensnahe Geschichtsstunde', 03/03/81.

¹⁴⁷ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Sport und Spiel gemeinsam mit den Soldaten der NVA', 24/02/81.

¹⁴⁸ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Mädchen und Jungen erleben abwechslungsreiche Ferien', 18/02/81.

¹⁴⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Vermittlungsstellen für die Zukunft', 21/03/81.

¹⁵⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Von 172 den Richtigen wählen', 15/10/81.

organisations were functioning in Berlin. According to *Neues Deutschland*, Berliners had organized themselves in over 29.000 different groups. These groups were coordinated by another 2300 departmental organizations.¹⁵¹ Often articles can be found that mention the high number of organisations, and how this number is growing. Another article celebrates the fact that since 1976 the number of art collectives in Berlin has risen from 38 to 122. The newspapers also makes it clear that the creation of such groups was organized from within the SED. Articles can be found that bring the news of how many new groups should be made within the next year. For example the number of youth organisations had to grow by 360 for the year 1981.¹⁵² Remarkable is the various topics these organisations are concern. In the examples above artists and youth organisations were the subject. There were also organisations dedicated to German-Soviet friendship, which had very high number of members:

In den rund 1900 Grundeinheiten der Hauptstadt begannen in diesen Tagen die Jahreshauptversammlungen. Dort halten die 450 000 DSF-Mitglieder Rückschau auf Geleistetes und debattieren neue Aufgaben, Dabei wenden der Vielfalt keine Grenzen gesetzt.¹⁵³

Other examples include organisations dedicated to spending time with the elderly¹⁵⁴ or an organisation of people gardening in allotments.¹⁵⁵ Even people that needed advice on how to properly maintain their aquariums had multiple organisations to choose from: 'Wer Rat braucht, sollte sich ihn bei einer der Fachgruppen für Aquaristik beim Kulturbund holen. In acht Stadtbezirken bestehen bereits solche Gruppen.'¹⁵⁶

The reason why it is so interesting that GDR society had such an high level of organisation, has to do with how these organisations saw themselves, or should see themselves according to the SED. The next example is of an ice-skating club in Berlin. The way they saw themselves within the socialist society includes more than only ice-skating:

¹⁵¹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Aufgaben für 1982 gemeinsam mit den Werktätigen beraten', 19/12/81.

¹⁵² *Neues Deutschland*, '122 Volkskunstkollektive', 06/08/81.

¹⁵³ *Neues Deutschland*, "'Siberische Jagdhütte" in einem Pankower Kietz', 22/10/81.

¹⁵⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Die Timurs vom Prenzlauer Berg', 06/02/81.

¹⁵⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Kleingärtner der Hauptstadt zeigen Fruchte ihrer Arbeit', 18/09/81.

¹⁵⁶ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Das Steckenpferd im Aquarium', 30/09/81.

Die Leitung fühlt sich mitverantwortlich für das kulturelle Leben im angrenzenden Wohngebiet — die Gegend um den Ostbahnhof bis hin zur Karl-Marx-Allee. (...) Besonders die Kinder der Unterstufe nutzen die Filmvorführungen, die jeden Dienstag für sie auf dem Programm stehen. Regelmäßig lädt der Jugendklub zu Tanzabenden, Vorträgen und Diskussionsrunden. Filmdiskotheken, Jugend- und Kinderfasching werden für die Schüler veranstaltet.¹⁵⁷

The fact that this ice-skating club also organised movie nights, lectures and discussion evenings shows that it had more influence in society than just leisure and sport. Earlier in this thesis historical literature has been cited that showed there was almost no limit to how far the state reached within the life of its citizens. This makes it almost undeniable that the lectures and discussion evenings, especially since they are being mentioned in *Neues Deutschland*, were completely in line with SED ideology. The quote above could also function as an example to other organisations in GDR society, to show that there are many ways an organisation could profile itself in the GDR.

The fact that the SED actively promoted the cultural engagement of its citizens was mentioned earlier. Another effort of the SED was to actively encourage people to pursue private hobbies. The idea was that people happily pursuing their hobbies would create an emotional attachment to their surroundings. Since they were living in the state of real existing socialism, this would mean an emotional attachment with socialism.¹⁵⁸ Another reason for encouraging private hobbies could be the fact that for every hobby there was an organisation in the GDR where these people could come together, for example people with aquariums. In some form of way these organisations would be under the supervision of the SED. The huge and growing number of socialist organisations thus means that citizens were interacting more and more with the public transcript. By promoting cultural engagement and private hobbies, and creating for each of these numerous socialist organisations, the SED was making society more perceptive for the public transcript. This meant that the SED authority had to be more often confirmed and the socialist values embedded in the public transcript had more opportunity to influence people.

¹⁵⁷ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Ein Schienenstrang zur Kultur nach Feierabend', 25/11/81.

¹⁵⁸ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation*, 116.

