Chapter 2

Workers in the Welfare Dictatorships

After we have become acquainted with the rise of welfare dictatorships, the forthcoming chapter describes and compares the functioning of these dictatorships, which were based on a compromise between the party and the working class. The central thesis of the book is that having abandoned the harshness of the Stalinist strategy of modernization, the East German and Hungarian communist regimes turned themselves into welfare dictatorships that sought to win over the 'masses' with the promise of providing ever-increasing levels of consumption. This strategy achieved working-class acquiescence, but in the long run it proved to be detrimental for the regime because it shifted working-class political consciousness to the right and effectively excluded left-wing alternatives from the public sphere. This second part of the book seeks to rethink the relationship between the working class and the 'workers' state' in order to explain the apparent contradiction that while, on the surface, the rule of the communist parties seemed consolidated in the two countries, in 1989 the working class essentially refused to commit itself to any left-wing alternative, and readily accepted the restoration of capitalism.

The main thesis of this most meticulously documented and substantial part of the book is that the remarkable absence of independent working-class action at the time of the collapse of the authority of the communist parties can be explained through major contradictions between the economic and social policies of the governments on the one hand, and the communist ideology that they propagated on the other. I seek to illustrate that since the party in both countries saw an increase in consumption levels as the chief goal of the government and the main guarantor of social peace, workers also regarded emancipatory measures and projects as part of 'communist propaganda', which they refused to believe. The consumerist turn of the party therefore paved the way for the eclipse of left-wing alternatives in 1989.

The policies of the ruling communist parties towards the working class contained a number of contradictions. It can be argued that some elements of their policies actually did correspond to the project of building a socialist society that would offer an alternative model to capitalism. One example of such an element was the promotion of female emancipation and the establishment of full female employment, which was facilitated through a wide range of centrally provided child-care institutions such as nurseries, kindergartens, afternoon schools, organized holidays and summer camps for children.[1] These facilities were available at very low prices. Further examples include state investment in schools and teaching, with the aim of levelling differences in the educational and social background of parents and of providing equal educational opportunities; and community building at the workplace, supported in the form of the socialist brigade movement, which was supposed to be the basis for working-class education and cultivated entertainment.

However, while the above-listed elements could, indeed, be reconciled with the concept of a society based on workers' communities, there was a crucial contradiction between this programme and the reality of the power structure of the one-party state: namely, the party had no intention of renouncing its monopoly on power or of transferring much of its decision-making power to working-class communities. Therefore, the promotion of ideas of community within the workplace was not meant to prepare the workers for taking control of the means of production. Documentary evidence from brigade diaries, and the records of party meetings where the brigade leaders discussed their problems, as well as evidence from interviews I conducted with workers, show that the members of the brigades did indeed participate in an intensive community life. They went to theatres, cinemas and pubs together, they celebrated state festivals (in the GDR these were particularly numerous), they held common family parties, they helped each other with the repair of cars, renovating flats, and resolving personal problems such as an alcoholic partner or a divorce; but this sphere of social interaction was firmly separated from the sphere of power. It is telling that, in my interviews with former brigade leaders, when I asked if they were members of the party, most would answer no. For example, one respondent said: 'No, the party was not for me … I was always a social-minded person, I liked being in company, organizing things … of course, they [party members] tried to convince me to join, but I always said no … not because I fundamentally disagreed with them, no … the party was simply not for me'.[2] Some (even those who were in the party) openly admitted that fellow workers considered party members to be careerists, and this held back those who were indeed community-minded people.

This book distinguishes between the reformist and collectivist models of the welfare dictatorships. Even though there was a partial retreat from the initial, more radical programme of the Hungarian reform of 1968, the extension of the private sector continued in the 1980s, which influenced the existing social structure. While in Hungary reforms were concentrated on the decrease of state control of the economy, in Honecker's GDR the opposite can be observed: the state extended social provisions and promised to solve centrally even the housing of the citizens. Although the end of the reform era in Hungary witnessed a retreat from a more radical property reform, pro-market discussions remained on the agenda. When the government was forced to seek the financial support of the International Monetary Fund, further concessions had to be given to the market. Thus, after Hungary's new economic mechanism, the second major market reform came in 1982 when the government authorized the introduction of nine forms of small business. The reform allowed the formation of the so-called VGMKs (*vállalati gazdasági munkaközösség* = economic productive communities of the enterprise), which were in fact private enterprises using the infrastructure and personnel of the factory outside regular working hours. VGMKs often received contracts from their own factories. In the 1980s Hungary was already a socialist 'mixed' economy in so far as the second economy operated as a significant adjunct to the state sector.[3] Since salaries in the private economy were considerably higher than in the state sector, the expertise started to wander away to the private enterprises.

The second economy impacted on social stratification as well. In 1981 a national sociological survey led by Tamás Kolosi found that the private economy had the second largest impact on social stratification after occupation.[4] The interpretation of the Hungarian market reform was at the time subject to fierce political controversies. To overcome the resistance of the hardliners in the party, the reformers argued that it would 'correct' the inequalities of state redistribution. The reform did, in fact, increase social inequalities because people in higher state positions had better access to the private economy.[5]

Honecker came to power in the name of the consumption-oriented 'standard-of-living' policy, to which he remained loyal until the collapse of his regime. In the introduction I outlined the most important elements of his programme: pay increases, a generous welfare policy, a large-scale state housing construction programme and the support of working women. Keren argues that ever since Stalin combined taut, centralized planning with a high priority for investments, the economists believed that the reformers' mix was just the opposite: slack, decentralized and consumption-oriented. The Honecker regime, however, combined a slack,

but centralized planning with an orientation towards consumption.[6] In the 1970s Honecker's state could boast of real results. Wages increased while prices were kept relatively stable. In 1971 the minimum wage was increased from 300 to 350 M, and in 1976 to 400 M. In 1977 the government decreased the unemployment insurance revenue of the workers. Even according to Western analysts the real income of the population significantly increased up to 1978.[7]

As a study of GDR wages shows, blue-collar workers earned relatively well as compared to other social strata.[8] In 1988 the average wage of a blue-collar worker was 1,110 M (gross) while that of a foreman was 1,370 M (gross). University or college graduates earned 15 per cent more on average than skilled workers. The difference among the various branches was also relatively little: 150 M per month. Shift bonuses could influence workers' wages by up to 30 per cent. The study found a smaller wage differential between the sexes in the GDR than in West Germany. In 1988 the average female income was 16 per cent lower than the male income in the GDR, while in West Germany the difference was nearly double.

The second main pillar of Honecker's social programme was the state housing programme, which aimed to solve the flat problem of every GDR citizen within twenty years, historically a very short period of time. The state promised to build, renovate or modernize 3.5 million flats, and provide every adult GDR citizen with comfortable and spacious housing (with own room for every adult family member). Young couples and shift workers principally enjoyed priority in the allocation of state flats. The housing programme was later criticized because it concentrated state resources on the building of the modern blocks of flats, and there was not enough capacity for the renovation of the old houses.[9] Despite this criticism, the social impact of the project should not be underestimated; the overwhelming majority of the surviving correspondence between the Zeiss employees and the enterprise addressed the issue of the allocation of the flats.[10]

The support of the working mothers was an important field of social policy because the regime aimed to enhance the participation of women in the labour market. This was mainly achieved through the extension of the state network of child-care institutions. In 1980, 60 per cent of the relevant age groups could be accommodated in the nurseries and 90 per cent in the kindergartens. The social policy package of 1972 gave various benefits for the working mothers: a 40-hour week for mothers with three children (or shift workers with two children), the increase of paid maternity leave, higher child benefits and more holidays. To encourage people to marry young, every couple who were below twenty-six and marrying for the first time received an interest-free loan of 5,000 M. The state also

paid a maternity grant of 1,000 M after every baby. Single working mothers, who received no nursery places, were given paid leave. In 1976 the 40-hour week was extended to every mother with two or more children, paid maternity leave increased to twenty-six weeks, the mothers got one year paid leave after the second child and the paid holiday increased with the number of children. From 1986 every mother was entitled to a one-year paid leave after the first child, and in justified cases fathers could also take advantage of this opportunity. In 1987 the regime significantly increased child benefits: from 20 to 50 M after one child, from 50 to 100 M after two, and from 100 to 150 M after three children.[11]

The project of the socialist welfare state was, however, doomed to failure because the standard of living continued to be much higher in West Germany than in the GDR and the East German citizens compared themselves with their Western neighbours rather than with the socialist camp (where their standard of living was indeed high). While in Hungary the market reforms were accompanied by relative political liberalization, Honecker's standard-of-living policy was combined with repression, which closed the possibility of any dialogue between the workers and the party. The ideological discipline was reflected in the local party materials: while the Hungarian party materials inform us about the growing social discontent, the GDR sources remain silent about the troubles until the very end.[12] The mass flight of the population to the West when the Hungarian borders were opened revealed that the silence was the result of repression rather than a sign of people's consent to Honecker's policy. At that time, however, the party effectively lost social trust, and the brief attempt to reform the party and the system ended with the unification of Germany.

This second, heavily documented part of the book compares the working-class experience of the welfare dictatorships. The recognition that working-class demands did not differ substantially under capitalism and socialism triggered a consumerist turn in the party's policy towards the working class. Hungary was in a specific situation because of the legacy of the 1956 revolution; indeed, as we have seen, the spread of the 'petit-bourgeois' mentality and the formation of a socialist petit-bourgeois middle class (as one member of the executive committee of Győr county argued, 'a flat, the car, the weekend house and the trips were no luxuries') can be already observed in the 1960s. Nonetheless, a similar orientation towards consumerism can be traced also in the GDR, which experienced the rivalry with capitalism very directly because of its situation as one part of a divided Germany. While Walter Ulbricht built a wall to prevent the escape of the population to the Western 'consumer paradise', his successor Erich Honecker implemented the East German variant of the Hungarian policy regarding the standard of living in order to convince the people of the

superiority of socialism. A social compromise was thus established between the party and the working class: people gave up their political demands, or at least refrained from open protest, in exchange for the state providing an uninterrupted and reasonable increase in the standard of living of the working people. The forthcoming sections seek to explore the possibilities and limits of the welfare dictatorships as well as demonstrate the essential fragility of the legitimacy based on the increase of consumption levels.

Labour Policy in Hungary

The Standard-of-Living Policy

In November 1972 the Central Committee drew a balance of Hungary's new economic mechanism introduced in 1968. In spite of the 'obligatory' appraisal of the many positive experiences of the reform, the committee considered it important to address the working-class criticism of the reform because the resolution, amongst others, stated that the standard of living of the workers in state enterprises had not kept pace with the general increase of the standard of living:

Figure 2.1 Motor Vehicle Unit of Rába

> Therefore the masses very much agree with the statement that when the standard of living of the people improves, it is not right that workers in socialist industrial enterprises lag behind. It is also necessary to correct the uneven, sometimes unjust distribution of profit. Besides, workers complain that the increase of consumer goods puts a substantial burden on their families.[13]

The resolution shows that the party took into consideration the frequently declared criticism that the economic reform created income differences that were too high, and therefore unjust, while the managers and the peasantry prospered at the expense of the industrial working class. The increase in industrial wages was intended to strengthen the support of the regime among the working class. This measure indicated the main direction of the social policy of the party, which was called appropriately the standard-of-living policy. This policy promised the workers in state-owned enterprises that their standard of living would be increased in proportion to those in wealthier social strata, who benefited from the expanding private sector. The resolution received the extensive support of the working class, according to the executive committee of Győr county, which was probably not far from the actual reality.

In Győr-Sopron county a survey conducted in 1972 found the following inequalities in the distribution of income: the annual income of the peasantry was higher (19,060 Ft) than that of the average working-class and intellectual household (18,625 Ft). The average wage in a month amounted to 2,146 Ft in industry, 2,419 Ft in the construction industry, 2,538 Ft in the state farms, 2,593 Ft in transport and 2,271 Ft in the co-operative farms. Wages in light industry lagged behind significantly. The workers' wage levels did not keep pace with the top managers. The wages of the direct production managers also lagged behind, which created a problem of recruitment. Differentials between the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour were low, which injured the pride of the skilled workers. The report also noted that there was a differential between men and women workers and that 'the principle of equal pay for equal work was not always effective'.[14]

There is remarkably little information about the wages in the materials of the party organization of Rába MVG, and aspects of the distribution of the annual bonuses were also not discussed; allegedly, the chief manager personally checked the lists every year.[15] Secrecy may well have been the policy of the enterprise. The wage increase of 1973 is therefore important because it is well documented and it gives a general picture of the distribution of wages in the industry of the county (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Wage increase of industrial workers in the county in 1973 (Ft)

	1972	1973	Increasing	%
Heavy industry	2,256	2,510	254	11.25
Light industry	1,880	2,075	195	10.37
Food industry	1,994	2,236	242	12.17
Other industry	–	–		
Average	2,069	2,299	230	11.11

Source: GYML, X. 415/128/1, A bérfejlesztés és a különböző bérezési formák bevezetésének hatása a dolgozók helyzetére és a munkaerőmozgásra (a KB november 14–15.-i határozata alapján).

In the county sixty-one thousand workers and direct production managers received pay increases. Even though the pay increase was supposed to level wages in industry, statistics show that the party mainly aimed to win the support of the heavy industrial core of the working class. The pay increase was thus the highest in heavy industry. Table 2.2 shows how the standard-of-living policy was realized in the county.

Table 2.2 Wages of industrial workers in the county (Ft)

	1968	1970	1972	1973
Heavy industry	1,880	2,059	2,256	2,510
Light industry	1,568	1,735	1,880	2,075
Food industry	1,637	1,786	1,994	2,236
Other industry	–	–	–	–
Average	1,711	1,894	2,069	2,299

Source: GYML, X. 415/134/2, Jelentés Győr-Sopron megye munkássága helyzetéről a KB 1974. márciusi állásfoglalása alapján, 3. melléklet, Munkások havi átlagkeresete.

