

East Schooling And West Watching
Effect of West German Television on Young East Germans

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Scholars have argued that no area of East German society more decisively formed the “socialist citizen” than education, and the monolithic nature of this socialist education serves as a testament to such indoctrination (Rodden 2002, pg. 9). The socialist principles of Marxism-Leninism were the underpinning of all curricula in the 10-year polytechnic school system of East Germany (which will be abbreviated in this paper as the GDR), and almost every young person in the GDR enrolled in these institutions (Rodden 2002, p. 15; Rodden 2006, p. xviii). These polytechnic schools covered grades one to ten, providing an education geared toward vocational training and work-study programs in industry; thus, students were provided with the proper technological skills and instruction in the socialist worldview to become productive members of the state’s working class, which Marxist-Leninist principles heralded (Augustine 2007, p. 204)

The Marxist-Leninist principles in these polytechnic school curricula were historical materialism and political economy, principles directly opposed to the capitalist principles that students were able to clandestinely view through the West German television programs they watched each day. Historical materialism works on the assumption that the whole of human history is a series of class struggles over a society’s means of economic production, which the working class will eventually win in a revolution against the upper classes (Nothnagle 1999, p. 15). Marxist-Leninist political economy posits the capitalist exploitation of the working class as a basis for the special mission of the working class to form a classless society (Nothnagle 1999, p. 15). Yet while GDR curricula attempted to indoctrinate polytechnic school students in socialism, television programming from West Germany (which will be abbreviated in this paper as the FRG) contradicted this worldview by broadcasting the attractions of capitalism, especially the wide variety of attractive products to be bought in such an economy, and criticism of the GDR’s human rights abuses and economic woes. (Edwards 2001, p. 242). This study will focus on these opposing forces and their effects on GDR students from 1980 to 1989, asking, what happened when the socialist worldview taught in school and the capitalist worldview as seen on TV collided in the minds of East German youth? Due to the conflicting ideologies young East Germans learned primarily from these sources, they tended to idealize the consumerist society of the FRG, while Western television’s underlining of GDR political abuses and the GDR’s lack

of luxury items often hindered young East Germans’ development into socialist personalities.

The conflicting ideologies with which young East Germans were presented stemmed from the differing political systems of the GDR and FRG and the barrier of the Berlin Wall. The GDR was a member of the Warsaw Pact, a security system of allied Soviet states. It had a complex history of reliance on the Soviet Union, especially the Soviet Union’s military, to legitimize the nation, as the GDR had only been in existence since 1949 (Dennis 2000, pp. 53, 92). GDR politics were dominated by the Socialist Unity Party (SED), a Communist party which presented itself as the “highest form of class organization of the working class,” guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism (Dennis 2000, p. 188); its policy of *parteilichkeit*, meaning party-mindedness or partisanship, demanded that GDR citizens believe the SED’s word as law (Rodden 2002, p. 15). The Berlin Wall which the SED-run East German government put up to divide the GDR from the FRG was heavily guarded, and strict travel regulations kept most GDR citizens from crossing over to the West (Taylor 2007, p. 306; Dennis 2000, p. 93). The FRG, in contrast, was democratic, capitalist and a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), comprised of Western countries (Tusa 1997, p. 37; Dennis 2000, pp. x, 92).

Residents’ quality of life in the FRG was far superior to the quality of life in the GDR, in part due to West Germany’s flourishing economy (Tusa 1997, p. 362). The West German mark was valued much more highly than East German currency, and labor productivity was much higher; additionally, West Germans had access to better-quality, and even luxury goods (Tusa 1997, p. 363; Dennis 2000 p. 263). East Germans observed with jealousy West German visitors to the GDR who “were dressed in stylish, well-made clothes and enviable shoes,” and who “snapped up as bargains goods the locals could not afford” (Tusa 1997, p. 363). In contrast, East Germany’s economy was in crisis during the 1980s (Dennis 2000, p. 263). Essential services such as the maintenance of roads and the updating of telephone technology were neglected (Dennis 2000, p. 264). Furthermore, the variety of goods produced in West Germany’s capitalist society was not to be found in East Germany. The GDR’s status as a communist society meant that it totalized the socialist concept of the working class’s ownership of society’s means of production (Dennis 2000, p. 257). All the country’s industries were state-owned; the