The last part of this chapter concerns the role of recognition and awards in the socialist society of the GDR. In the second chapter of this paper the use of honorary socialist names was examined. It could function as recognition for expressing socialist values and at the same time function as an obligation to uphold the values the socialist name stood for. From the articles in *Neues Deutschland* there seems another mechanism applied to motivate society to express or embody the values in the public transcript. Throughout the year 1981 many citizens, companies and organisations have been awarded for their various accomplishments. A transformer plant in Berlin has with the help of a youth organisation exceeded their prospected goals and are awarded with an honorary banner by the SED.¹⁵⁹ Another company has successfully incorporated methods that save money and energy, and are likewise being awarded:

Er arbeitet in einem Kollektiv, das sich mit der Anwendung sowjetischer Neuerermethoden und Rationalisierungsmittel beschäftigt. Für ihre erfolgreiche Tätigkeit wurden die Kollektivmitglieder auf der Zentralen Messe der Meister von morgen in Leipzig mit einer Ehrennadel der Gesellschaft für Deutsch-sowjetische Freundschaft ausgezeichnet.¹⁶⁰

Not only reaching the own goals of a company is important. Also institutions, such as the chambre of trade in Berlin had been awarded for their high contribution to the solidarity fund:

Die Handwerkskammer Berlin und ihre Kreisgeschäftsstelle Prenzlauer Berg sind mit einem Ehrengeschenk des Solidaritätskomitees der DDR ausgezeichnet worden. In den vergangenen vier Jahren überwiesen die Berliner Handwerker und Gewerbetreibenden 8,7 Millionen Mark zugunsten der antiimperialistischen Solidarität.¹⁶¹

Besides companies and institutions private citizens can also be awarded. For example for their voluntary work: Für hervorragende Leistungen im Wettbewerb „Schöner unsere

¹⁵⁹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Große Vorratskammer für Sand, Kies und Splitt', 15/01/81.

¹⁶⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, '15.000. Besucher in der UdSRR-Ausstellung', 17/01/81.

¹⁶¹ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Handwerkskammer Berlin für Solidarität geehrt', 13/03/81.

Hauptstadt Berlin — Mach mit!" wurden am Dienstag im Wappensaal des Roten Rathauses 164 verdienstvolle Bürger mit der Ehrennadel der Nationalen Front in Gold geehrt.¹⁶²

Many examples of awards being given out can be found in *Neues Deutschland*. Even school children could earn medals for excellent work: '1980 konnten 672 Lessingmedaillen vergeben werden an Mädchen und Jungen, die ausgezeichnete schulische Ergebnisse aufweisen konnten.'¹⁶³ Citizens who showed great effort to recycle, and thus saved the GDR money and energy, were also being recognized:

Bürger, die vorbildliche Leistungen beim Sammeln von Sekundärrohstoffen und bei der Erfassung von Futtermitteln vollbracht haben, wurden am Mittwoch auf einer Auszeichnungsveranstaltung des Rates des Stadtbezirkes Berlin-Mitte geehrt.¹⁶⁴

Besides the examples of awards being given out in the GDR shown above, companies and organisations were also in competition with each other for honorary titles. One of these titles also included the quality mark 'Q' that companies could obtain if everything was up to the highest standards:

Mit dem Titel „Betrieb der ausgezeichneten Qualitätsarbeit" wurde am Freitag der VEB Elektroprojekt und Anlagenbau Berlin ausgezeichnet. Alle Haupterzeugnisse, darunter Antriebe für Werkzeugmaschinen, für Kraft-, Walz- und Zementwerke, tragen das Höchste Gütesiegel.¹⁶⁵

Sometimes the competition was not limited to companies only. In the next example are companies, housing communities and garden allotment organisations all in the running for a socialist title:

Mit dem Titel „Bereich der vorbildlichen Ordnung und Sicherheit" wurden dieser Tage im Stadtbezirk Berlin-Treptow 24 Betriebskollektive, 28 Wohnbezirke und eine Kleingartenanlage ausgezeichnet. Sie gehören zu den insgesamt 2307 Treptower

¹⁶² *Neues Deutschland*, 'Verdienste wurden gewürdigt', 22/04/81.

¹⁶³ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Vor dem Preis steht der Fleiß', 06/05/81.

¹⁶⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Tüchtige Sammler wurden ausgezeichnet', 01/10/81.

¹⁶⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Betrieb erhielt Qualitätstitel', 11/04/81.

Betriebskollektiven und Wohnbezirken, die den Kampf um diesen Titel mit Erfolg geführt oder bereits mehrfach verteidigt haben.¹⁶⁶

The SED could award any type of organisation in GDR society with titles and recognition based on their expression of socialist values. This highlights another aspect of the public transcript. The SED did not only try to make the public transcript inescapable in everyday life in the GDR, but also let different elements in society compete against each other in how much they embodied the values in the public transcript. This would not only motivate true socialists to be even more vocal in expressing their ideals, but would also force for example housing communities who did not care too much about socialism or politics in general, to put some effort in expressing the ideals of socialism. It is almost as if the SED applied the market forces of capitalism to the idealistic realm of socialist politics. By organizing the expression of socialist ideals in a competitive way, society would motivate itself to interact with and adhere to the socialist ideals embedded in the public transcript.