Even though there could be some unreliability in the statistical data, they still displayed basic trends. The pay increase favoured skilled workers; the direct production managers received only a bit more money than skilled workers. In heavy industry skilled workers got roughly twice as big an increase as their semi-skilled or unskilled counterparts. In light industry the semi-skilled and unskilled workers received nearly as big a pay increase as unskilled labour in heavy industry. It is remarkable that the pay increases for women were lower in every category than those for men,

with the exception of ministry-run construction enterprises (we do not know how many women workers were employed in this industry). The wages of women workers lagged behind those of their male counterparts for two reasons. Firstly, heavy industry preserved its male dominance; women were mainly employed in the badly paid industrial branches like light industry. Secondly, the majority of women workers were unskilled: 35.8 per cent of the blue-collar workers in the county in 1973 were women but only 16.5 per cent of them were skilled workers.[16] The party held the large, skilled industrial working class to be its main social basis. Thus, well-paid jobs in industry were mainly 'male' jobs: in Rába 25 per cent of the workforce was female, but the majority worked as unskilled or semi-skilled workers, or in administration.[17] These data show that traditional gender hierarchies were preserved in industry. There are no separate data about men's and women's wages; but if one takes the differential between heavy and light industries, it is a reasonable assumption that men workers earned 25–30 per cent more than their female counterparts on average.[18]

A report of 1974 gave the following picture of the conditions of the working class of the county in statistical data: ninety-eight thousand workers were employed in state industry, and, together with retired workers, one hundred and thirty thousand people belonged to the working class. There were twenty-seven large enterprises, which had more than five hundred workers, and forty thousand people worked in the large industry. The number of commuters was estimated at thirty to thirty-five thousand. In the plan period,[19] the proportion of workers who earned 2,000–4,000 Ft a month increased from 43 to 60 per cent, while that of those who earned less than 2,000 Ft decreased from 56 to 40 per cent. According to the report, social benefits increased by one and a half times but the average income in big families was still less than 800 Ft per person. The average pension of retired workers amounted to 1,365 Ft. The overwhelming majority of the workers (94 per cent) had a 44-hour working week but there was much overtime. One quarter of party secretaries were blue-collar workers.[20]

Since the standard-of-living policy became the new social message of the party, it was important to know how people received this policy.[21] In 1976 there was a survey conducted of the party members in machine-manufacturing enterprises across the county. In six enterprises 1,013 people (almost half of them [471] from MVG) were asked to evaluate their material circumstances; 84 per cent of the respondents were men and 16 per cent were women. The distribution according to age group was the following: 21–30: 18 per cent, 31–41: 35 per cent, 41–50: 32 per cent, and 51–60: 12 per cent. Of these, 21 per cent had finished primary school, 26 per cent had a three-year vocational training certificate, 35 per

cent had finished secondary school and 13 per cent had finished college or university; 35 per cent were skilled workers, 13 per cent semi-skilled and 3 per cent unskilled; and 49 per cent belonged to the 'other' category. (Blue-collar workers amounted to 53 per cent of the party membership in the machine manufacture of the county.)

The survey confirmed that workers in this sector were in a better financial situation than the working-class average. The respondents belonged to the old guard of the factories because 35 per cent had worked in the same enterprise for 20+ years, 18 per cent for 16–20 years, 21 per cent for 11–15 years, and 16 per cent for 6–10 years. The qualification of the respondents was clearly above the average: in 1972, one-third of the employees of Rába MVG did not finish primary school,[22] while in the sample it was only 5 per cent. The wages in the sample were also higher than the average wages in the county: almost half of the respondents (46.8 per cent) earned 3,100–4,000 Ft in a month, while only one-quarter of the industrial workers of the county fell into this category. In the county only about 40 per cent of the industrial workforce earned more than 3,000 Ft; but in the sample it was 66 per cent. In the sample, 16.5 per cent earned 4,100–5,000 Ft while in the industry of the county only 9.3 per cent fell into this category. Interestingly, there were reverse proportions at the top: in the sample 0.7 per cent earned more than 6,000 Ft while in the county the figure was 2.4 per cent. The difference can be explained through 'top' managerial wages; even though it should be noted that even these wages were only about twice as much as the average wages in the sample.

The record of continuous employment and relatively high wages enabled the respondents to live in good material circumstances – or at least at the level, which was at the time characteristic of the socialist middle class. Living conditions can certainly be described as good because the majority of the respondents were owner-occupiers. One-third of the respondents (31 per cent) lived in their own houses, one-quarter (24 per cent) in their own flats, one-third (30 per cent) were life-long tenants of state or council flats, 11 per cent lived at home as family members, and only 4 per cent rented a room. No one lived in workers' hostels. This means that the overwhelming majority had settled living conditions. The households of the respondents were well equipped with durable consumer goods: 93 per cent had a television, 94 per cent a radio, 91 per cent a washing machine, 69 per cent a spin drier, 87 per cent a fridge and 83 per cent a vacuum cleaner. One-quarter of the respondents (24 per cent) owned a motor bike and 26 per cent had a car; 22 per cent of the households possessed a record player.[23]

Even though the material conditions of the respondents were 'objectively' good, their subjective evaluation of the standard-of-living policy

was less positive. Although almost everybody (99 per cent) agreed with the statement that the standard of living had increased, opinions differed as to the extent of the increase: 21 per cent of the respondents thought that there was a significant increase in the standard of living during the plan period, 64 per cent described it as average and 14 per cent said that the increase was insignificant. Two-thirds of the sample (68 per cent) described the supply of consumer goods as satisfactory, 31 per cent as not satisfactory and 1 per cent said that it was bad. The opinions on real wages differed from the opinions on the general standard of living: 33 per cent said that the pay increase had exceeded the increases in prices, 28 per cent thought that the pay increase balanced the higher prices, and according to 39 per cent pay did not keep pace with increasing prices – in Rába MVG, 44 per cent of the respondents agreed with this statement. The survey concluded that the population – even the party members – evaluated the increase of prices more negatively than 'was shown by the facts of economic policy. They spoke of the increase of prices even if they could satisfy their needs at a higher level and they bought more valuable products. They disregarded the improvement of the technical standard of the products and they evaluated only the prices.'[24]

People were only 'moderately' content with their wages: 75 per cent of the respondents described their wages as average (even though in reality they were higher than the average industrial wages in the county), 19 per cent thought that their wages were good and 6 per cent said that they were paid badly. The majority of people (57 per cent) were not content with the pace of the pay increase. Worker–peasant conflict was again manifest in the survey: according to two-thirds of the respondents (68 per cent) the peasantry had a higher income than the working class, and only 7 per cent said that the workers earned more than the peasants. The survey noted that according to the statistics the income of the peasantry was 10 per cent lower than that of the working class. During the discussion of the material, the representative of the Rába MVG argued that the workers regarded the commuters also as peasants: 'It is not the real peasants who live better but those who work in the factory and live in the countryside. According to the statistics the workers possess more land than the peasants. The survey reflects that the workers who live in the countryside also farm their land to increase their income.'[25] Worker–peasant conflict showed that the social integration of commuters into the working class had been a problematic process, and the commuters were still considered to be peasants in the eyes of urban workers.

The survey revealed some interesting psychological relationships between the skills, gender and the evaluation of wages. While the semi-skilled workers described the material situation of their families as good,

the majority of the skilled workers said that it was average. The survey explained this difference through the almost equal wages of the two groups: skilled workers expected higher hourly wages than their semi-skilled counterparts and therefore they were more discontented with their wages. There was also a difference between the satisfaction of men and women: even though the majority of women earned less than the male average (2,100–2,500 Ft), they were more content with the financial situation of their families than the men. It is an interesting contradiction that while 99 per cent said that the standard of living had increased, more than half of the respondents were discontented with the pay increase. The survey stated that people evaluated the standard of living only according to the pay increase and they did not count the improvements in the communal infrastructure, schools, health service, roads and parks. Since the main social message of the party at the time was the standard-of-living policy, party members were unlikely to contradict assertions that the standard of living had increased. The detailed answers, however, show a more contested picture: it seems that people expected more from the standard-of-living policy than what it delivered. In the meeting of the executive committee the representative of the Rába MVG called attention to the psychologically harmful effect of the non-differentiating wage system:

> In our factory there are direct production managers who earn less than the blue-collar workers. It is no wonder that the workers often refuse to study or accept higher positions. What is the reason for this? One should investigate that the wage is disproportionate to the greater responsibility. The majority of the workers measure the standard of living with their wages, cars and weekend plots.[26]

To achieve all these things, people were willing to work more: nearly half of the respondents (48 per cent) said that they worked in their free time. At the same time many people saw little relation between the work performed and their wages: according to 22 per cent of the respondents the achievement rarely or never determined the wages (in Rába MVG 25 per cent gave this answer) and only 19 per cent thought that people were paid according to their work.[27] This, in general, shows that many people had doubts about the social value of labour.

As we have seen above, Ede Horváth, the chief manager of Rába, agreed with several elements of the economic reform; he was very conscious of the role of economic incentives and he was determined to use them in order to motivate people. With the growth of the production of Rába there was a massive increase of the workforce, particularly in the early 1970s. In this period the labour problems of the enterprise were also discussed in the executive committee:[28] Rába enticed many women

workers from the textile factories in Győr, and it also opened new plants in other, smaller towns, which had little industry, like Sárvár and Kapuvár, where it was easier to recruit new workers. Despite these efforts, a production report of 1972 complained that there was a chronic shortage of labour in some professions such as metal cutting and at the smelters.[29] Another problem that the report singled out was the high fluctuation of labour: it was regarded as a good result that between 1969 and 1971 the percentage of employees who gave notice decreased from 29 to 19.2 per cent.[30] Shift work was likewise problematic because many employees continued to rely on agriculture so that the report proposed the pay of bonuses for different shifts in order to fully exploit machine capacity:

> Employees frequently refuse to work in two-three shifts referring to objective problems such as child care, lack of nursery or kindergarten places, long travelling times, etc., but it can be stated that the low differentials play a role in the refusal. The enterprises cannot give a shift bonus from their own funds. In our view it would be justified to pay a 10 per cent bonus for the afternoon and a 20–25 per cent bonus for the night shifts to motivate people. This should be solved centrally because today there is a high income from private farming, which definitely influences the willingness of the workers to work in different shifts.[31]

Ede Horváth also expressed his strong support for the economic incentives in a meeting of the executive committee:

> In my view the enterprise organization marks time nationally. We could not find a solution to fundamentally change the present system, which had been established in 1945. More or less this is where we stand today … In my view there are two basic conditions of a modern enterprise organization. The first is to make people interested in higher achievement: the reward should be manifest not in a typed speech but people should get it in their pocket. I agree that there is surplus labour. It is an old problem. We have to say with self-criticism that we cannot do much. There is no material interest to get rid of unnecessary labour. If we could pay the wages of 2,000 people to 1,800, every economic unit, party organization and manager would be keen to solve this persistent, sensitive issue. The other thing is labour discipline. If we can't keep discipline, the best organizational concepts will be useless or even worsen the present situation.[32]

The delegate of the Wagon Factory supported Horváth's view of performance-based wage policies in the executive committee. He explained the problem of labour shortage in skilled professions through the low wage differentials:

> I point out the negative phenomena in the Wagon Factory that are related to the psychology of labour. Many employees leave because they are not satisfied with the wages and the professional development. The comrades here also

> know that the fact that 40 per cent are unskilled workers is connected with a bad psychology: they received the highest wages and therefore complete unskilled brigades left the enterprises.[33]

The chairman of the county council of the trade unions (Szakszervezetek Győr-Sopron Megyei Tanácsa) also spoke of the positive effects of greater differentials:

> On behalf of the trade unions we recommend that it would be reasonable to introduce the wage volume management in other enterprises, too. For instance, since the wage volume management had been introduced in the foundry, we have had no labour problem. The workers are paid good money, they produce more with a smaller staff and there is no fluctuation. We should consider this and introduce it in other workplaces, too, particularly where there is a shortage of skilled labour. We should make people interested in working well. We should give a good estimate of the supply of skilled labour and make a proposal to the higher bodies.[34]

The chief manager put his ideas into practice wherever he could. The annual premium could amount to a substantial extra income;[35] allegedly, Horváth personally revised the list of annual premiums.[36] The regulation of premiums was also used to strengthen labour discipline because he introduced the practice of stopping workers who went off sick for more than five days a year, getting a premium. Quality could influence 30 per cent of the final wage, which Horváth defended with the argument that the wage cuts also improved the work of those who otherwise did not understand the significance of quality.[37] That having been said, he sought to pay competitive wages until he could, which he regarded as a prerequisite of high performance:

> In 1981 we will increase the wages of skilled workers by 17.2 per cent. But for this money we demand work. We need three shifts, piecework and quality! If someone cannot accept this, there is turnover. The executive committee should consider that there are problems on our side, too, and we cannot do much about them. We have to accept that if a worker gets more money somewhere else, he will want to go there.[38]

Mention must be made of a specific group, the direct production managers, whose low wages have been much criticized in the period. Allegedly, there were even cases when workers refused to be promoted with the argument that it does not pay to undertake more responsibility.[39] This, in fact, hindered the professional career of workers because the overwhelming majority of the lower management was recruited from the shop floor. In the Wagon Factory, 99 per cent of the foremen were recruited from

the blue-collar workers.[40] The political reliability of the foremen was also important because they were usually entrusted with the organization and leading of the party cells. This involved more work, and therefore it was an important argument that the pay was not proportionate to responsibility. The interest of the party in the pay increase of the foremen was connected to the interest of the factory. According to a 1979 report, during a 'purge' of personnel in the Wagon Factory between 1974 and 1977, seventy-two foremen were removed from their posts because of professional incompetence. The rest of the lower managers were regarded to be professionally (88–90 per cent) and politically (75–80 per cent) competent.[41] The proof of professional competence was a high-school certificate, even though the report noted the difficulties of imposing this on older workers.[42] The executive committee of the party organization of the MVG also evaluated the competence of the managers. One speaker argued that a manager was politically competent if he could lead his team regardless of whether he organized anything else in the factory, while another thought that the most important was that the manager had a good relationship with those he managed.[43] They did not like that fact that many foremen were expected to drive trucks to ensure the supply of material even though it was part of their job description. The examination of eight plants of the Wagon Factory (Foundry, Auto, Rear Bridge, Blacksmith, Iron structure, Wagon, Motor, Vehicle) gave the following results. The average wages of the foremen in the eight plants varied between 5,100 and 5,400 Ft, while that of the managers stood at between 5,900 and 6,600 Ft. In the Motor Unit there were foremen who received 6,300 Ft and managers with a salary of 6,700 Ft. At the same time the average wage of the blue-collar workers was 4,000 Ft. According to the report there were only twenty-five to thirty workers in the enterprise who earned more than their superiors with overtime and working on Sundays.[44]

Counting with these wages the foremen earned 30 per cent more and the managers 60 per cent more than the blue-collar workers. The material recognition of the foremen, which 'the party and the government rendered a central question in 1970',[45] was therefore realized in the Wagon Factory. Other enterprises were in a less fortunate situation. In light industry, for instance, the basic wage of direct production managers was 4,800–5,000 Ft in 1984. One member of the executive committee of the county argued that blue-collar workers could earn the same money and therefore it was difficult to find managers.[46]

The manager's attempt to introduce a performance-based wage system in Rába evidently formed the consciousness of the employees. The representative of MVG in the executive committee, for instance, challenged a manager, who had boasted that the members of the VGMK in his factory

Table 2.3 Managerial wages in selected workshops of MVG (Ft) in 1979

Factory	Workers (No)	Direct production managers (No)	Factory managers (No)	Direct production managers/ workers	Wage of foremen	Wage of managers
Foundry	1,214	52	10	23	5,418	6,270
Auto	409	11	4	33	5,000	6,220
Gear	993	29	7	34	5,317	6,571
Forge-shop	473	20	5	24	5,215	6,220
Iron structure	578	20	5	29	5,305	6,340
Wagon	644	26	4	25	5,160	6,275
Motor	1,191	31	8	38	5,230	6,300
Vehicle	227	5	3	45	5,900	5,900

Source: GYML, X. 415/200/3, A közvetlen termelésirányítók helyzete, politikai-szakmai felkészültségük értékelése – az emberi kapcsolatokra gyakorolt hatásuk.

finished a weekly job in one weekend, with the question of what his employees had been doing during the week.[47] Stagnant real incomes, however, reinforced the voices of discontent. Even though in 1986 Horváth was made an honorary citizen of Győr and elected the man of the year, his titles did not compensate the Rába workers for the material recognition. Rába was presented in the national media as one of the most successful modern enterprises, which produced much revenue in Western currency for the country, but the workers thought that they profited little from this revenue.[48] In fact, when economic reform was placed again on the agenda, and the reform communist wing of the party started to leak information about the poor economic performance of the country in the second half of the 1980s, Rába workers believed that they were the losers of national economic policy:

> At the meeting of the commercial chamber, comrade Havasi spoke of the difficult economic situation that everybody knows. He explained why it is so difficult to realize the 3 per cent production growth. According to our employees Rába always produced more for the people's economy. If this is not the case in many other factories, the ones who have good results rightfully expect the government to intervene on their side. It is untenable that there are enterprises (and not so few), which produce losses[49] and they receive various favours (flexible working hours, VGMK, etc.). At the same time, the employ-

> ees of factories like the Wagon Factory, where there is a strict economic order and strong discipline, are at a disadvantage.[50]

The workers in the Industrial Tool Factory thought that the economic regulators had a contradictory effect because they indeed punished those who worked well.[51] Many employees went as far as to relate the poor economic performance of the country to the unfair redistribution of state revenues:

> The interview with the manager of our enterprise in *Népszabadság* had a very good reception. The employees fully agree with the statement that it is time to give more opportunities for the prospering enterprises because the capital invested in them produces greater profit. It cannot be in the interest of the people's economy to support the loss-making enterprises at the expense of the profitable ones. It is bad news for the employees who work decently that the various regulators will again prevent the recognition of the high achievements. The conference of the labour management stressed that the reward should be proportionate to the achievement. This is exactly the opinion of our employees, too.[52]

The consumption-oriented policy that Hungary's welfare dictatorship encouraged had, therefore, contradictory results. It successfully integrated the working class into the system and in the mid-1970s, when the government could spend the most on the increase of the consumption levels of the population, the surveys of the Research Center for Public Opinion Poll of the Hungarian Radio and Television showed Kádár to be a very popular leader – and we have to stress that the Hungarian political climate was much less oppressive at the time than Honecker's dictatorship, so the results of the surveys were more reliable.