state allocated resources for utility purposes, meeting critical needs of society only (Dennis 2000, p. 257). Jana Hensel (2004), who grew up in the GDR in the 1980s, relates that this focus on utility left little room for variety or luxury, stating that the GDR as a society was “oriented toward things that had practical uses, rather than things that were supposed to demonstrate one’s good taste or fashion sense” (p. 52). Stores had “one type of any given product: one kind of butter, one flavor of jam, one brand of soft drink” (Hensel 2004, p. vii, 46). Furthermore, products manufactured in the GDR were often obvious generic knockoffs of FRG goods. Hensel (2004) relates, “We knew an Eastern ‘Germania’ skateboard was a cheap copy of the Adidas one...Likewise, it was a major source of embarrassment if your aha or Modern Talking stickers came from Poland, and not from Western teen magazines” (p. 48). Residents’ opportunities for recreational activities were also scarce. Holger Lutz Kern and Jens Hainmueller (2009) write, “As in other communist countries, life in East Germany was rather dull and uneventful,” pointing to the “scarcity of restaurants, cinemas, theaters, and night and sports clubs” in the country (p. 380). The quality of life in the GDR illustrates the totalitarian hand of the SED at work, and its grip included education.

The socialist worldview and *parteilichkeit* of the SED governed all aspects of polytechnic school (hereafter known as POS) educational policy. The GDR Minister of Education in the 1980s was Margot Honecker, Erich Honecker’s wife, who was known for her rigid adherence to Communist ideology and the SED (Rodden 2002, p. 14). She aimed to form “socialist personalities” through education, an aim manifested in the Ministry’s tight control over school systems (Rodden 2006, p. 14). This socialist influence was pervasive in materials and activities provided in schools. Jana Hensel (2004) was a student in a Leipzig POS from the mid to late 1980s, and she describes reading “magazines for young readers” with a “friendly little freckle-faced mascot” who gave schoolchildren tips such as “how to improve the quality of our special edition of the school newspaper celebrating the signing of the Warsaw Pact” (pp. vii, 9). She also remembers her classroom walls being adorned with “pictures of Lenin and...Erich Honecker” (Hensel 2004, p. 5). In such a controlled climate, textbooks became a matter of primary concern.

POS curricula were of the utmost importance to the Ministry entrusted textbook writing to academic collectives headed by

an elite Party member who would “adhere to the communist line on all questions” (Rodden 2006, p. xxvi). These textbooks introduced complex socialist theories as students advanced in the POS (“Comparison,” German Historical Institute, 2011). The SED also had a tight hold on POS faculty. Paul Gleye (1991), a Fulbright lecturer in the GDR during the 1980s, commented that teachers were “invariably Party members” (p. 71). Even if teachers were not SED members, Rodden (2006) states SED policy demanded every teacher “teach the textbook to the letter” (p. 6). Furthermore, virtually all GDR classrooms used the assigned textbook for each subject and grade level (Rodden 2006, p. 7). The Marxist-Leninist content in these books was omnipresent.

The socialist worldview promoted in POS textbooks attempted to form young East Germans into “socialist personalities” through pro-socialist indoctrination. Every subject was underpinned with its own version of socialist teleology; for example, “socialist geography” promoted the superiority of socialist nations by the sheer amount of land they took up (Rodden 2006, pp. 70, 149). History became a key area for promoting socialist teleology. This socialist world-historical view is illustrated by a 1982 edition of the history book *Geschichte 5*, intended for POS 5th graders (Rodden 2006, pp. 117, 196). For example, when teaching the concept of “centuries,” the editors of the book ask questions referencing the Roman slave revolt led by Spartacus (73-71 BC) such as: “In which century did the revolt of Spartacus take place?” (Rodden 2006, p. 196). GDR textbook writers widely held the Spartacus revolt as the “exemplary model” for later working-class revolutions from below such as Lenin’s Great October Revolution (Rodden 2006, p. 196). Indoctrination in socialism and appreciation of the Soviet Union was often much more blatant, as in the 1986 edition of *Geschichte 9*’s coverage of World War II; the book points to the most important factor in Germany’s defeat as “the heroic battle of the Volk of the USSR” and also states that after the war “the balance of power in the world altered in favor of peace and socialism” (Rodden 2006, p. 198). The positive indoctrination that POS texts attempted to force on students was supplemented by training for future service to the state.

