

English summaries

The German Democratic Republic as History

A. LÜDTKE

The GDR has ceased to exist. This article discusses both the history and the recent historiography of this “closed” past. Limits of access have been abolished almost totally. Anybody is entitled to study the case; except for few exceptions even the most recent materials or, for that matter, secrets are available for academic scrutiny. Lüdtke outlines main lines of “reading” the history of the GDR, most of them originating in the context of global confrontation or co-existence during the pre-1989 era. Still, much of the debate revolves around the impact of control, whether external (i.e. Soviet) or internal, and the relative autonomy of societal processes versus penetration by the forces of domination. In difference, Lüdtke emphasizes those approaches which reveal people’s socio-cultural perceptions, emotions, and practices. It is from this vantage point that the appearance of “stability” of the GDR which prevailed until her very collapse in 1989 can be dismantled. The simultaneity of acceptance and distance so characteristic for many people in the GDR was grounded in a multifaceted configuration. Important elements were: a specific temporality, the intensified sense for the local and, at the same time, generational fissures, but also the abandonment of the aesthetics of public space.

Workers in the GDR. Reflections on Social History

P. HÜBNER

The article gives a survey of important aspects of labour history in East Germany from 1945 to 1990. In his introduction the author highlights some barriers to making statistical sources accessible and deals with problems in the usage of terms. The analysis concentrates on the relative importance of the workforce in the social policies of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) and the development of the social structure of the workforce. The aims and interests of workers, conflicts of interest and their solution are analysed in detail. The workers’ brigades are in the focus of attention, in particular their functions in everyday life. Moreover, the article sketches some effects of central planning and social backgrounds of workers in the GDR.

Die aus der Tuchbude. The women from the textile mill. A contribution on the employment of women in the GDR based on life-history sources

P. CLEMENS

How did women assert their parallel family and occupational responsibilities—in a male-dominated company with a female employee majority, and in a society in

ENGLISH SUMMARIES

which the competition between the sexes was muted, but which had political structures not permitting a critical, democratic discourse on topics including conditions of gender-specific dominance?

This study focuses on female textile-industry workers in one city and belonging to one generation; women out on the fringes in a number of respects and who had not (yet) broken out of their working conditions. Why that was so, as well as the experiences and meanings that they associated with their changed yet static living and working environment, are related in the form of life stories. The interviews were made in 1991 and 1992 after the collapse of the local textile industry.

Communist Dictatorship and University Milieu. Social History et Academics in the GDR, 1945-1961

R. JESSEN

Since the end of the forties the SED tried to enforce a rapid turnover of the teaching staff of the East German universities. The professoriate in academic fields like economics or law could be changed completely within a few years and in the humanities a small counter-elite of former emigrants successfully started to build up a new teaching staff. Only in the medical and natural sciences the old personnel, milieu and mentality survived until the early sixties. Continuity in these disciplines depended upon the lack of qualified scientists, the open border in the West (until 1961), the autonomy of the scientific discourse and the informal power of the academic establishment. In the social sciences and the humanities a rapid change was possible because the SED was either able to implement an alternative elite of loyal intellectuals or to destroy the scientific autonomy of these disciplines so that academic credentials where not an absolute prerequisite of the career further more.

The East German People's Police, 1952-1958: A micro-study on state socialist governmentality

T. LINDENBERGER

What is the significance of ordinary "policing" outside the realm of the secret police and its activities of surveillance and repression under communist rule? The study sets out to delineate the institutional, ideological and practical aspects of a key character in East Germany's Deutsche Volkspolizei during the first years of construction of socialism, namely its omnipresent "precinct commissioners" (Abschnittsbevollmächtigte). Deployed on the countryside, they had to bear out the double significance of "security" in state socialism referring both to the aggressive expansion of the Party's grip on society and to "public safety" in the sense of traditional police work. The extensive reports and debates, in which both the police leadership and the rank and file officers adressed the ingrained dilemma of state socialist rule, are scrutinized in order to single out some key features of state socialist governmentality.