The basis of this legitimacy was, however, essentially fragile. Even the cited survey of 1976 revealed that the standard-of-living policy failed to satisfy people to the desired level as to convince them of the superiority of socialism, even when there was an effective increase in real wages. According to national statistics the real wage increase was the greatest in 1970–75; in the second half of the 1970s the real wages still increased but at a lower rate because of the rapidly increasing prices.[53] Throughout the 1980s real wages stagnated, and in 1988 they actually fell. But even in 1976 when the survey was conducted, the majority of people achieved a higher standard of living with more work, because the pay increase alone did not guarantee the desired level of consumption. Even this survey showed that the standard-of-living policy was not the best political slogan; the actual counter-effect became manifest in the 1980s when people became more discontented with their economic situation. In the 1970s the slogan that the oil crisis would not creep into the socialist countries was much repeated; it did not improve the credibility of the government when it still did. The quotations reveal

the process of how the political climate has been 'darkened' for the regime, what the manager also tried to explain in the quoted interview of the summer of 1989.[54] People regarded the financial restrictions that were necessitated by the economic situation of the country as unjust since they had not worked less than before. The warning of the reformer economists came true;[55] people thought that the government 'determined' the standard of living, and so when they started to live worse, their anger understandably turned against the political regime which had deceived them.

Working-Class Culture and Education

The revitalization of the educational project in the 1970s was supposed to benefit the working class as well as to render the cause of socialism attractive in the eyes of the people. The project sought to shape people's consciousness in two ways: first, by increasing the general level of education, and second, by providing for the cultivated entertainment of the people thereby increasing the level of general knowledge. The popularization of 'high culture' (theatre, concerts, ballet, art movies) was meant to demonstrate that workers were fully integrated into the socialist middle class.[56] At the same time the project carried the propagandistic message that intellectual values were more important than material ones, which was, unfortunately, contradicted by the social experience. There is also evidence from the interviews that although workers did participate in an intensive community life, people gave little credit to the socialist cultural propaganda, which advocated the superiority of intellectual values. The survey of 1976 shows that this was true also for part of the intelligentsia.

Increased educational performance on an individual level, of course, enhanced a person's employment prospects; evening courses were in fact offered in order to train working-class managers.[57] Education was important for ensuring their professional competence, which the county secretary formulated in a rather clumsy way:

> The other thing is the training of working-class managers. The resolution of the Central Committee attaches great significance to this. But there are excesses in the leadership. I have heard such opinions from some workplaces and enterprises that their workers will fill every leading position. Then why do we need to train ten thousand university graduates? We should not generalize but we always have to consider the concrete situation: if a worker is suitable for the job, we will choose him. But if we make a wrong choice and the new manager cannot bear the burden, we will put him in a very unpleasant situation. He has to go back to the shop floor and the workers will tease him and make fun of him. If we increase the number of working-class managers only statistically, we may discredit this noble political goal.[58]

Adult education was indeed supposed to strengthen political loyalty: selection to institutions of higher education depended on the recommendation of the party. With the increasing number of young university graduates, the importance of evening universities in individual mobility did, however, decline.[59]

In the light of statistics there was also enough room for improvement at the lower level of education, which the project strongly promoted. In 1974, about 37,000 skilled workers finished primary school or even had secondary or other further education, but nearly 11,000 skilled workers did not have basic education (the compulsory eight classes of primary school). Between 1968 and 1973 there were 5,200 people who attended a primary school for adults (90 per cent were blue-collar workers); and 8,500 trainees were admitted to the training schools of the county in a year.[60] This working class was mainly of working-class origin itself; 80 per cent of the trainees came from working-class families.[61] The report noted that the proportion of students from working-class families was very low in medical and language faculties at university.[62] The enterprises supported the education of their employees in economics and engineering. Working-class children therefore had more chance of gaining access to the technical intelligentsia, rather than to more traditional intellectual occupations.

Another report from 1974 likewise painted a gloomy picture of the state of public education. It was estimated that 40 per cent of the semi-skilled workers and around two-thirds of the unskilled workers (33,000 people) in the county did not finish primary school. In the machine industry 25 per cent of the workforce did not have basic education. The report noted that 24 per cent of the workers in the county commuted, and travelling consumed much of the free time that they could have spent cultivating their mind. It critically remarked that many social organizations neglected the cause of culture: 'The enterprises do not always support adequately the local cultural institutions, which could offer a basis for the strengthening of the workers' collective and community life, and the comprehensive development of workers' education.' Within the enterprises, the report stated, the socialist brigade movement provided an organizational basis for workers' education. There were 2,585 socialist brigades in the county, with around 32, 000 brigade members. The report, however, criticized the 'over-formality and often mechanic administration in the cultural initiatives of the brigades'. The general cultural level of the population also received critical comments: 'We experienced striking deficiencies in the economic, pedagogic and linguistic competence of the population; their development is essential for the further expansion of enterprise democracy.'

The intellectual critics, however, contradicted themselves or they had too high expectations. The following data that they listed namely does not support the above negative picture: it was estimated that 25 per cent of the population regularly read books while around 40–45 per cent was reported to rarely read. The proportion of theatre audiences containing blue-collar workers was higher, and 10 per cent of workers regularly listened to classical music. 'Municipalities started organizing concerts but they suffer from a lack of experience. One major obstacle to popularizing classical music is that there are not enough town halls in our county – including Győr – that are suitable for concerts.' The report noted that even though fine arts improved, 'the decoration of the public squares left much to be desired'. The movement of amateur filmmakers 'was developed on a narrow basis but it was noticed nationally'. In 1972 there were 434 amateur artistic groups in the county, with 8,572 members; 6,000 of them were below thirty, which shows that it was primarily a youth-based movement. In 1973, the county had 90,315 television subscribers.[63]

Thanks to the massively propagated cultural programme,[64] there remains considerable information on the education of the Rába employees in Győr. In 1972 it was reported that out of the 17,000 employees of the MVG, 5,500 (32.3 per cent) did not have elementary education. Even the report noted that 'this number was strikingly high'.[65] Over the following five years this percentage decreased to a quarter of the total workforce (24.7 per cent). The educational statistics of the employees according to age group showed the general improvement of education (see Table 2.4).

The education of blue-collar workers was characterized by a similar generational pattern: the overwhelming majority of the workers without basic education were over thirty and there were many more workers in the age group below thirty who finished secondary school than in the age group over thirty. The educational difference between the older and younger generations was also considered in the appointment of managers: even though foremen had to have a high school certificate, it was noted that one could not expect this from older workers.[66] At the same time the acquisition of a college or university degree almost automatically meant promotion for the skilled workers: this is supported by the fact that amongst the blue-collar workers there were only fifteen college graduates (all of them in the age group below thirty).[67]

The MVG directly supported the education of young people. It supported its own training school and the trainees were employed in the enterprise during their training time. Between 1972 and 1976 the school admitted 350 children in a year on average, and around 75 per cent of the young skilled workers chose to stay with the enterprise. The choice was also motivated by the so-called social scholarships that the enterprise

Table 2.4 Education of workers according to their ages in MVG in 1977 (%)

Age Education	Under 20	20–30	30–50	Above 50	Total
University or College	–	6.6	3.4	2.7	3.9
High School	18. 5	27.7	17.1	14	20
Primary School	75	60.4	46.3	27. 5	51.4
Unfinished Primary School	6.5	5.3	33.2	55.8	24.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: GYML, X. 415/195/3, Jelentés a munkásmu˝velo˝dés tapasztalatairól, helyzetéro˝l és szerepéro˝l, fejlesztésének feladatairól a Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyárban, MVG összes dolgozójának iskolai végzettség szerinti megoszlása korcsoportonként.

offered to the trainees: they received a regular financial support during their three-year vocational training and they had to commit themselves to working in the enterprise for an equal period of time.[68] This type of scholarship was also offered to university and college students.[69] The enterprise evidently increased its support for training and education: in 1976 there were one hundred more trainees who received support than in 1972. While in 1972 the MVG spent 689,700 Ft on social scholarships, in 1976 it spent more than double, 1,751,000 Ft.[70]

Adult education, which was specifically targeted at the working class, likewise received support in the period. This was not limited to higher education; given the high number of employees without basic education, they were encouraged to finish primary school or do vocational training. The party organization of the factory listed two main problems in this respect: the first was that it was difficult to convince older people to study (and the majority of people without basic education belonged to the older generations) and the second was the problem of commuters. The party organization contacted the local village schools but only two of them answered declaring that they could not start the workers' primary school because people refused to go back to school.[71] The enterprise offered financial incentives, too: basic education was a prerequisite of vocational training within the enterprise, and those who received the skilled worker certificate received a pay increase of 10 per cent.[72] The attendance

Table 2.5 Education and qualification of blue-collar workers according to their age and gender in MVG in 1977 (person)

Education	Age	Skilled		Semi-skilled		Unskilled		Total	
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
College	Under 30	15	–	–	–	–	–	15	–
	Above 30	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
High School	Under 30	754	56	78	102	5	1	837	159
	Above 30	444	22	57	25	6	2	509	49
Primary School	Under 30	2,633	96	824	479	166	150	3,623	725
	Above 30	2,539	88	946	778	99	201	3,584	1,067
Unfinished Primary School	Under 30	13	2	147	29	116	55	276	86
	Above 30	1,158	55	1,353	619	335	435	2,846	1,109

Source: GYML, X. 415/195/3, Jelentés a munkásmu˝velo˝dés tapasztalatairól, helyzetéro˝l és szerepéro˝l, fejlesztésének feladatairól a Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyárban, Fizikai dolgozók iskolai végzettsége.

of secondary school and university degree programmes was supported with paid study leave. Many socialist brigades committed themselves to increasing the education of the members, which aimed to strengthen the individual motivation. According to the report the interest of the employees in adult education was satisfactory, which can be supported with statistical data. Between 1972 and 1976, adult education in MVG had 3,999 participants: 387 men and 175 women finished primary school, 1,524 men and 741 women finished secondary school and 1,010 men and 162 women attended university or college courses.[73]

While much had been done to mobilize the collective for the educational project, there were also administrative means to enhance the participation. In December 1976 an educational committee was formed in

the party organization of MVG to promote education and culture among the employees.[74] Whether it can be explained through the generally improving education or the support of the enterprise or both, statistics continued to improve throughout the 1970s (see Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Development of the education of the workforce of Rába MVG (%)

	1975	1979
University or College	3.4	6.1
High School	18	23. 6
Primary School	54.6	52
Unfinished Primary School	24	18.3

GYML, X. 415/200/3, A közmu˝velo˝dés helyzete. Az MVG végrehajtó bizottságának jelentése az 1975-ös pártértekezlet után, 12, 1979. december 11.

The percentage of highly qualified workers increased. In 1979, 23 per cent of the employees were white-collar and 77 per cent were blue-collar workers; 25.2 per cent of the workforce were aged below thirty and 24.2 per cent were women.[75] Between 1975 and 1979 a total of 1,961 employees participated in technical training programmes, 410 skilled workers obtained further qualifications and 334 semi-skilled workers received the skilled worker certificate. Within the framework of production development, eleven courses were organized with 360 participants. In one year, thirty to forty university students received scholarships from the enterprise who then committed themselves to working in Rába MVG after graduation.[76]

Despite the improving statistics, even the reports admitted that there were two specific types of educational inequality that adult education could hardly reduce. The first was the education of the commuters. The commuters were less likely to participate in adult education than Győr residents because they had less free time and they depended on the public transport timetables:

> The ratio of the commuters is rather low in adult education. The reason is that they cannot reconcile the afternoon classes in the workers' primary school or secondary school with the schedule of public transport. Their trains and buses depart around 5 pm and if the commuters miss their buses and trains, they have to wait for the end of the afternoon shift.[77]

This inequality was also reflected in the statistics. Even though 39 per cent of the employees in Győr were commuters, in the 1978/79 academic year, of 25 Győr residents (90 per cent) and only 3 commuters

(10 per cent) obtained a university degree during work. In the same year 26 urban workers (90 per cent) and 3 commuters (10 per cent) obtained a degree from the workers' university. In the same year, 57 local residents (70 per cent) and 24 commuters (30 per cent) finished secondary school, and 12 Győr residents (70 per cent) and 5 commuters (30 per cent) finished workers' primary school. The low ratio of the commuters among the university graduates shows that they had fewer opportunities in the enterprise than the local residents. The training courses that were held in the enterprise more successfully engaged the commuters because they were adjusted to the schedule of their trains and buses, and 50 per cent of the participants in these courses were commuters.[78] A certain bias against the commuters, which was reflected in the worker–peasant conflict, persisted in the party organization of MVG. Commuters were allegedly interested in cultivating their plots rather than their minds: 'The agricultural activity of the commuters is a serious obstacle to their professional development. Husbandry, gardening and farming consume much of their time on a regular basis, which renders any intellectual activity impossible after work in the factory.'[79] Among the young skilled workers there was an equal proportion of local residents and commuters: in 1978, 56 commuters (59.6 per cent) and 38 local residents (40.4 per cent) started working in MVG, while in in the following year 39 commuters (55 per cent) and 32 Győr residents (45 per cent) took up work in the enterprise. The report, however, noted that in reality a much higher number of trainees came from the villages but they returned home after they finished training.[80]

The second specific problem was that of gender inequality. The educational statistics of MVG show that the education of women workers was in general lower than that of men. In 1977, there were 38 per cent of women workers who did not finish primary school, 56 per cent had only elementary education, and 6 per cent finished secondary school. At the same time, 29 per cent of male workers did not finish primary school, 59 per cent had basic education, 11.8 per cent finished secondary school and 8.2 per cent had a college or university degree. Within the group of skilled workers, the proportion of women who had a high school certificate was higher: 25.6 per cent of skilled women workers finished secondary school while this proportion was 16 per cent among the skilled men workers. The educational inequality between men and women could be clearly demonstrated in their participation in higher education: 8.5 per cent of the skilled men workers and 8.1 per cent of the semi-skilled men workers had a college or university degree, while the highest education of women workers was secondary school. The educational statistics of the total workforce of MVG reflected the same inequality: while 1.9 per cent

of the women had a college or university degree, this ratio was more than double (4.6 per cent) among the men. At the enterprise level, the educational statistics were more balanced in the lower educational categories because the white-collar workers improved the statistics of women: 26 per cent of the women did not finish primary school, 52.1 per cent had basic education, and 28 per cent had a high school certificate, while 24.2 per cent of the men did not did not finish primary school, 52.1 per cent had basic education and 28 per cent had a high school certificate.[81] Adult education maintained a certain inequality at the university level: even though one-quarter of the employees were women, only 16 per cent studied in college or university during work between 1972 and 1976 (the ratio at the high school level was better because half of the adult students were women).[82] Since higher management was recruited from the university graduates, the lower ratio of women who finished college or university also meant lower career chances in the enterprise.