The POS curriculum included courses in socialist production and training in industrial work in order for students to become a productive working class of socialists. This training accounted for more than 10 percent of all classroom hours

in the POS system, and it was intended to steer young East Germans into industries where workers were needed (“On-Site II,” German Historical Institute, 2011). Such training also included a weekly “School Day in Production,” in which students would receive on-site technical training for government jobs (“On-Site” I,” German Historical Institute, 2011). The children and youth were outfitted for these jobs, both literally and figuratively. A 1980 picture of this on-site training depicts three children on-site at the Lauchhammer Brown Coal Combine, all outfitted in workers’ uniforms, fascinated by the workings of a pantograph of a mine locomotive (“On-Site I,” German Historical Institute, 2011). Similarly, a 1987 picture of an East Berlin “School Day in Production” manifests the same insistence on students’ wearing the uniforms of the industry which they are studying; depicted are four boys standing in front of a chart, all in nondescript two-piece uniforms of industrial workers (On-Site II,” German Historical Institute, 2011). This importance of being trained to become part of the collective body of state workers, especially symbolized in the wearing of the uniform, is echoed by Jana Hensel. Hensel (2004) states that “children learned that they were supposed to be useful and do their duty toward the state. As kids, we were always pretending to be soldiers, nurses, cops, doctors—any responsible job where you got to wear a uniform” (p. 12). While those behind the POS curriculum attempted to foster students’ allegiance to the state by training them for labor that would benefit the GDR, the curriculum attempted to form the “socialist personality” through agitprop tactics in civics.

An insistence on socialism’s superiority and that class struggle was the central factor in historical dynamics defined the civics curriculum. Civics represented the Ministry of Education’s definitive effort to shape POS youths into socialist citizens. Rodden (2006) writes, “The study of civics in the DDR [GDR] did not merely involve rights and responsibilities to the community; because the socialist citizen was fundamentally a collective being, the subject defined the identity of East Germans” (p. 90). POS civics represented the world in strict terms of bilateral power to students: on one side were the GDR and its socialist allies, committed to spreading peace and socialism, while on the other were the western capitalists and imperialists who were determined to destroy the world. The east-west divide between the Germanies in particular was used to illustrate this split in economic systems. One 1988 photograph in the German Historical Institute’s archives depicts a 10th-grade civics teacher at an East Berlin school

who is instructing students in the difference between the GDR’s socialism and the FRG’s capitalism (“Civics Lesson,” German Historical Institute, 2011). The heading written on the blackboard behind him states: “The GDR and the FRG—two states with different social orders” (“Civics Lesson,” German Historical Institute, 2011). On the “GDR” side of the board he has listed the following descriptions: socialist state, socialist ownership of the means of production, power of the working class in alliance with other working people (“Civics Lesson,” German Historical Institute, 2011). On the “FRG” side he has written: imperialist state, private-capitalist ownership of the means of production, power of the bourgeoisie monopoly (“Civics Lesson,” German Historical Institute, 2011). As the civics’ teacher’s lesson illustrates, GDR socialism was clearly presented to students as superior to capitalism. His illustration of the two states as having different social orders due to their different economic systems is a concept straight from Marxist-Leninist ideology. The Marxist-Leninist world-historical teleology states that the inevitable dominance of socialism in the world will develop in stages; before the working class comes to power and produces a socialist utopia, the society’s economy will be in the hands of the upper class bourgeoisie who will oppress the working class (Nothnagle 1999, pp. 97, 171). Through the civics teacher’s assertion that the GDR economy is controlled by the “alliance” of working class people while the FRG’s economy is monopolized by the bourgeoisie, he is demonstrating to students that the GDR’s socialism puts the GDR at a higher social order than the FRG. This Marxist-Leninist insistence on class dynamics as the central factor in historical eras permeated the civics curriculum. As a 1988 edition of the civics textbook *Staatsbürgerkunde 10* stated in no uncertain terms, civics was meant to teach students that the “struggle of the working class is being guided by the nature of our era, the main direction of social development, and the most important details of the historical situation” (“Civics Textbook,” Calvin College, 2011). This Marxist-Leninist division of the world into two social orders informed the policy of Education for Socialist Patriotism that characterized the civics curriculum.