¹⁶⁶ *Neues Deutschland*, 'Vorbildliche Kollektive wurden ausgezeichnet', 05/05/81.

Conclusion

For some East-Germans the portrayal of the GDR as shown in this thesis would have been nothing more than flagrant lies, pushed forward by a repressive dictatorship. For others it would have been the world as they knew and loved it, admittedly not perfect, but based on sound principles. It can be no surprise that if the citizens of the GDR could have different perspectives on the lives they were living, the historical works done on this subject show different historical narratives. The strength of the theory of the public and private transcript in relation to the history of the GDR lies in the fact that it can differentiate these narratives and bring them together. In this thesis the aim was to elaborate on the content, the credibility, the distribution and reception by society of the public transcript as dictated by the SED. The reason that the citizens of the GDR could argue with the SED was because the discrepancy between the public transcript and reality was growing. The more the SED could not keep its promises, the more bargaining power the GDR citizens obtained.

The GDR was portrayed as a nation under threat of imperialistic forces, only kept at bay by the politics of socialism. Through solidarity within the country and with other socialist nations around the world they would prosper. The SED guarded the socialist politics and by doing so took care of all the needs of the citizens of the GDR, which in turn thanked the state and its socialist policies. The foundation of the socialist society of the GDR was solidarity. Even though this worldview consisted mainly on an idealized version as portrayed in the propaganda by the SED, it could get very real for any East-German if they needed to interact with the state, or had a suspicion that a state functionary was present.

Seeing propaganda as a form of fiction, the quality of this fiction would determine its effectiveness. The SED put great effort in telling a believable story. By showing the long history of socialist traditions and values in German history, it underlined its own legitimacy. It could show just how much life had improved under socialism by comparing workplaces and living conditions to Berlin before the GDR. Other historical examples are used to show that the citizens of the GDR can finally fully engage with their cultural heritage. Interesting is how these narratives on German history are partly being written by society itself. Organisations, companies and neighbourhoods can create 'Traditionszimmers' or 'Traditionskabinetten' to showcase their history and ties with the socialist traditions and

values. This behaviour can be encouraged by the SED by giving honorary socialist names with the obligation to remember and uphold the socialist ideals these persons stood for.

From the articles in *Neues Deutschland* it becomes clear how inescapable the public transcript was in everyday life. Beside naming organisations or companies after distinguished socialists, the same is being done with street names and buildings. Combined with the many monuments in Berlin remembering the sacrifices of other socialists, the SED made the actual space in Berlin part of the public transcript. This forces Berliners to interact with it on a daily basis. Other ways to distribute the values embedded in the public transcript to society was to give good examples in the paper. The many interviews show the true socialists in Berlin. The many good qualities expressed in these interviews could inspire others to follow their example. These interviews also highlight the position of the workplaces in GDR society as the place where socialist values were being expressed, and if necessary corrected. In two ways cultural engagement was used to distribute the public transcript. In socialist ideology the engagement with classical arts and its humanistic legacy would inspire people to become socialists. Examples of this can be found in the paper, but it seems more common to use popular forms of culture under the banner of socialism. The value of inspiring people to become socialists is then lost, but it seemed more important for the SED that people acknowledged socialism and thus their power, than to instil socialist values in 1981.

The paper also gives an interesting insight in how the society of the GDR is structured. There are a few aspects which would influence the reach of the public transcript. First of all seeing society not as individuals, but as families, brigades and housing communities. Examples are being given for how these structures should behave. In the example of the housing communities, the exact same description of an idealized version of a housing communities is being given on three separate occasions throughout 1981. Another aspects is the emphasis of exposing children to the socialist ideals. Through their schools, holiday organisations, career guidance and more children are engaged with the socialist ideals. Parents are made aware of the importance of the development of their children with these ideals. A third aspect is simply the huge number of organisations in GDR society, and the constant emphasis on increasing this number. By encouraging people to join these various organisations and participate in their activities, the SED can increase its influence and make the public transcript even more inescapable. In the introduction of this thesis the

term *Ostalgie* was explained: the longing back to the GDR of former GDR-citizens. The high level of organisation coordinated from within the state would collapse with the fall of the GDR. For the everyday citizen, this could mean the simultaneously collapse of large parts of their social life, and for a part explain their longing back to these days.

The SED made their ideology inescapable in everyday life to instil the socialist values on their citizens. Could the same be said for liberal democracies during the Cold War? Maybe to a lesser extent than in the GDR, but it is very plausible that for example the FRG would display the norms and values of a liberal democracy in their public spheres. The theory of public and private transcripts tries to differentiate between how a nation sees itself ideally, and how citizens on a personal level interpret this identity, regardless which political orientation a certain nation has. It is known that for a large part national identities are mostly constructed identities, based on parts of history that suit this identity best. By approaching this identity in the form of a public transcript, in other words a fiction, the constructed part of this identity can be exposed. National identities are a big part of how people see themselves, and the theory of the public transcript has proven itself a useful tool to better understand how these identities are build up. Especially in a dictatorship which forces a certain identity on its citizens, but no doubt useful in uncovering the constructed parts of any identity.

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