While statistics can tell us something of the improvement of education, they can hardly be used to describe the cultural life of the factory. Since no survey survived among the employees, apart from the later memoirs, one can only rely on a rather general report, which summarized some basic facts. In Rába (like in any other state-owned enterprise) the socialist brigades were regarded as the main basis of the cultural initiatives and undertakings.[83] The members of the brigade committed themselves to studying, obtaining a higher degree and participating in cultural events (attending theatre, concerts, artistic films, visiting museums, etc.); these cultural offerings counted towards the ranking of the brigades.[84] Whether it was motivated by genuine interest or the administrative measures, the number of regular theatregoers increased: 435 season tickets were sold in the enterprise in 1976, while in 1977 this increased to 585. The report noted that the enterprise established regular contacts with the artists of Kisfaludy theatre,[85] which helped to popularize the theatre among employees.[86] Three artistic groups functioned within the framework of the enterprise: a choir, a brass band and a dance group. In 1976, more than thirty thousand people saw the programmes of these groups. The workers' concerts were also reported to have had a positive reception.[87]

The most successful form of propagating general knowledge were the popular scientific lectures; not surprisingly, primarily the technical and economic subjects attracted employees, with 2,600–2,800 attending the lectures in eighty sections in a year. On 1 March 1977 a TIT-group (Tudományos Ismeretterjesztő Társulat = Scientific Association for the Propagation of General Knowledge) was formed in the enterprise, with twenty-two members.[88] The enterprise had a well-equipped technical and a trade union library (see Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Main features of the libraries of MVG

	Trade union library	Technical library
Members No.	**6,537**	**2,675**
Brigade members No.	**3,209**	**889**
Visitors No.	**52,323**	**12,676**
Borrowed copies	**160,690**	**29,487**
Library stock	**66,000**	**47,395**

Source: GYML, X. 415/195/3, Jelentés a munkásmu˝velo˝dés tapasztalatairól, helyzetéro˝l és szerepéro˝l, fejlesztésének feladatairól a Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyárban, MVG könyvtárainak fo˝bb jellemzo˝i.

Nearly 40 per cent of the Rába employees were library members and the majority of them regularly attended the library. The members borrowed ten books in a year on average.[89] The libraries organized writer–reader meetings, which were attended by around six hundred employees in a year.[90] The larger cultural events took place in Ady Endre Community House, which hosted the various clubs, artistic groups and hobby groups. The report noted that the enterprise requested a new building for the organization of cultural programmes.[91]

In the light of the later memoirs the picture is more mixed. Many interviewers reported of positive experiences concerning community-building, where the members of the brigade did indeed support each other and the common cultural undertaking was regarded as real entertainment and not one more task that had to be fulfilled.[92] It was, however, admitted that not everybody was enthusiastic about the common cultural undertaking; even a contemporary report recognized that after one day of hard work, many people were happy to go home and spend time with their families rather than attend high cultural events. Despite the good intention of the party, the administrative measures were likely to have the opposite effect: in the eyes of many, the fulfilment of the cultural tasks was regarded as a constraint. Workers' education admittedly sought to increase the political consciousness of the people; it seems, however, that it missed its political goal. Even those who had positive experiences of brigade life stressed the loss of the community, while dismissing communist propaganda. Many pointed out that the members who failed to attend the events were also 'recorded' in the diary of the brigade, which reveals that (self-)deception had become part of the functioning of the system.

The revival of important elements of the old social democratic programme (support of working-class housing, culture, education and com-

munity-building) can be observed also in Honecker's GDR. The problem with this project was not its content but rather the fact that the party was unable to modernize its political and social programme. As we will see, the shortage of flats and building materials remained a frequent source of complaint in the GDR; facing competition with West Germany, it was difficult to convince the working class of the superiority of socialism. The support of working class culture and education was undoubtedly a positive socialist initiative; however, there is evidence from both countries that educational mobility declined from the 1970s. The gap between ideology and social reality, should not, however, discredit the programme of the support of working-class culture and education. Even though Rába was a 'privileged' socialist factory, it did not have a homogenous working class. Workers had different cultural needs: even if the whole brigade did not attend the cultural events that they recorded, many could still participate in an 'affordable' cultural experience. There were brigades where the community indeed gave motivation for people to study or learn languages. The party's effort to raise the education level of people should be evaluated in the light of Hungarian statistics, which showed the relative backwardness of the country in comparison to East Germany. The educational project of the party clearly improved the statistics of Rába MVG: it decreased the percentage of people who did not finish primary school, and enabled ambitious workers to obtain college or university degrees. Those who had higher education were quickly promoted to white-collar or managerial jobs. Both East German and Hungarian interviewees reported of such working-class careers.

Working-Class Housing and Commuting

The two most important fringe benefits were the support of housing and public transport. With respect to the first, it is clear that Rába had far fewer flats to offer to the employees than the Zeiss enterprise, which could distribute whole blocks of flats as a result of the state housing programme. There is no survey of the housing conditions of the Rába employees but there is indirect evidence that the housing conditions of at least the skilled core of the working class corresponded to the standards of the socialist middle class. The quoted survey of the evaluation of the standard of living among the membership of the machine-manufacturing enterprises in the county involved 471 Rába workers (nearly half of the respondents). The survey found that people had settled living conditions: the majority of the respondents lived in their own houses or flats.[93] The high number of commuters (39 per cent in the Győr factories) also improved living conditions because building was cheaper in the villages:[94] it was often the

parents who gave the building plots, and young people could rely on the help of relatives and friends.[95]

The enterprise offered two specific types of help to employees. They could get tenancy in one of the flats that belonged to the enterprise; it was, however, a very limited opportunity because Rába only had ninety-three flats in Győr. Between 1971 and 1977, ten blue-collar and twenty-three white-collar workers could move to these flats.[96] The occupants were usually life tenants: in 1979, eighteen of the tenants of the enterprise flats no longer worked in the enterprise.[97] The second, more widespread form of support was the enterprise loan that Rába offered employees at preferential rates to buy flats. The support was not unconditional because the recipients had to sign a contract with the enterprise and agree to work there for a determined period of time.[98] Between 1970 and 1979, there were 1,093 employees who put in a claim for a flat, out of which the problems of 601 employees (392 blue-collar and 209 white-collar workers) were solved. In all, 447 people received a total of 22,465,000 Ft from the development funds and 170 employees received 2,122,000 Ft from the solidarity funds.[99] Between 1971 and 1977, no fewer than 148 blue-collar and 101 white-collar workers received enterprise loans to buy OTP-flats, and 131 blue-collar workers received support for housing cooperatives.[100]

The enterprise launched one workers' housing project in cooperation with the state construction company of Ipar street (Ipar=industry) in 1976. The project solved the flat problems of 120 people.[101] In the following years the enterprise had to rely on the city council for the provision of flats, which could help substantially fewer people a year. In 1979, for instance, the council offered only fourteen flats to the Rába employees.[102] A report of the flat committee of the enterprise did, however, stress that the employees had not experienced the 'severe flat problem that has become so fashionable today': between 1970 and 1979 the enterprise solved every second flat claim, and there was no flat claim put in for more than three to four years.[103]

Other criticisms emerged in the 1980s, which were mainly targeted at the unequal chances of young people to acquire the desired flats. Even a report on the social situation of youth in the county admitted that the social background increasingly mattered in the establishment of an independent household:

> The chance of youth to buy a flat is not uniformly negatively evaluated. We can summarize the opinions in the following ways: the young people in the big cities, who live from their wages, and whose parents have similar material circumstances – namely, they cannot count on the help of their parents and they have no extra income – are in the most difficult situation. The small towns give a better chance to youth: people can usually get flats in two to five years

> (e.g. in Csorna). In the villages the cheaper ground plots, the extra income from farming, and friends' help improve the chances of youth to get settled.[104]

The party organization of MVG reported that the extra work to establish their own home was occupying working-class youth too much, and they often did not have time or energy for the social and party activities.[105] With the 'creeping in of the oil crisis' – as it was called – the government increased the price of petrol and utilities. The increase of the rents of the state flats found a particularly negative response among the population because the cheap housing was one propaganda slogan of the party:

> Out of the planned measures the increase of the state rents triggered loud debates among the employees. The responses, of course, depended on the involvement of people. Those who live in state flats are angry while some others would say that 'one has to pay the price of every service'. Many people think that the state flat is an achievement of the socialist society. We often used the cheap rents as an argument against the higher incomes in the capitalist countries.[106]

In 1984, workers said that a flat cost ten to fifteen times more than their annual income.[107] The problem was brought up in the information report of MVG in October 1985:

> The flat issue is the most important problem of today's youth. The topic came up in the preparation for the Thirteenth Party Congress but since then there has been no progress. On the contrary, the flat prices have increased. The great burden of saving for a flat deprives this age group of healthy education and entertainment.[108]

The flat problem was often used to explain the political indifference of youth: a report from the Mosonmagyaróvár plant, for instance, related the low level of interest of working-class youth in the communist organizations to the lack of material prospects.[109] Young people may not have seen as much future for themselves as their parents' generation did when they were young.

Interestingly, reports on the state of public transport allow for a similar line of argumentation. On the one hand, the enterprise did indeed give generous support for the public transport of the employees; on the other hand, informants reported an increasing discontent with the conditions of travelling as if it had expressed the bad political mood of the people for the regime. (Public transport constituted a separate topic of the information reports.) The overwhelming majority of the employees travelled by public transport, on trains or buses, to their workplaces, or they cycled.[110] From1968 the employees could buy seasonal rail, bus or combined tick-

ets at a discount in the enterprise (a combined ticket was valid for both the bus and the train). The percentage of reimbursement was higher for rail because the state covered 20 per cent of the fare, the enterprise covered 66 per cent and the employee had to pay only 14 per cent, while there was no state support for bus travel. The enterprise paid 40–60 per cent of the bus fares of an employee, depending on the distance.[111]

The travel allowance was, apparently, significant. In 1980, the enterprise supported the rail fares of 2,595 employees, the bus fares of 2,108 employees, and the combined tickets of 365 Rába workers.[112] This in practice meant that the support covered a significant part of the fares. The employees who travelled by train paid only 10 per cent of the fares (the enterprise paid a total of 523,932 Ft, while the employees paid 54,732 Ft) and those who travelled by bus paid around 50 per cent (the enterprise paid a total of 290,880 Ft, and the employees paid 324,811 Ft). Commuters comprised 39 per cent of the employees of the Győr plants. In 1979 the enterprise had twelve buses to solve the transport of the employees to the airport plant,[113] which employed 3,440 people (30 per cent of the total workforce in Győr). In the same year the enterprise ordered eight new buses to provide for the comfortable transportation of the employees.[114] According to the report, the same could not be said of the railway transport. There were many complaints that the workers' trains were overcrowded and dirty, and the carriages were old and damaged. Many wagons had no or poor heating and the windows could not be closed properly. The management complained that there were frequent delays in winter. In 1980, first quarter, 1,591 employees started work one hour late, causing a production loss of 810,000 Ft to the enterprise.[115]

The conditions of city transport may well have been poor throughout the period; criticism, however, became abundant in the 1980s. Information reports frequently addressed the problem of overcrowding as a source of everyday anger: 'It is not the first time that we criticize the poor standard of public transport from Adyváros to the airport plant. Why can't Volán[116] take into consideration that more people travel by bus in winter and increase the number of lines?' The informant added that 'people expect human travelling conditions for their money'.[117] After two years we can read the same criticism: 'Line 20[118] is extremely overcrowded in the morning hours. People complain that it is impossible to get on the bus at the Verseny ABC bus stop.[119] With the coming of the winter, this over-crowdedness can become intolerable.'[120]

One angry informant did indeed write a long report on the state of public transport, which reveals the general increase of frustration:

> Civilized public transport has been neglected on 80 per cent of the bus lines for years. We don't speak of comfortable travelling because it is only a wish. But we would like to achieve tolerable conditions on the morning and afternoon workers' routes. Volán allegedly solved public transport between Ménfőcsanak and Győr, but all they did was to provide long-distance buses, which arrive so over-crowded in Csanak that people can't get on them. The passengers of the buses who pay 400–500 Ft for a season ticket also have a reason to be angry with the Csanak people who occupy their places when they go home from work. But what can they do if they only want to travel to Csanak, and they have no other option than to trample on the others and swallow their scolding and grumbling? This creates a very bad mood for work or the 'second shift' at home. It would be good if a town route was indeed a town route and not a compressed passenger carrier equipped with a town number! It is characteristic that in an interview with the managers of the Volán in Debrecen and Győr, the former said that they plan to buy new buses, while the Győr manager reassured his audience that they would solve the problem with a 'better organization' of city transport. Ever since then nothing has changed, only the passengers' anger has been mounting.[121]

This kind of irony manifested itself in other information reports. The forge shop ordered soda machines in the summer in order to provide the employees with cold drinks. The machines did indeed arrive but they remained in their packaging for a year. 'There was presumably a shortage of carbonic acid', an informant commented on the case with understandable irony.[122] Canteen food was another frequent source of ridicule:[123]

> On Good Friday they probably fried stale meat because it tasted like the old leather shoe sole. In the canteen people wondered whether it was necessary to hurt the feelings of religious people by serving a meat dish. But during the meal it turned out that they hurt those who did not refrain from consuming meat on that day (although it turned bitter in the mouths of many people).'[124]

Another informant proposed that the kitchen drop the 'Győr' small roast from the menu because 'it destroys the reputation of the town'.[125] The canteen jokes sometimes had a political connotation similar to the comment on the shortage of carbonic acid – for instance, the observation that the 'overcooked pasta and tasteless meals cannot be explained through the increase in prices. These mistakes can be explained through the incompetence of the cooks'.[126]

The critical comments support the experience that Burawoy had among the furnacemen of the Lenin Steel Works.[127] People realized the gap between the promises and the actual results of the system, which no longer could consol them with a distant 'bright future' as had been done during the period of forced industrialization. In the light of the unprec-

edented scale of social mobility in postwar Hungary, the political and social emancipation of the working class and peasantry that the Communist Party advocated could indeed be attractive catchwords in the 1950s and 1960s. However, as the information reports of the 1980s show, workers no longer believed that the regime could offer them a 'bright future': they openly made fun of the socialist propaganda and all of its promises. Since informants were members of the party (and often low-level party functionaries), this criticism revealed that loyalty to the system had started to crumble.