The civics curriculum promoted love for the policies of the SED as well as complete hatred for its opponents through a policy known as Education for Socialist Patriotism, which began in the 1950s and lasted into the 1980s. Using the policies of *parteilichkeit* and *Erziehung zum Hass* (Education for Hatred), the Ministry of Education attempted to instill an

emotional binary in students, combining love toward the “socialist Fatherland,” the GDR, with hatred of “imperialistic enemies” in West Germany and any other antagonists of the GDR (Rodden 2006, p. 98). This binary, as Rodden states, can be summed up in two slogans used extensively by the SED: “The Party, the Party, it’s always right!” and “Carry hatred in your heart!” (Rodden 2006, pp. 98-99). The rhetoric of *parteilichkeit* is evident in *Staatsbürgerkunde 10*. Alan Nothnagle (1999) states such rhetoric provided no room for individual interpretation; it avoided interpreting facts with the subjunctive and indirect discourse, instead using direct quotations from the SED and prominent socialist figures as self-evident truths (p. 29). This adherence to the SED’s word as law and use of direct quotations can be seen in *Staatsbürgerkunde 10*. The author writes, “As the 11th Party Congress of the SED stated, ‘it is becoming more clear that imperialism, whose most aggressive circles risk a nuclear war, has become a hindrance to societal development.’ That is the clearest proof that it is outdated” (“Civics Textbook,” Calvin College, 2011). The book portrays the SED in terms of its ability not only to nourish socialism through progressive economic and social policies, but also in terms of its abilities as a peacemaker. The SED, writes the author, wants humanity “to maintain peace and to learn how to live and get along with each other” (“Civics Textbook,” Calvin College, 2011). The author continually contrasts the fatherly (or perhaps Big Brotherly) love that the SED has for its citizens and the socialist cause with the aggressive, destructive intentions of Western nations, especially those involved in NATO. The chapter consistently associates NATO members with the “evils of capitalism,” such as extensive unemployment, as well as aggressive militarism and nuclear war (“Civics Textbook,” Calvin College, 2011). The book resorts to scare tactics in its depiction of the Western powers, stating that if left unchecked by socialist nations, NATO members will create a “nuclear inferno” that will consume all of humanity (“Civics Textbook,” Calvin College, 2011). Students recognized the binary of love and adherence to the fatherly SED and hatred for the fiends of NATO they were supposed to espouse, and they responded dutifully—at least in school.

In school, POS students were forced to comply with the Marxism-Leninism, *parteilichkeit*, and Education for Hatred in their curricula; the GDR “regime of fear,” using forces such as the Stasi secret police, suppressed public dissent (Rodden 2002, pp. 13, 45). Students learned that giving correct ideological answers mattered more than cultivating

knowledge of the actual subjects they were taught. As Jana Hensel (2004) put it, “You could be as mediocre as you wanted in math or history, as long as you got good grades in the things that really mattered: conduct, orderliness, enthusiasm, and application” (p. 89). Not only did POS curricula encourage compliance to socialist principles, they made it incredibly difficult for students to conceive of any other worldview. As Stefan, a student who attended a POS during the 1980s, put it, “Teachers rarely commanded us, ‘You must understand it this way.’ It was a matter of perspective, of a Marxist worldview utterly enveloping us in such a way that no one could really think outside those terms” (Rodden 2006, p. 214). And in school the views of the West, especially West Germany, that they articulated demonstrated the requisite hatred. Hensel (2004) writes, “As good 1980s Socialist preteens, our official attitude toward the West was one of contempt” (p. 91). She states POS students learned that in “the society on the other side of the Wall,” left-wing activists were persecuted, massive unemployment and price gouging reigned, and the inhabitants were neo-Nazis (Hensel 2004, p. 91). “At least that’s what we were taught in school,” she says (Hensel 2004, p. 91). But the “society on the other side of the Wall” had a powerful tool that transcended that barrier. That tool was television.

Despite the barrier of the Wall, East Germans in many regions of Germany received and watched West German television as their “primary source of entertainment,” their unusually intense interest stemming from the lackadaisical, luxury-free nature of life in a Communist regime (Lutz Kern and Hainmuller 2009, p. 380). This ability to receive West German television, although fortuitous, was not the deliberate fruit of West German government policy (Garton Ash 1994, p. 135). “This was, as it were, an act of God,” states Timothy Garton Ash (1994) of East German reception of West German television (p. 135). Nevertheless, widespread reception of signal allowed for widespread television watching. As Lee Edwards (2001) writes, “With the exception of Dresden and part of Saxony (located in the southeastern corner of the GDR), all of East Germany could receive West German television, mainly due to the relay antennas located in West Berlin” (p. 141). And watch West they did, en masse. Studies in the 1980s confirmed that working people in the GDR spent up to 70-80 percent of their free time at home, where they watched Western television programs that contained the message of “a better life, of greater freedom and also the possibility of actively

forging the future” (Edwards 2001, p. 141). The influence of West German television on young East Germans was often great. Thomas Davey wrote in his 1987 ethnographic study of children in East Berlin, *A Generation Divided*, that East German children were “flooded with information about the West, primarily through television. Without ever leaving their living rooms they are in a position to compare the official rhetoric in which they are immersed in ‘reality’ as it is served up on their television screens” (p. 124). As Davey’s comment illustrates, the content of these television channels filled an informational void that the GDR regime had created in East German children’s lives through its socialist bias.

On the whole, West German news channels gave East German affairs an “extraordinary amount of coverage” (Edwards 2001, p. 144), often criticizing the government that was so venerated in the POS. Although East Germans’ reception of West German television was purely coincidental and most FRG programming was intended for West German audiences, the West German government and West German news stations often used this influence on East German audiences to their advantage. West German news was constantly concerned with the workings of East Germany. As Edwards (2001) writes, “Each week, West German programs like *ZDF-Magazin*, *Monitor*, and *Report*, moderated by well-known television personalities, presented items about the politics, economics, and culture of the GDR” (p. 145). This continual coverage came from news sources with political stances that ranged from right-wing to left-wing (Edwards 2001, p. 145). Although, as stated before, the West German government did not deliberately arrange for signals from West German television stations to reach East German sets, but the West German government was aware of this effect (Edwards 2001, p. 146; Garton Ash 1994, pp. 135-136). Yet the West German government’s specific policies regarding television broadcasts to East Germany, both its aims and its level of involvement in such broadcasts, is hard to ascertain. Garton Ash (1994) points out the difficulty of distinguishing between the influence that West Germany exerted passively, “by virtue of its mere existence, prosperity, freedom, openness, etc.” and that which it exerted actively “by virtue of conscious policy” (pp. 135-136). However, he is able to verify that West German reporters’ “vivid, first-hand, live reports” on East Germany’s internal affairs in the 1980s reached East German viewers as a deliberate “fruit of West German policy” (pp. 135-136). Working conditions for Western journalists were the subject

of “hard-fought negotiations and agreements” between East and West Germany, and this intense coverage was the product (pp. 135-136). The depth and variety of West German news coverage caused a great multitude of the East German population to become politically aware (Edwards 2001, p. 145), including young East Germans. Children’s easy access to televised political programming from West Berlin caused them to be “forcefully confronted with political views and social perspectives diametrically opposed to those espoused in their schools” (Davey 1987, p. 7). Clearly the subversive criticism of the GDR that West German news stations presented contradicted the GDR’s particular socialist worldview in and of itself, but the consumerism present in West German commercials also threatened to undermine the utilitarian society and antipathy for the West that POS curricula promoted.