'Community life was very different back then': The Socialist Brigade Movement

The role of socialist brigades is often misunderstood in the literature: they are linked with the Stakhanovite movement, which was primarily aimed at increasing production. There was a socialist work contest also between the brigades. In principle, the members of the brigades committed themselves to accomplishing extra tasks in production and education. The accomplishment of the tasks was then evaluated and the best brigades received moral and material recognition (the title of excellent brigade, premium, etc.). The movement admittedly sought to increase competition but at the same time it was aimed at community-building because socialist brigades were supposed to be the main basis of workers' education and culture. Members of the brigades were expected to meet regularly and to organize common programmes in order to keep their commitments. These programmes were recorded in the diary of the brigade.[128]

The surviving contemporary sources of brigade work in Rába tell us indeed little of what role the brigades actually played in the lives of workers.[129] In 1975 the Wagon Factory won 'the wandering red flag of Work', and it was given the title of 'Outstanding Enterprise'.[130] The available party documents of MVG, however, suggest that the management had an ambivalent relationship with the brigade movement, particularly when the workers attempted to intervene in production decisions that the managers regarded as their own authority. The former Stakhanovite, Ede Horváth, was not very enthusiastic about production campaigns. At a meeting of the executive committee of Rába MVG he openly expressed his disapproval in front of the party leadership: 'Comrades, you have to compete on the sports field!' We should not, of course, forget that Horváth was a member of the Central Committee; the party secretary of the factory dared not contradict him publicly.

The management's ambivalent relationship with the brigade movement supports the argument that the brigades were first and foremost

'support groups', which offered space for social life and private contacts rather than production teams. We can even document conflicts between the brigadiers and the managers. Brigadiers often openly charged the management with hindering brigade work:

> As a former brigadier, I can tell that a collective can work even without special warning. Our brigade was formed nine years ago; since then sixteen people finished secondary school or college, almost everybody has his own library, and we made excursions across the country. The members of our brigade did not spend the premium on feasts but they used the money more reasonably. They knew each other's family problems. The former speaker brought up the issue of the contact with the management. We met the managers only if the task was very urgent. There was no regular contact. There was simply no opportunity to discuss the problems of the movement with the higher bodies. We could not speak about the problems that we had in production. It angered the management that we informed them of the problems in their field. We received answers that we are not competent in this, it is not our business. Or another case: there was a manager who declared in the evaluation form that there was no socialist brigade in his field.[131]

In a base-cell meeting a brigadier reported of a similar conflict with the management over the issue of authority:

> I do agree with the report and also with the refusal to evaluate the work of the party groups. In the axle and bridge production line political work is totally ignored at the level of the factory. I base this on the fact that one year after the formation of our brigade we had a meeting where they said that there is no brigade work even though I attended every brigade meeting. Then I resigned from my post because it was a great thing that we could form this brigade at all. The reasons why our brigade work was not better lie in the management and the trade union because it did not care about us. … In my view, every worker has his own problem but he would not speak of it because it won't be solved anyway. I also had a tool problem; I was promised to get one and I did not get any. Why should we tell about our problems if they won't be solved anyway?[132]

The main tasks of socialist brigades triggered debates in the executive committee of the party organization of MVG. One speaker openly expressed his doubts about the comparability of brigades (and thus, about the validity of impressive statistics):

> As for me, I cannot agree with the following. The report states that there is excellent brigade work in some fields. I would like to examine this question. It is not easy to compare the work of a white-collar worker with that of a blue-

> collar worker and similarly, it is disputable what we call excellent brigade work. We often have problems – when they request our figures, we declare that the organization of the socialist work contest is 55 per cent in our enterprise. What do the other 45 per cent do? If we compare individual work, we may find that many of those, who are not organized in brigades, also work well, or even better. Their work equally counts towards our results.[133]

Another speaker proposed that the brigades, whose members perform hard physical work, should be given a more lenient evaluation:

> I think what we see here is only a search for solutions. They can't decide what the brigades should do. There are many documentaries of brigade life on TV. There is nothing in the films that we have not done. Or do we maybe set too high standards? We have to admit that it is difficult to realize the socialist work contest in our enterprise. We have to use different aspects of evaluation. There are brigades that keep a regular record of the fulfilled tasks – theatre, borrowing from the library – and there are others where people finish work and they are happy to go home to have a rest. They don't have time for the common meetings. We should understand that.[134]

Despite the positive figures of the socialist work contest, even the surviving sources suggest that brigade life was more important for community-building than for production.[135] In life-history interviews many former brigade members reported having participated in an intensive community life – an argument, which was also developed in the cited accounts of former brigadiers. The common leisure and sometimes even family programmes strengthened social contacts among colleagues, thus reinforcing cohesion and solidarity. Interview partners also reported of cases when these supportive social networks helped them (or others) through private hardships.

> It was much better with the socialist brigades, we all knew each other. At that time they said that we have to pay attention to the others. On paper. But people also wanted to pay attention to the others. Because I remember that we went to see the babies of the colleagues, we went to the cinema, and what you can imagine, everywhere. To concerts … and the community was at that time more united, we went to bowl, to play football; at that time we always went somewhere. Not because people undertook the tasks on paper. Ridiculous. But because they had a nice time together. And there were very few who wanted to be left out of this company.[136]

Many interview partners directly contrasted the old times, when communities at the workplace had been more important to the people, with the experience of the new, capitalist regime:

> At that time it was possible to establish better communities in a workplace than today. I can say this as a brigadier. I invited them to this anglers' camp[137] a couple of times in a year. When the first was successful, they were likely to come again. They had an opportunity to get to know each other, and they were also interested in it. Now the same company – okay, not the same because three or four had already retired, but there are new people – so, ten years ago sixty to sixty-five came because many brought their families, too – last time it was only twenty-two. One has no time, the other is tired – only one had a really serious excuse, even though he still came in the afternoon. It is no longer fashionable today; perhaps people don't want to go to company because of their individual problems. But this also holds for our house. Eighty flats. When we moved in, I visited at least thirty-five flats on New Years' Eve. But people also came to us, we went from flat to flat together, we had a great time.[138]

The decline of community life was addressed in many other life-history interviews. People generally agreed that society had become more individualistic:

> That old community spirit, that brigade spirit that I represented, too – since I was the brigadier in this group – so it was possible to regularly bring together people; I invited them or we went to a restaurant, and we had a good chat. We don't have this today, people don't have time, even though we are not that many, everybody runs home after work, has other business.[139]

While many interview partners recalled community life with a sense of loss, brigades were not linked with communist ideology in the eyes of people. As one interview partner formulated, people had a nice time together and they cared little about the ideology. Other interview partners consciously distanced themselves from the propaganda of the regime, while maintaining that community life was different back then:

> In the past the collective was very different, for instance the socialist brigades, it is easy to say now that it was all communist propaganda, but I think, no, today you can't organize anything like that. I am not nostalgic, really not, because those times were also not very good, but it was different, people were related somehow differently. Now they don't care about others, it is a different age, a different style, everybody says, it was not so bad in the past, we were young, we used to go out, it was not bad at all. We went to the pub, to the wine-cellar, drinking, having barbecues, we also went to the library, there were eminent librarian members [laughs] so I was an eminent librarian member, too. I like reading very much, I wrote in the diary of the brigade, we had lectures, we planned socialism [laughs], it was not so bad, excursions with the brigade, cinemas, the collective was very different in the past. Okay there was a lot of Marxism, but we did not take it seriously, they could not fool us with everything.[140]

Both the life-history interviews and the local sources support the argument that the brigade movement did not increase workers' influence on production decisions and it did not improve their proprietary consciousness. It did improve community life but it failed to achieve its propagandistic goal because people were much more likely to identify themselves with their group (where everybody was in a more or less similar situation) than with the regime. It can be indeed argued that solidarity was often reinforced by the common feeling of powerlessness; in this sense it is worth pointing out the complaint of the brigadier, who spoke of his problem obtaining tools at work. It is likewise remarkable in the quoted sources that brigadiers would typically speak of 'us' and 'them' in relation with the workers and the management, which may be indicative of the weak influence of the brigadiers. This suggests that the brigade movement was regarded as a 'circus for the people' even by the party, and in the light of the life-history interviews, people actually understood the message. We do not, of course, know how much politics was discussed in brigade meetings but it can be assumed that this – and the growing economic difficulties – did not trigger a political climate that was favourable for the regime.

Opposing the Management

In principle, the party leadership of the county could intervene in the labour policy of the enterprise, and it could also influence indirectly the personnel policy through the party organization of Rába MVG. After the memorable conflict between the first secretary of the county and Ede Horváth, which ended with the defeat of the secretary, the leadership of the county, however, rarely attempted to intervene in the policies of the factory, which Horváth considered to be his territory. Horváth was, of course, himself a high-ranking official of the party because from 1970 he was a member of the Central Committee, a position that he kept until the dissolution of MSZMP in 1989. Some cases can still be documented, when the conflict between the manager and the employees did not remain within the gates of the factory but was reported to the leading county party organs. This section introduces three cases: an attempted strike in 1977; a series of dismissals in 1979; and the manager's regulation of paid holiday in 1986, which had a particularly negative reception in a political climate that called for more freedom. Given the strict managerial control, only few dared to oppose the manager in his heyday; the vehement objection to his autocratic leadership style manifest in the last case was inseparable from the political weakening of the regime and the attack against old hierarchies.

On 4 July 1977, in factory unit 28 of MVG, sixty-four workers stopped working for one and half hours because they did not agree with their wages. Ede Horváth talked to the workers, who finally agreed to return to work. The case was reported to the economics department of the party committee of the county, and an investigation followed (meanwhile there were two weeks of maintenance in MVG).[141] The investigation found that there was a coincidence of several factors that triggered the conflict. In 1977, MVG gave an average pay increase of 6 per cent but decided to increase the norms by 10 per cent.[142] The workers of the given unit received new work, where the wage-scales were low and they could not earn the average wages because they lacked the relevant experience. They complained to the company's labour department, but they received no answer. A further problem was that planned production value was increased from 6,335 million Ft to 6,760 million Ft in the first half year of 1977. To motivate the employees, MVG set a premium of a two-week wage for the units that could fulfil the increased target. The enterprise succeeded in fulfilling 95.4 per cent of the plan, and 44 per cent of the set premium (12.9 million Ft) was distributed among 7,671 employees (43 per cent of the total workforce). The managements and workers of the units that did not fulfil this plan did not receive this premium. In the Rear Suspension and Vehicle factories the managers failed to explain this situation to the workers, who thought that they had been deceived by the management.[143] According to the report a settlement was finally reached between the workers and the management: the wage-scales in the unit where the workers protested were revised, and it was promised to all employees who did not receive the set premium that if they succeeded in fulfilling the plan in the third quarter of the year, they would get both the promised one-week wage plus the two-week wage that had been denied to them. We do not know to what extent the stoppage influenced the decision; at any rate, the blue-collar personnel of MVG decreased by 222 people in that summer.[144]

According to the information reports the workers' discontent with wages frequently manifested itself in critical political comments:

> It spoilt the mood of the unit that on 12 December the workers did not receive the high but rightful wages that the quality control had already signed. The workers say that the department of labour can revise the norms, strengthen the quality control, etc., but it cannot refuse to pay the wages for which they worked and the quality control signed. They are all members of the trade union and some of them are members of the party, too. They responded to this decision by refusing to pay the party dues and rejecting the papers to which they subscribed. People also discussed the communiqué of the meeting of the Central Committee. They consider the 4.5 per cent increase of the

> prices of consumer goods too high because incomes will increase only by 2 per cent, which means that in 1979 we will live worse than today. In sum: the mood of the workers of the unit is not good![145]

After half a year the mood of the workers was again reported to be bad:

> Our workers are mainly concerned with recent events that negatively influenced their wages. This was for instance the increase of the norms – which was unreasonably high in some cases – and the increase in quality requirements. This can decrease wages by 30–40 per cent. According to the workers it should not be allowed that an experienced skilled worker, who has worked for many years, is paid 15–16 Ft for an hour! He cannot even buy his breakfast from this money. It is absurd that the wage of a crane operator is the same as that of a skilled worker, and a trolley driver sometimes earns more.[146]

Workers from the forge shop likewise complained that they could not buy a proper breakfast from their hourly wage:

> In the past weeks our employees were mainly concerned with the change in prices. They agreed with some of the items but they found the increase in the price of meat to be definitely too much. They said that their hourly wage does not cover a normal breakfast and – as they say – one cannot do hard physical work while living on bread and jam.[147]

Horváth's decision to 'revise the personnel' triggered similarly negative political comments in 1979. The decision was not targeted at the blue-collar workers; Horváth sought to decrease the number of administrative staff. He ordered a check on the work duties of every employee, an evaluation of their work and then lay-offs of surplus labour. The city council had to find employment for those Rába workers who lost their jobs. The revision affected 1,318 employees: 170 retired, 124 were transferred from the administrative staff to production, 344 received new work in the enterprise, 98 people did not accept the offered position, 102 positions were closed, and 480 people were laid off.[148] Many regarded the measure as a result of the problems of the people's economy:

> The employees talk a lot about our economic policy. They do not fully approve of the current actions of the people's economy. Perhaps they are a bit afraid of the open information about the situation of the people's economy. They do not understand, for instance, how it is possible that a dynamically developing enterprise like MVG dismisses people.[149]

The revision of the personnel likewise reinforced anti-manager attitudes:

> We need precise information because everybody asks our party members: what do you know, who will be dismissed? It cannot be the aim of our society to increase insecurity. We would also like to know what happens to the managers, who employed surplus labour. They also did a bad job.[150] The same people, who complained about the shortage of labour two or three months ago, suddenly realize that on the contrary, there is a surplus of labour (not a surplus of the managers – only a surplus of the employees!).[151] Even though the blue-collar workers were little affected, their comments revealed that people perceived the political climate to be more insecure.