The Western consumerist society prominent in West German television commercials was the antithesis of the utilitarian society that the East German government fed young East Germans in the POS; its bells and whistles attracted East German children and youths, frustrating attempts to indoctrinate them in the values of socialism. A consumerist society is, as Peter Stearns describes, “a society in which many people formulate their goals in life partly through acquiring goods that they do not need for subsistence or traditional display,” and in this process of acquisition “take some of their identity from a procession of new items that they buy and exhibit” (Stearns 2001, p. ix). The Communist conception of the manufacture of goods simply for necessity stood in stark opposition to the consumerist espousal of luxury that television commercials promoted. These commercials offered the West German time to stretch his legs between shows, but to the East German represented a world of “magical wealth and amusement” (Edwards 2001, p. 146). The types of goods presented in these commercials were precisely the type of goods from which East Germans were cut off. In contrast with the “one kind of butter, one flavor of jam, one brand of soft drink” Jana Hensel (2004) found in East German stores (p.46), and the “scarcity of restaurants, cinemas, theaters, and night and sports clubs” in the GDR (Lutz Kern and Hainmuller 2009, p. 380), Paul Gleye (1991) states Western commercials presented goods like rich coffee, champagne, and chocolates to a deprived GDR public and an “urbane, carefree life” (p. 156). These commercials gave many East Germans a sense of relative deprivation, or, more specifically, “an intense longing for material goods and a

no less intense hatred for the political party and economic system that had made them unobtainable” (Edwards 2001, p. 146). Young East Germans’ naivety made them especially prone to experiencing relative deprivation due to such consumerist presentations on West German television. Paul Gleye (1991, p. 156) described children’s reactions:

They turned the dials and watched the commercials about things like toys and cookies, and then they asked their parents to buy the products. Parents told me how difficult it was for them to explain to their children why they could not have the things they saw on television. No, that’s a different country, with different money, and no, you can’t go there. I suspect that, of all the factors conspiring to frustrate the building of a socialist state in East Germany, in the long run West German television had been the most effective.

West German television made GDR children painfully aware of the consumerism that lay over the Wall, sparking longings for luxuries they learned they could not have in a socialist state. Naturally could not share these subversive views while at the POS. Thus, GDR students formed value pluralities, paying lip service to socialism at the POS but disregarding schools’ attempts to form socialist personalities by watching West German television at home.

Due to the need for secrecy about their West German television watching habits at school, POS students learned to form value pluralities regarded their behavior in various settings. Such value pluralities meant that at school, they would publicly behave in ways that upheld the principles of their socialist education, but in “safer” private settings like home they disregarded such principles in favor of their enthusiasm for Western television. Such behavior indicated that West German television inspired an unenthusiastic embrace of the “socialist personality.” As Jana Hensel (2004) states, “Everyone in the GDR watched Western TV shows, which could be picked up by fiddling with the TV antennas. We just had to do it secretly, and we were careful never to mention our favorite shows in front of our teachers” (p. 9). As mentioned above, GDR teachers were often Party members, and they were commanded to root out any interpretation of the world that differed from a socialist worldview. Punishments for such differing interpretations

varied in severity, but all served as a sharp reminder, not only to the recalcitrant student but to his or her classmates, of “the price one pays for violating ideological property” (Davey 1987, p. 90). In any case, students had to be careful, cultivating a kind of doublethink that allowed them to navigate both the domestic realm and educational realm with ease. Gleye (1991) noted that due to the conflicting ideologies with which West German television and the POS presented students, a “form of value plurality seemed to be mastered quite early by children. One said certain things in school...one said a different set of things at home” (p. 72). Students’ ability to navigate two different worlds was often superficial, however; Davey’s ethnographic work on East and West German youths presents many instances of children’s identity crises stemming from these opposing ideologies.

Davey’s study exposes the confusion and uncertainty of GDR children caught in the midst of an East-West culture war. On location, Davey (1987) interviewed children in both East and West Berlin aged between 10 and 12, a developmental range in which he argues that children begin making increasingly complex connections about their social worlds; Davey’s questions focused on the “political socialization” of both groups of children, or how and to what degree they established their sense of national and ideological affiliation (pp. 1-3). East German children showed marked ambivalence and hurt toward the GDR and their socialist education that was totally at odds with the *parteilichkeit* they learned in school, indicating their resistance to developing a “socialist personality.” This reaction appeared to stem from the conflicting educations in East-West sociopolitical dynamics that school and West German television had given them. Eleven-year-old Sybilla admitted about her school experience, “Sometimes I do get tired of it. Always politics...I have to pay attention, I know that. Sometimes I listen to west radio, or watch west television, though. Then I get really confused. I know one of them (West or East) must be lying” (Davey 1987, p. 89); as Davey states, Sybilla’s ambivalence toward school life and confusion was all too common among the responses he received (p. 85). But GDR children also described the outrage and hurt felt once they realized, usually after watching a liberal dose of West German television, their schools had presented them with a false version of reality (Davey 1987, p. 85). As twelve-year-old Gritt states, “We learn in school that the Wall was built to protect us from capitalists who want to invade our socialist

land. I used to believe that completely" (Davey 1987, p. 85). She later tells Davey about an incident when she watched a West German TV program that reported the death of a man who was shot trying to get over the Wall (Davey 1987, p. 86). "I'll never forget it. That's when I really began to feel like they were lying to us here," she says (Davey 1987, p. 86). Their responses to West Germany were more idealistic.

In contrast with their own ambivalence and insecurity about the GDR and their education, young GDR students tended to idealize West Germany as a land of plenty; this reaction was in part due to the forbidden status the POS gave the FRG and also due to the consumerism students witnessed on West German television. Gleye (1991) writes that East Germans watched a great deal of West German television, in particular programs such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, which dramatized the lives of rich, beautiful, and powerful Americans (pp. 12-13). He states that American television comedy *ALF*, about a beloved but mischievous alien creature, must have enjoyed surreptitious popularity among East Germans, as he relates how he frequently saw stuffed *ALF* dolls in rear car windows and how a young girl made him take a picture of her in an *ALF* T-shirt (Gleye 1991, pp. 70, 154). Perhaps most loved of all of *ALF*'s shenanigans, Gleye (1991) writes, was *ALF*'s ordering out for a pizza, as "the concept of hot food delivered to one's door was quite foreign to labor-short East Germany. It suggested a different world from the bratwurst kiosks of the DDR [GDR] with their eternal lines of hungry customers waiting to be served" (p. 154). Occasionally, the POS engaged in self-defeating behavior when it warned against the insidious society on the other side of the Wall, as Hensel points out. She states, "The unintended consequence of our teachers' prohibitions was to transform West Germany into a nirvana where friendly adults ran around with candy and gum in their pockets, handing them out to children on the streets" (Hensel 2004, p. 91). But television clearly played a part in this idealization as well. Youths learned to associate the West with consumerist luxuries, and therefore learned a keen sense of the superiority of FRG conditions over those of the GDR. Gleye (1991) writes that children who watched Western television picked up "an acute awareness of the East-West relationship as it applied to their world," and the FRG took on a "magical aura" (p. 151). Or, as one young boy put it, "people who want to go to the West...I think they want to leave because of the advertisements from the West. They see those ads and want to go over" (Davey 1987, p. 103).

Such evidence indicates West German television promoted children's frustration with GDR communism and the GDR government's repression of that frustration. Yet evidence also exists that young East Germans' viewing of West German television promoted their satisfaction with their government, and that the GDR took steps to provide its citizens with West German television. Lutz Kern and Hainmuller (2009) argue that West German television bolstered GDR citizens' satisfaction with their regime due to its "escapism," presenting East Germans with a vivid world unlike the GDR; they state, "West German television...allowed East Germans to vicariously escape life under communism at least for a couple of hours each night, making their lives more bearable and the East German regime more tolerable (p. 395)." Lutz Kern and Hainmuller claim the opposite of regions of East Germany that were unable to receive West German programming, particularly the Dresden district in the southeast due to its topographical features and its distance from West German broadcasting towers; they contend that dissatisfaction with the GDR accompanied residents' inability to watch FRG TV channels, pointing to evidence that the number of East German applications for exit visas was higher in counties of the Dresden district that were unable to watch West (Lutz Kern and Hainmuller 2009, pp. 382, 395). Although this theory may be true, it points less to youths' approval of the GDR government and more to approval of relief from the GDR government and their orientation toward the West, allowing them to mentally travel to West Germany although their feet were planted in the GDR. In any case, Lutz Kern and Hainmuller's 2009 study was geared primarily toward teenagers and young adults (p. 396), so an assessment of young children's satisfaction with the East German regime could vary significantly from these findings.