The regulation of paid holiday triggered more vehement protests in 1986 during which the employees did not refrain from expressing their opinions of one-man management. In order to improve the management of labour, Horváth decided that the employees should take their holiday once a year and they should inform management of the dates at the beginning of the year. Apart from the poor communication of the measure, the manager's regulation of paid holiday had very bad timing: the economic prospects of the country deteriorated, and the call for political reforms found a positive reception even among large parts of the party membership.[152] In this atmosphere the 'senseless and heartless' regulation and the manager's ignorance of enterprise democracy met with fierce opposition from the employees. Even the information report of the county dealt with the issue:

> The decision of the manager of MVG to regulate paid holiday very negatively influenced the political mood of the town. People were angered by the absence of democratic preparation, the disregard of the trade union and the rigid enforcement of the rules. Almost all of the base-cells in MVG brought up the issue. Many people gave back their trade union cards and refused to pay the trade union and party dues.[153]

The trade union estimated the decrease of dues to be 24–64 per cent in April in the various production units and 20 per cent at the level of the enterprise (3,800 employees refused to pay).[154] Another report warned against provoking people in the unfavourable economic situation: 'In our county the regulation of paid holiday met the disapproval of the majority of the employees in MVG. Willingness to pay trade union dues declined. The unfavourable economic situation led many people to question the high number of awards on 1 May.'[155]

The base-cell reports formulated the problem even more sharply. The regulation evidently turned the feelings of the workers against the man-

ager, who considered the interests of production more important than the interests of people. According to the report of the Rear Suspension Factory, the decision:

> triggered vehement protests and resistance, which has not subsided. People say that the management did not ask for their opinions before this significant decision. They consider it to be an anti-democratic step. Extremist opinions are expressed in the following ways: people speak of the weakness of the trade union and they criticize the managing director. They compare the declaration on the radio that the family comes first with the manager's decision that they consider to be inhuman. Fourteen members of the trade union gave back their membership cards as a sign of protest.[156]

Employees evidently thought that the manager's decision was an attack against the trade union and enterprise democracy:

> The topic of holiday still frequently comes up in the conversations. Particularly those people are angry who had to give back their holiday vouchers. They don't understand this unreasonably rigid attitude and that some people can just ignore the wish of the large majority. We cannot simply let it go, this decision torpedoes enterprise democracy! Everybody thinks now that although we have an enterprise council, collective decision-making plays no role in our enterprise even in cases which obviously violate the interest of employees. Our workers think that in the case of the holiday the interest of the individuals is not contradictory to the interest of the collective.[157]

With respect to the measure, the managerial censorship of *Rába*, the newspaper of the factory, was also strongly criticized:

> We cannot agree with the sanction against people who are on sick leave for more than five days, which is a typical regulation of the Wagon Factory. At the same time the *Rába* newspaper received a lot of criticism. This publication is not at all the newspaper of the workers. If it were theirs, it would report on the issues that really concern the workers. For instance: the period of notice or the decision about next year's holiday. Can't we recognize the socially damaging effects of these issues!?[158]

At the end of 1986 agitators in MVG reported that 'pessimism has spread, the mood of the employees has become tense, and there is a wide distrust of the measures of the government and the interest representation of the trade unions'.[159] The case of paid holiday ended with a compromise: in the beginning of the year a 'phantom holiday plan' was created and the managers overlooked the changes during the year.[160] The regulation thus only succeeded in reinforcing opposition to the manager and his leader-

ship methods, without any practical use. The case is indicative not only of the changing political climate but also the manager's failure to recognize or respond to it. The incident ended similarly to how Burawoy depicted the scene of 'painting socialism' in the Lenin Steel Works. Everybody knew in the factory that it is only for keeping up appearances. Under the surface the regime was dismantling.

Labour Policy in the GDR

The 'Unity of the Economic and Social Policy'

While in Hungary the leading political slogan of the early 1970s was the standard-of-living policy, the GDR party leadership lived under the spell of the increase of the production of consumer goods. In the very same meeting where Professor Hager so passionately addressed the gaps in the supply of the population with daily consumer products, the first secretary of the party organization of the Zeiss factory could proudly announce that they already drew the 'right conclusions' from the resolutions of the Eighth Party Congress:

> In our political-ideological work we paid a special attention to the evaluation of the resolutions of the Eighth Party Congress, and thanks to this, we succeeded in winning the support of the management for the solution of the problem. Our employees made a pledge to work more, and therefore we could decide at the plenum of the IKL that our factory will increase the plan targets of consumer goods by 2 millions Marks already in this year. We undertake to produce 7,000 extra telescopes in 1971, and we will also increase the plan targets of cameras and lenses in order to provide for a better supply of the population with these articles, which are in high demand. We promise the party leadership that we will do our utmost together with every comrade and employee of the factory to realize the plan targets of 1971 and to concentrate our efforts on the tasks that follow from the resolutions of the Eighth Party Congress.[161]

Even though the party leaders promptly followed the party line, it is, of course, a question as to the extent the supply of the population with consumer goods did indeed improve in the early 1970s. Despite the fact that the reports were in general optimistic, there is some evidence that the 'fight' for the stable and continuous provision of the population with daily articles was indeed a difficult one. A report of 1974, for instance, called attention to the fact that 'despite the overall positive results of the fulfilment of consumer goods targets and the related improvement of the supply of people with these products as well as better services', there were still problems that the party leadership had to solve with consequent and purposeful work:

Figure 2.2 Work 1 of VEB Carl Zeiss Jena

Figure 2.3 Work 2 of VEB Carl Zeiss Jena

> The demand for the 1,000 small things cannot be covered. There are not enough can openers, corkscrews, scissors, kettles and fittings needed for electric installation. We likewise can't satisfy the demand for television sets, tape recorders, wine, champagne, building materials, carpets, men's suits and women's coats, leather clothes, bath tubs, fire-proof glass and bulbs. People frequently criticize the public services in the towns, in particular the inadequate lightening of the streets.[162]

The list, at any rate, seemed to contradict the overall positive results, and the complaint about the inadequate lightening suggests that the shortage of electricity was still a problem at that time.

In 1976 the government could feel confident enough to announce further welfare measures (including a large-scale housing programme, which was expected to solve the problems of the population). The party leadership of the district likewise wasted no time in evaluating the resolutions of the Ninth Party Congress:

> We have every reason to believe that socialism has decisively shaped the ideas and behaviour of our citizens. The general party line of the Ninth Party Congress with its resolutions that serve the interests and welfare of the working class and those of the whole population found an unambiguously positive reception among the working people, who passionately defend our political line. … As we all know, the state housing project is the core of our social political programme. Between 1976 and 1980, we will provide 20,000 citizens with new and comfortable flats so that every third family in the district can enjoy better living conditions. In addition, in 1980 the net income of the population will be twice as much as in 1960, and we promise to keep the same price level. We will introduce new basic wages for 70,000 employees in the district, and we will also increase the minimum wages. For these purposes we received 200 millions Marks. We have an additional 360 millions Marks for the improvement of the conditions of retired people. In order to fulfil the resolutions of the social political programme we will need 40 millions Marks for the support of the adult education of 18,000 working people. From 1 May 1977 we will introduce the 40-hour week for 54,000 employees of the district. During the Five-Year Plan we can support the extended weekend holidays and baby leave of working mothers with 60 million Marks. Besides, we have to mention that for the sixty social political measures that have come into force since the Eighth Party Congress we need an additional 36.3 million Marks. Comrades, all of these are grandiose objectives but they can be realized; and if we succeed in increasing labour productivity accordingly, we can even ponder over new social political measures in order to further improve the living and working conditions of the people.[163]

Even though the functionaries were not sparing of impressive figures when they praised the achievements of the social policy of the party, they

were much less interested in the actual conditions of the working class in the district. It is, indeed, striking, particularly in the light of the omnipotent class-based ideology, how *little* labour-related topics were in fact discussed in the meetings of the party leadership of the district. Even on these occasions the party leaders mainly discussed 'purposeful' things, for instance, what kind of ideological work can improve the workers' willingness to undertake shift work or how to propagate full-time work among the women of the district. It seems that the 'improvement of the living and working conditions of the people' increasingly drove the real workers out of the vision of the functionaries, and working-class responses to the policy of the party were dissolved in the bureaucratic language of the official ideology.

In comparison with the Hungarian sources, there is remarkably little information on the working class of the district. In 1971 one document gives a figure of 303,000 for the total number of workers, employees and trainees in the district, out of which 186,000 were employed in industry, construction industry and traffic. The party had 89,000 members in the district out of which 77,000 attended party schools, which shows that the party paid much more attention to the ideological training of its members in the GDR than in Hungary.[164] Thanks to the overall efforts of the party to increase female employment, there are some more data about the working women in the district. Between 1970 and 1973 the percentage of women of working age employed increased from 73 per cent to 82.5 per cent, and in 1975 it reached 90 per cent in the district. Already at the end of 1972, 50.8 per cent of the employees of the district were women. A survey, which was conducted in forty-four selected enterprises of the district, found that 34.9 per cent of the female workers belonged to the skilled working class. In the Zeiss factory the proportion of the skilled female workforce was much higher, 49.3 per cent, but it was also high with 45.3 per cent in the Jenapharm factory and in the textile industry of the district.[165]

The problem of how to reconcile the family and household duties with those of a full-time job was discussed even in the meetings of the party leadership of the district. Women who were employed part-time were constantly encouraged to take full-time jobs; the women's commission of the Zeiss factory, for instance, loyally reported that in every half year they had a long ideological discussion with the part-time workers for this end.[166] The reports complained that even more ideological work was needed to persuade the working mothers to undertake shift work: in the Zeiss factory the shift nursery (which was opened also during nights) had to be transformed into a normal one because 'the discussions with mothers who had two or more small children led to the conclusion that

the mothers are not ready to entrust a nursery with the night care of their offspring'.[167] The agitation for shift work, nevertheless, continued: according to a 1972 report, 15.8 per cent of the women workers of the district worked in a two-shift, and 6.7 per cent in three-shift, system. In this respect the report commented that the proportion of employees who ate in the canteens increased from 39.2 per cent to 43.2 per cent. Apart from the agitation and the extra money, other bonuses were also offered to make the shift work more attractive in the eyes of people: in the same year, 70 per cent of the holiday vouchers which were distributed in the district were given to workers, and those who did shift work had an advantage over the others. Thermal bath vouchers to other socialist countries were in the highest demand (in the trade union elections of 1972 the workers even criticized the low proportion of workers among the beneficiaries). The holiday commissions arranged with the child-care institutions about the accommodation of the children of the working mothers during the time of the holiday.[168]

Shift work gave another advantage, which in many cases (for instance in that of Zeiss) surely took precedence over the holiday vouchers in the eyes of people: namely, that shift workers were positively discriminated in the allocation of state flats. In the letters of complaint to the chief manager, shift workers never missed the opportunity to stress the priority of their claim, and from the replies it is evident that the flat problem of the shift workers was indeed more likely to be solved. This had a very practical reason: when a young family lived in a one-room flat with a baby, the parents could not get a normal sleep. Judged from the high number of complaints, people who lived in workers' hostels had the same problem because it often happened that the room- or flat-mates worked in different shifts. According to the report of the women's commission of the VEB Carl Zeiss, girls were more likely to give up their career in the factory than boys because of this problem:

> The young women workers who live in the workers' hostels complain a lot about the problems of cohabitation when their room-mates work in different shifts. The tension that comes from this situation increases their objection to shift work, and they often choose to leave the factory because of their living problems. We would like to ask for quick help from the leaders of the trade union and the responsible officials in the field of cultural and social policy. Every worker who we lose because of this problem is a great loss to us.[169]

Since the training opportunities of Zeiss were widely advertised across the GDR, the factory attracted trainees from many places, and it was interested in the settlement of the new workforce. Another report likewise stressed that girls were more likely to return to their homes if they encountered

problems,[170] which suggests that despite the emancipatory rhetoric, traditional gender stereotypes continued to shape people's attitudes.

On these grounds, it is very difficult to say how working people did indeed respond to the labour policy of the party. While in Hungary a survey was conducted among the party membership of the county to learn how they evaluated the standard-of-living policy, we cannot find equivalent surveys among the materials of the party leadership of the district of Gera. It is clear from the quoted report of the evaluation of the resolutions of the Ninth Party Congress that the social political measures consumed enormous sums of money. A report of the Zeiss factory also commented that because of the extended holidays of the working mothers the enterprise lost twenty thousand working days, and the shortened working hours caused a loss of two thousand hours a week. The various benefits (child benefits, sickness benefits, the support of single mothers and maternity grants) cost the enterprise an additional 1 million Marks a year.[171] In the light of these sums, it is all the more remarkable that the party leadership was not interested in how the working people actually evaluated what had been done for them. There is some evidence, though, that people were not as enthusiastic about the socialist achievements as leaders claimed they were, and interestingly, it was mainly women who were more discontented with the conditions. In VEB Carl Zeiss Jena, many women complained that they arrived home so late that they could not manage the household:

> Even though we did much for the improvement of the living and working conditions, health care and labour protection, a number of the women employees have demands that we currently cannot satisfy. They complain that the rate of development is too slow, and they criticize the shopping opportunities and the opening hours. They say that there are not enough afternoon schools and holiday places for children and big families.[172]

It is remarkable that the supply of consumer goods was mostly criticized by women, which suggests that shopping remained more or less a women's job. This is also supported by the reasons why part-time women workers refused to undertake full-time jobs. The 'objective reasons' that were mentioned in a report of 1972 included the 'unsolved daily care of the children, the lack of places in the afternoon schools, and the poor supply of consumer goods'. In addition, there were 'ideological problems' with the division of labour within the family: 'many men are strongly opposed to the employment of their wives because they want to have a comfortable rest after work'.[173] This, at any rate, explains the apparent contradiction of why working women, who counted among the beneficiaries of the labour policy of the regime, were more likely to voice their discontent

with the provision of the population; at the same time the criticism also revealed the boundaries of the 'unity of the economic and social policy'.

There were positive responses among the working women, of course, which were evidently exploited by the regime for the purposes of propaganda. At a district party meeting in 1972, the delegate of the Zeiss factory, who herself was a woman worker, gave the following speech:

> I work in the optic plant of the VEB Carl Zeiss Jena. I would like to tell you about the very positive reception of the social political measures of the Fifth Conference of our Central Committee among our colleagues. We were happy to hear of the outline of the social political programme. Our colleagues hold this programme to be the fulfilment of the resolutions of the Eighth Party Congress, and they fully comprehend that it pays to work diligently. I believe that we can all hold ourselves to be happy to live in this country, the GDR … I myself come from a working-class family, where there were four children. If I compare now how difficult it was for my parents to secure the future of their children with that of our situation today, then I can only say that the current measures in the interest of the working mothers are fully in line with the essence of socialism. Of course, they did not fall into our laps. I regard myself as happy because my work also contributed to these results, and I believe that this gives a meaning to our lives. Many women and mothers think like me, and they are ready to do everything to the utmost of their power to prove themselves worthy of the resolutions of our party.[174]

Since the speech is full of phrases that were characteristic of the language of the functionaries (such as 'women … ready to … prove themselves worthy'), it is at best doubtful that it was written by the speaker only; further, the bureaucratic language renders it difficult to believe that it reflected the true feelings of people (even if the social political measures did undoubtedly find a positive reception among the women employees).

In this sense it can be argued that the disinterest of the party leaders in working-class opinions was symptomatic because the labour policy was 'subordinated' to the higher interest of the ideological struggle, and it was indeed held to be primarily a means of propaganda in the eyes of the functionaries. The chief aim of the labour policy was to appease the workers, not to emancipate them, and this difference was well reflected in the lack of the representation of the workers in the party materials. People evidently felt this, and they increasingly distanced themselves from the ideology of the party, which so blatantly held the workers a means of propaganda only. The propagandistic goals of labour policy were openly described in an information report of the first secretary of the party organization of the Zeiss factory, in which he reported about an interview for the Italian newspaper *L'Unita*, where

> comrade X, a 26-year-old worker was chosen to demonstrate that there is a new generation of well-paid, skilled young workers, who are fully conscious of their role in the building of their socialist state. The interview introduces how comrade X finished an evening school, and how he participates now in higher education. It describes the various social institutions of the factory such as the polyclinic, nurseries, kindergartens and canteens, and it argues that the real income of a worker in the GDR is actually higher than that of his West German counterpart. The interview concludes with the argument that the cause of the 'production miracle' of the GDR lies in the highly qualified personnel and the satisfaction of workers' needs, which was confirmed by every worker whom the author asked.[175]

Both cases – the speech of the woman delegate and the interview with the selected worker – show that communication between the party and the workers was effectively controlled by the party bureaucracy, and that the party did not trust the workers to formulate their opinions even if their responses would have been positive. This revealed that the reception of the labour policy among the workers had a propagandistic value only.

Managing Discontent

The sources well reflect the 'transition' from the naïve working-class ideology of the party under the NES to the bureaucratization of the communication between the workers and the party in the Honecker era. The documents of the late 1960s (and partly also those of the 1970s) demonstrated with real examples what the party could do for the improvement of the living and working conditions of the people (similarly to the quoted story of Professor Hager), and there were even reports of sporadic manifestations of workers' discontent. It is characteristic, however, how these complaints were managed: the party did not even consider ideological criticism if it came from workers, but it concentrated on their appeasement only. Therefore it may well have been a logical outcome that the reports of the 'mature' Honecker era contented themselves with the repetition of the general ideological slogans and the listing of production figures.

Since the party leadership evidently held the agitation of the workers for shift work to be an ideological task, it is not surprising that the conditions of the shift workers received special attention. In the Zeiss factory an investigation found that in many cases there were no responsible managers present on the afternoon and night shifts. The enterprise tried to explain away the bad report:

> A shift manager or a direct production manager is present on the second shift but it frequently happens that we can't put managers on the job during the

> night shifts when only a few colleagues are working. For instance, at the time when the inspectors visited the plant, there were only ten colleagues who did night shift in the grindery of the instrument plant. They promptly received their tasks from the responsible manager of the second shift, and they could work without supervision. Reasoning: they are all experienced workers who can work on their own.

It was also reported that the inspectors were satisfied with the provision of the shift workers with food and drink: 'People in the afternoon and night shifts receive qualitatively nourishing, warm food, and the continuous supply of drinks is solved with the help of vending machines.'[176] It seems that the inspectors were indeed concerned about the well-being of the workers because it was suggested that the coffee in the vending machines should be freshly brewed for the night shift. Such small gestures could have expressed much better the essence of the labour policy of the party than any ideological phrases.

The women's commissions likewise had ideological tasks but the latter did not prevent them from reporting on the negative experiences that they had during visits to factories. A visit to a paper factory in 1976, for instance, concluded that even though the factory had a very good collective, the working conditions could hardly be described as satisfactory, and the state of the plant rightfully shocked the committee:

> We learnt from the discussions that the whole brigade has achieved very good results in the improvement of quality and the increase of labour productivity. The colleagues have regular political discussions of the actual questions of our development, which help them clarify the ideological problems. We should add that the brigade won many times the title of the 'collective of socialist work', which is a recognition of their excellent work. Despite their tiring physical work and the not yet satisfactory wages, the women workers show a very positive attitude to their work and our development. Furthermore, the working conditions are not the best, for instance, an unfriendly hall and bad hygienic conditions (since it is mainly the colleagues who are cleaning the rooms). We were shocked at the sight when we walked through the plant and the paper hall. In our judgement, the hygienic equipments in these rooms are unworthy of human beings, and they recall the misery of the postwar years. The toilets and washbasins are dirty and broken. Furthermore, it seems that no one has had time for a proper clean since the machines were dismantled: waste has been piled up in the corner, in such a shocking condition that one is disgusted even to take a look. It is also a question of hygiene because it is a breeding place for vermin. We believe that even though the building of the factory is old and not modern, our concern about the people should – and indeed must – manifest itself also in the improvement of their working conditions so that they meet the socialist requirements.[177]

We do not know whether the visit had positive results (for instance, the ordering of a clean-up) or the dirty washbasins counted among the ideological problems that should have been discussed rather than solved. The report of the women's commission, however, does reflect something of the emancipatory objectives that could have been found in the professor's story as well, and it is also important to stress that the achievement of the women workers was highly praised even though it was admitted that they had to work under difficult conditions and for unsatisfactory wages. Their tolerance may well have been a sign of their political loyalty to the regime; and in the latter case it was indeed underlined that the collective demonstrated a political commitment. It is, however, remarkable that while both stories stressed the unselfishness of women, it turned out that sometimes even small things could not have been arranged for them in the factory, and they needed a wider public for their problems to be solved. It seems that it did not always pay to be tolerant.

People, however, had not always had the virtue of tolerance: at least in the early 1970s some cases were reported in which the workers gave clear signs of their discontent. These cases of protest all concerned disputes about the material rewards (wages or premiums), and their investigation suggested that the party sought agreement with the workers rather than to sharpen the conflict. This shows that the appeasement of workers was important, even in cases of open conflict. The workers of a Silbitz plant were so outraged by an unpaid bonus that they declared in front of the local party leaders that 'if we don't get our due, you will learn something tomorrow' – a reference to 17 June as the report commented. The reason of the conflict was that while the furnacemen received a loyalty premium of 750 Marks, the others were denied the payment of this premium. Similarly to the Hungarians, the East German workers expected the party to intervene on their side, and when it failed to do so they reacted with an understandable resentment: 'We don't need to organize any APO meeting because nobody comes anyway. I have not picked up the party literature because no one buys it any more. Out of the thirty-three comrades of the APO only three are willing to pay the party dues.' In the turners' shop, broken turner's chisels were found, and it was suspected that the workers vented their fury on the tools. The discussions with the workers led to the conclusion that the positive discrimination of the furnacemen 'hurt the professional pride of the skilled working class because the least qualified workers received the highest benefits'. It is remarkable that during the discussions the workers did not refrain from making direct political comments (such as the comment 'they won't talk with us but they put the Staatssicherheit on to us' or the reference to 17 June).[178] While no record of the resolution of the dispute exists, the party obviously demon-

strated a readiness to negotiate with the workers (e.g. discussions). Further, the workers did not hesitate to openly show their disagreement with the party (and even make direct and very negative political comments). This suggests that they also knew how to put pressure on the party to recognize their rightful material demands.[179]

The distribution of the annual bonuses of 1972 in the metallurgic industry of the district was likewise not an easy task. It was calculated that the average bonus was 5–20 per cent higher than in 1971, and it amounted to 550–800 Marks. There were, however, big differences among the various plants, which were explained through the different calculations of the average wages in the individual plants, the different maximal values set by the enterprises, and the different recognition of overtime, shift work and the years of employment. The managers declared that the guidelines were too general and it depended on the plants how much they gave for the individual criteria. A foundry of Lobenstein, for instance, gave 120 Marks for the three-shift work while in the VEB Blawa Schleiz the shift workers received 300 Marks. The furnacemen caused further troubles for management because their loyalty supplement and shift bonus also counted towards the annual bonus. Since the enterprises received no more money, the bonus of the furnacemen could only be increased at the expense of the other employees. In some places such as the VEB Elektrobau Greiz, the management had to reduce the bonuses because of the higher material costs but they warned that the employees 'won't understand this measure'[180] because they had better results in 1972 than the year before. People may well have been discontented in other plants, too, because after the payment of bonuses, 'it was heard from many places that despite the fulfilment and even over-fulfilment of the plan, higher bonuses were paid in light industry and commerce than in metallurgy. In many plants the employees threatened to turn to the trade union.'[181] The comparison between the industries was probably not accidental, because metallurgy was held to be a stronghold of socialist industry. Such cases show that the workers also knew how to use 'political-ideological arguments' against the party in order to stress their demands.

The next case may well have been a good basis for capitalist propaganda because it was about a wage dispute with the workers of nationalized enterprises in 1973. Here the conflict was very simple even though the report tried to beat around the bush: the private enterprises paid more to the workers while the state wanted to pay 'in proportion to performance'. Many workers were not convinced by the political agitations: in VEB Stramo Greiz, five out of the seven people wanted to give notice reasoning that it would not pay them to commute if they received less money. With other employees the discussions led to 'decisive results'; the report,

however, commented that one has to wait when people get the new wages, which render them fully conscious of the change. In addition, the leaders of the party and the trade union as well as the managers were requested to pay an 'increased political attention' to the new state enterprises, where the employees had to count with wage cuts.[182] It seems that the party also counted with the opportunity that in such cases the indignation of people could override their fear of political repression; besides, the case did not really demonstrate the advantage of socialism over capitalism.

The introduction of the new basic wages (which was, in general, favourable for the workers) in a Freital plant was likewise preceded by the party leaders giving several instructions to the local secretaries in order to avoid any disagreement with the workers:

> No question must be left unanswered! Everybody must feel that his word counts! No norm can be changed without justification. Our principle is: the same wage for the same achievement! You should stress the improvement of the working and living conditions and the support of working-class culture. Since the introduction of the new basic wages concerns one of the basic issues of labour, the party secretaries, trade union leaders and the chief manager are personally responsible for the whole process. The chairman of the central working group must be the chief manager so that he can solve every problem immediately. You should explain to the workers how the old norms relate to the new norms and how the new wages are calculated. The leading functionaries have to be present when the workers first receive the new wages so that they can answer any question that might come up. The workers must get a clear picture of the relationship between the old and new wages so that they realize that it is worth working under the new system.

The instructions show that it was as much in the interest of the party to avoid labour conflicts as in that of the workers; even though the new wage forms increased the average wages of blue-collar workers, the report argued that those who did not have the necessary qualifications should not be left out either: 'Unskilled workers had to be downgraded from the higher to the lower wage groups, which hurt their professional pride and self-respect. Therefore it would be better to change the job requirements with the help of science and technology or to organize training courses for the workers so that they can remain in their original wage groups.'[183] It seems more likely, however, that the decrease of the wages would have triggered protests, and the local party organization proposed this compromise so that there would be an unambiguously positive reception of the measure in the plant.

The above cases all illustrate the controversial relationship between the party and the workers: while the latter may well have 'agreed' not to intervene in politics, they expected the party to represent the interests of

labour and arrange that the workers receive their rightful rewards – as one manager of the Zeiss factory formulated.[184] The manifestation of workers' discontent was harmful to the prestige of the party even in its mild forms (e.g. worker comrades terminating their party membership). Therefore, while the party strictly refused to engage in any political debates with the workers, it showed more readiness to fulfil their material demands (or at least to examine complaints of this kind). It is not surprising that the overwhelming majority of the letters of complaint addressed material needs. One can, for instance, mention here one case from the late 1960s: a worker asked for the help of the party leadership to get a Trabant before the usual waiting time on the grounds of his good production results and social work. He got the response that even though they could not help with the Trabant, he could immediately get a Zaporozhec.[185]

One, of course, does not know whether the above answer had the same comical effect at that time as it has today. It was already argued that during the era of the NES the 'party speech' sometimes turned out to be its own parody. Canteen food was an object of ridicule in the Hungarian factory, and it seems that it was not very popular among the workers of the Zeiss factory either, at least in 1968. The disagreement was described by the party secretary as the following:

> In recent time we have received an increasing number of complaints about the bad quality of food, particularly that of the dishes that can be freely selected from the menu. There are indeed objective difficulties: at present there is no skilled chef in the kitchen and we are short of thirty cooking assistants. It renders the situation more difficult that the kitchen staff get lower wages in our plant than in other similar factories. Last week the situation intensified and it culminated in a meeting of the party organization of O3 where the workers handed over a dish to the party secretary of propaganda/agitation with the following question: 'Can you eat this? Because we can't.' They also gave him a menu from 1959 in order to prove that at that time the selection was much better than today. I immediately took the initiative and I made constructive proposals for the improvement of canteen food in front of the responsible managers.[186]

It may well have been that the 'action' of the workers only demonstrated the simple fact that the bad food had nothing to do with ideology; the story, however, suggests that the party held the management of discontent to be its task even if it could offer nothing but ideology.

New Inequalities?

While in Hungary the declining social position of the working class received an ever-increasing emphasis in the information reports, it is not

surprising that it was much less discussed in the East German sources, which preferred to stress the positive changes in this respect. In both cases it was discussed how the scientific-technical development of society would influence the social role of the working class. In Hungary a survey was conducted among the party membership of the county, which found that many members of the party were sceptical about the leading role of the working class in the future, because they thought that with scientific-technological development society was increasingly controlled by the economic and technical intelligentsia.[187] The party leadership of the East German district did not take the trouble to ask the membership (at least no surveys can be found among their documents). The concept of the technological development was, however, closely integrated into the political agenda (which is not surprising if we think of Ulbricht's scientific socialism). In a meeting of the party leadership of the district the second secretary of the district delivered a long speech in which he argued that the rapid technological development did indeed *strengthen* the social position of the working class:

> In the era of the scientific-technical revolution, which is characterized by the rapid growth of the forces of production, the masses of the working people are inseparably connected with the modern socialist industry. Therefore, the working class, the largest class of our state, which is the most closely linked with the building of the socialist system, will be increasingly recognized as a leading class, which performs both physical and intellectual work … The bourgeois ideologists are trying to prove to us that the technological development renders the working class dependent on the intelligentsia. We as Marxists believe that the scientific-technical revolution can only be mastered by the people and for the people, and the future technological development can be successful only in so far as it supports and makes use of the ideas, knowledge and creativity of the working people.[188]

It is interesting that while the party documents tactfully avoided mentioning Ulbricht and his scientific system of socialism after the resignation of the first secretary, the faith in the technological development survived: at least, it was widely propagated that this development was the prerequisite for the further improvement of the living and working conditions of the people (see, for instance, the quoted interview in the Italian newspaper *L'Unita*).