Although students in the GDR POS system could rarely leave East Germany for West Germany, the availability of West German television channels allowed them to metaphorically emigrate away from the socialist worldview that was forced on them in their schools. While GDR curricula attempted to indoctrinate POS students and make them into "socialist personalities," the consumerism and criticism of the GDR espoused by FRG television ultimately caused young East Germans to question and often reject what they were taught in the classroom. Young East Germans' ambivalence and hurt toward the GDR and tendencies to idealize the FRG resulted from the fact that these children and youths were, as Thomas Davey (1987) put it, "caught in the crossfire between socialist rhetoric and western ideology as it is represented

on television" (p. 80). As their experiences show, the search for identity amidst this crossfire proved arduous indeed, a search made even more complex after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the successful campaign of West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl for "reunification" in 1990, resulting in East Germany becoming part of the Federal Republic.

The surge in West German consumer goods' availability in the East after November 1989 caused the new East Germany to become what Stefan, the POS graduate mentioned earlier, called a "consumer society," stating, "Many of my classmates simply gave themselves over to a great indulgence, a spree....You could now have whatever kind of pop record or newspaper you wanted" (Rodden 2006, p. 219). Hensel (2004) describes fervently studying West German culture in order to fit in completely, just as she and her peers had watched West before, but admits that in the early years of the 1990s young East Germans had a hard time truly understanding the norms of Western consumer culture (pp. 52, 58-59). She relates that she and her peers were unable to "dress properly," and that young East German women chose clothing based on a predilection for novelty rather than Western standards of good taste (Hensel 2004 pp. 58, 60). Such assimilation also took place on the East German educational front. East German curricula were replaced with West German curricula that taught such subjects as post-1945 West German history (Hensel 2004, pg. 95), and GDR history and civics books from the pre-1989 era were disregarded (Rodden 2006, pg. 246). Hensel (2004) relates that pictures of Honecker and Lenin disappeared from classrooms, and "gone were the activities by which teachers "had hoped to mold our personalities and to prepare us for future careers as engineers, cosmonauts, teachers, or transportation workers" (pp. 4, 6).

Yet after the initial East German frenzy over becoming Western died down, many who came of age in the reunification eventually felt the need for self-identity and careful introspection, rather than the consumerist thought en masse that West German television had encouraged. Stefan relates that it took a long time, "at least two or three years," for him to come to the realization that it was possible to renounce consumer goods and the bandwagon mindset that entailed; this recognition promoted his self-individuation, as he states "with that insight you suddenly distanced yourself a great deal more from this consumer society" (Rodden 2006, p. 219). And Hensel (2004) admits that since her

initial drive to become Western, "I've grown afraid that, by always looking forward, and never glancing back, we [East Germans] no longer have any idea where we stand" (p. 4). Stefan responded to such problems of mass culture in the early unified Germany, stating, "You must conduct a search for self. You must ask: Where do I conduct that search? Do I conduct it in great department stores?"; he continues, "Do I seek it in the newspaper and magazine stands, or in music stores? Do I search in the display windows of a new mall? Or do I conduct it within myself?" (Rodden 2006, p. 219) Stefan's question in turn points to overarching questions as the post-Cold War era began. Would young East Germans subscribe to a Western worldview and lose their sense of personal history? Would they continue to replace socialist perspectives with consumerist views? And what would they do when their idealized consumerist visions of the West proved to be merely that? Hensel and Stefan's reactions provide some insight, but ultimately each person who grew up in East Germany during its final years will have a unique story to tell, with unique answers to give.

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