The Hungarian materials in general show that according to people it was increasingly disadvantageous to belong to the working class (declining material conditions of the workers, the growing wealth in the private sector, etc.). In the case of the GDR there is some evidence that people wanted to remain nominal members of the working class at least, because

of its advantages (e.g. in adult education or in the education of their children).[189] In 1975, for instance, the first secretary of the party organization of the Zeiss factory reported to the district party leaders that members of the party were discontented with the criteria of class qualification:

> In this aspect I would like to call your attention to two problems that were discussed among our comrades. The first problem is that of the workers who have obtained university or college degrees with systematic and purposeful work and now they are employed here as engineers. Our worker comrades don't understand how it can be that according to classification they no longer belong to the working class because they are 'over-qualified' for that. The other problem is that of the engineers who work in the production either as controllers or they manage the mounting of large scientific instruments. They don't understand why they are qualified as 'intelligentsia' even though they do the same job as the technicians, who count among the workers. Even though they accept the criteria of qualification, they don't understand them. We believe that some of these criteria should indeed be changed in order to provide for a realistic qualification that takes into consideration the type of work and the role of the workers in socialist production.[190]

It seems, however, that despite every effort of the government to increase the standard of living of the working people, even in the GDR people grumbled that there were strata which could afford a higher level of consumption than the working class. According to an information report of 1977, during the discussions with people it came up in the towns of Jena and Gera that even though there was a levelling between the classes, social differences, on the contrary, continued to grow (in incomes, education, leisure time, holidays).[191] The opening of Intershops (which sold goods for Western currency) and Exquisit shops (where the prices were considerably higher than in the normal shops) reinforced social criticism. The Zeiss employees, for instance, complained that in the GDR there were three classes: 1. those who had relatives in West Germany; 2. those who had incomes above the average and they could buy in the special shops; 3. 'normal' consumers. The employees added that the latter were in the worst situation because they could not buy what they wanted in the normal shops and they had to wait eight weeks or longer for the repair of their cars.[192] It seems that the Zeiss employees had ideologically less conformist opinions of the relationship with West Germany: it was, for instance, discussed among the employees that a worker received an unemployment benefit of 900 Marks in West Germany, which was more than the wages of many GDR workers. It was also raised that if the situation in West Germany is indeed so bad then why were there no revolutionary actions against the system. Concerning the Intershops, the employees com-

mented that they supported the bourgeois ideology because the 'normal' workers, who do not have Western currency, were excluded from these shops. People did not understand why their money was of less value than Western currency.[193] The Exquisit shops were evidently considered to be the symbols of the new inequality in consumption: from the Zeiss factory it was repeatedly reported that the 'largest part of our comrades and employees believe that the spread of Exquisit shops only nourishes social differences and renders them more visible'.[194]

Even though much less negative criticism was reported from the GDR than from Hungary, the above reports show that the East German workers were not much more contented – at least relatively – with their level of consumption than their Hungarian counterparts. While in Hungary the private sector provided incomes that were above the average, in the GDR people counted those who had Western relatives or other contacts as being among the 'privileged' social strata. It was also raised in life-history interviews that parents who received Western currency from their relatives could buy the desired products that their children saw on television in the Intershops, and they were much envied by their less fortunate class-mates. While in Hungary the private sector 'influenced negatively the socialist consciousness of the workers' as the party secretary of the county formulated, in the GDR the Western standard of living, which was widely propagated also by the West German media, had the same effect. The East German state prohibited the watching of Western television channels (*Westfernsehen*), but behind the curtains people watched these channels in their homes. In addition, the opening of Exquisit and Intershops demonstrated that in spite of the egalitarian rhetoric of the party, there were differences among the consumers who could afford these shops and those who could not. Ironically, Honecker unintentionally assisted this process by putting the increase of consumption at the centre of his labour policy. When it turned out that the standard of living of the GDR could not surpass nor even catch up with that of West Germany, this labour policy rapidly lost credibility in the eyes of the people – together with Honecker's ideology.

From Hostels to Flats

Contrary to the Hungarian factory, where the reports uniformly claimed that the employees did not suffer from chronic housing shortages (largely a consequence of the high incidence of commuting), East German sources show that housing shortage was the principal social problem for Zeiss's employees. There were, of course, several factors that explain the huge pressure on housing: most importantly, the dynamic increase of the workforce; the need of the enterprise for expertise – a problem already in the late

1960s: the instrument plant, for instance, did not have enough designers because they could not give them flats;[195] the high number of new settlers, given that the training facilities of the enterprise as well as the educational institutions of the town attracted young people from across the GDR; and the centralized system of flat allocation.[196] Within the framework of state housing programmes, the Zeiss factory received a certain share of newly built housing estates, which were then distributed among the various plants of the factory. In addition, a percentage was reserved for the management in order to solve specific social policy and labour recruitment problems.[197] It should be added that the Zeiss factory was in an incomparably better situation with respect to the supply of flats than the Rába factory in Hungary. In 1976, Zeiss disposed of 11,321 flats and 3,342 places in workers' hostels in Jena.[198] There are no overall figures for the 1980s in the archive of the enterprise; but we know, for instance, that the optical precision instruments' division received 1,696 flats between 1972 and 1987,[199] which shows that the workplace played a key role in solving the housing problems of workers. This explains the much higher number of letters of complaint that addressed housing shortage in the GDR, when compared to Hungary.

Given the absence of overall statistical figures for the number of applicants and the average waiting time for a flat, one cannot draw definitive conclusions about the living conditions of the Zeiss employees from this type of source because the writers of the letters all complained of their miserable situation. It is possible, though, to identify some general patterns of how people acquired flats and also to identify some of the groups who were particularly dependent on this kind of state allowance. The new settlers undoubtedly constituted the most important group: as the cited reports stressed, Zeiss had an interest in winning over young people who had come from distant places for their training to settle in the town.[200]

The first accommodation that the enterprise could offer to young workers was a place in workers' hostels; as trainees, they were typically housed in dormitories. Here, younger single people usually shared a room, but there were also family hostels for married couples. Lodging in private houses was very rare. Since life in the workers' hostels meant the continuation of dormitory life – with common kitchens and bathrooms, and house-mates who often worked on different shifts – it is understandable that many young people tried to press the flat distribution committees and management to process their applications for a flat quickly. The issue arose in my life-history interviews: early marriages and the subsequent birth of a child were frequently motivated by the desire of young people for an independent household, as families with children had a much better chance to acquire a flat. Single people obviously stood at the bottom of the waiting lists.

The fact that practically everybody asked for a flat in the newly built housing estates that were under construction, increased the pressure on flat distribution committees and management still more. The enterprise distributed flats in old buildings too, but, as these were seen as undesirable, applicants frequently declined offers for such flats. Often they had no proper toilets, bathrooms, kitchens or central heating. In such cases, however, the applicants who stressed that they lived under miserable conditions risked an answer that their flat problem was not as urgent as they claimed it to be, and that they should wait patiently until their request for a modern, comfortable flat could be fulfilled. Flats were sometimes rejected on the grounds that they were too small for the needs of a family. It seems from the letters of complaint that many people chose to wait for a new and modern flat in their workers' hostels rather than to accept a flat in an old building. Reconstruction was difficult because of shortages of building materials, which explains the unambiguous preference for modern housing.

Although letters of complaint described individual problems, it is still worth introducing some of the cases, not only to give a picture of the living conditions of young East German workers who could not rely on parental help, but also to examine the communication between workers and official bodies. The letters depict a tense relationship: all the letters were requests, but every petitioner believed that they were entitled to a flat. Thus, the letters articulated demands of the state and management; they were not the requests of subordinates who felt themselves to be powerless. Some petitioners threatened to turn to Erich Honecker should they receive a negative answer to their application for a flat. The 'tense housing situation' – as it was called – brought some of the worst sides of human nature to the surface. Many were angered that their colleagues received flats earlier than they did, and they listed their names demanding an explanation. People were very inventive in pressing the factory for a shorter deadline, and there were persistent petitioners who wrote many letters of complaint. This, similarly to the cases introduced in the section entitled *Managing Discontent*, suggests that the government's policy of appeasement was a double-edged weapon: despite the oppressive ideological climate people could very assertively stand up for their social rights.

Because of the 'tense housing situation' in Jena, which was the favourite excuse of the officials who responded to such complaints, shared accommodation in the workers' hostels was an option that many people had to endure, regardless of whether they wanted it or not. Conditions in the hostels generated considerable criticism: the equipment and furniture was old and overused, cleaning was neglected and the common rooms were often filthy. The following letter well expresses the disappointment of young people who decided to take up work in the factory after they finished their training:

> Having finished the 10th class of school, I trained to be a polisher in your factory. I learnt about this opportunity from the newspapers and TV. I could get no training in my home town and as I come from a big family (I have six siblings), I wanted to be independent. I lived in the factory dormitory until 9 July 1980 and then I received a place in the AWU.[201] Since then I have been living in a six-room flat with three colleagues. The 'bedrooms' are separated only with curtains from the common rooms, so I can't even close my door. The whole flat was in a very dirty state (garbage left by the former tenants, broken locks and damaged wardrobe doors). It took me days to make it fit to live in, and I have to live here because I can rarely travel home. I am very much disappointed with the living conditions that the factory offers to the young skilled workers because they do not meet our expectations. I would like to achieve good results but for good work one needs good living conditions that I unfortunately do not have here. For this reason I am asking for your support.[202]

Apart from the poor material conditions, the problems of cohabitation also rendered life difficult for young people who dreamt of an independent life and a home of their own. In this respect no gender difference can be observed: young men complained of the poor hygienic conditions of shared accommodation as much as young women. The following letter depicts a very unfavourable picture of life in the workers' hostels:

> I started my training as a polisher in VEB Carl Zeiss Jena in 1980. During my training I lived in the Kurt Zier dormitory. I was born here in Jena and I lived for nine years in Kahla. After the divorce of my parents, I was sent to a children's home. I finished the 10th class of school there. If I include the time of my training, I have lived for more than eight years in shared accommodation (in twelve-, eight-, five- and four-bed rooms). After I finished my training, I was accommodated in the workers' hostel at Josef-Klose-Straße.[203] The conditions were so bad there that I considered giving my notice in. In my workplace you discussed my case and I was promised a flat in 1983. I have not, however, received this promise in writing. As I do not have a family home, the AWU is my main dwelling place where life is anything but easy for me. There is not enough room for my things: I have to store food in my wardrobe because the cupboards in the kitchen are invaded by cockroaches. The kitchen-cabinets cannot be locked properly because their doors are broken. Butter, cheese and drinks stand on the window ledge in my room. There are four of us living in the flat and we all work on two or three different shifts at once. Since the rooms are separated by paper walls, I cannot sleep when the others listen to music or they have visitors. The washbasin is often full of clothes so I can take a shower only very late at night. The hygienic conditions are poor and the flat is in a very shabby condition because of the frequently changing tenants. I like my work in the optic plant but I really need a place where I can have a rest after work. And this is indeed impossible in the AWU because of the reasons

> that I explained above. I do not expect a luxury home, just something that I can call my own.[204]

The answer is not known but there is some evidence that the social situation of the petitioner was considered because the sentence 'I lived for more than eight years in shared accommodation (in twelve-, eight-, five- and four-bed rooms)' was underlined with the comment that 'it is a really good argument!'.

Tenants also complained that they were too strictly controlled in the hostels. One petitioner attacked excessive supervision of hostel life by the police, a complaint directed to the managing director. The letter is cited because it shows how state repression turned workers who were in principle not at all opposed to the system of socialism against the regime:

> I have been working as a locksmith for sixteen months in the VEB Carl Zeiss Jena. I live now in block 86/87 in the hope that I would eventually get a one-room flat where I could move in with my girlfriend, for whom I came here to work. I was told that I would get a flat after a year. Therefore I kept on waiting patiently even though life in the hostel cannot be described as pleasant. The toilets and washing facilities are in a very bad condition or they are altogether unfit for use. I put up with all the inconvenience and lack of comfort because at least my individual freedom was not limited. But for a few weeks members of the security personnel of the factory have been sitting at the entrance, and when one enters, one immediately gets the impression that it is a boarding school or a barracks. I feel an immediate attack on my personal freedom. The requirement to register guests annoys my girlfriend and friends who visit me here. At 10 P.M. every visitor has to leave the hostel and sometimes visits are denied in the absence of an identification card. This applies also to the weekends when we young people would like to spend more time together. Not even an extra ten minutes can be arranged with the security staff. *One is constantly controlled here as soon as one enters the hostel. The police also regularly patrol the neighbourhood, which makes one feel like a common criminal. Sometimes the policemen quietly creep from door to door, and they eavesdrop on people.*[205] I have come to Jena to build an independent life, which is impossible under these circumstances. Only a flat could give me prospects. I spend the whole year in Jena and I can only travel home for a couple of days, three times in a year. Therefore this small room with the many orders and prohibitions and a real jailer is, after all, my main residence. I think that 23-year-old people have a right to expect something better than this.[206]

The letter suggests that many people did not identify the whole system with the image of the 'police state' unless they consciously meant to provoke the authorities, which is highly unlikely if they wanted to solve their flat problem.

It is interesting to contrast the above letter that criticized excessive control, with another complaint concerning the supposedly deviant conduct of a room-mate. It may well have been that life in the hostels lacked comfort but, as the following letter shows, it was very difficult to terminate tenancy regardless of the unlawful conduct of the tenants:

> I am a 26-year-old worker and I work on the three-shift system. I live in Neulobeda-West, block 10. My reason for writing is the following. At the beginning of this year a young man, Mr K, moved into our flat. He does not work in the VEB Carl Zeiss and he does not have a permanent job. He has, however, a hobby: he is a disc jockey. He stores his music equipment in the flat. He frequently comes home very late in the night with lots of other people who are very loud. The noise is really extreme, in particular at weekends. There are sometimes as many as ten strange people sleeping in the flat. They often help themselves to my food and drink from the fridge, and they leave the bath and the kitchen in a filthy state. I have worked for ten years in VEB Carl Zeiss Jena on the three-shift system, which is very tiring, especially when one can't sleep at home. I told the managers of the hostel about the problem but it seems that they either don't care or they can't help with this problem. Therefore I would like to ask for your help because this situation is getting on my nerves. I really need my rest so that I can concentrate on my work by the machine in the plant.[207]

In this case we know the reply: investigators found that Mr K had married a woman who also worked in the Zeiss factory, and they had received a one-room flat in a family hostel. The couple, however, broke up and Mr K was asked to relinquish the common flat, which he refused, arguing that he had nowhere to go. Then he received a room in the hostel of the petitioner. It turned out that Mr K was currently unemployed because he had resigned from Carl Zeiss declaring that he would earn his living by making music. Despite repeated warnings Mr K refused to change his lifestyle:

> In March, after several complaints, the managers of the hostel went to his room (he lay in bed and he did not make any effort to get out of bed) and they demanded that he should look for alternative accommodation, a new job and should respect house rules while he lives in the hostel. He does not pay his rent on time, and he had to be warned many times to behave himself. In May 1983 he was again asked to leave, but he answered that he considered it unthinkable.[208]

The reply promised that there would be stricter enforcement of the house rules, but effectively management was as powerless in this case as the hostel: the letter repeated that Mr K was allowed to stay in the hostel for as long as he had no alternative accommodation. The case shows that de-

spite the deeply repressive climate in the GDR, people not only defiantly asserted their rights but these rights (among others the right to housing) were indeed strictly protected by law.

Not much is known about the cleaning of hostels, but criticism of the dirty and untidy condition of common rooms suggests that like in almost every community it was very difficult to share the task equally among the tenants. The 'situation in the kitchen' sometimes declined to the point that the flats were invaded by cockroaches. In one case a single mother who lived with her one-year-old daughter in the AWU asked for urgent help because of the appearance of the insects. The inspectors, however, declared that one could not speak of invasion because they only found two living cockroaches (it was not mentioned how many of them perished). The case again points out the unintentionally comical effect of a party language that explained everything in terms of ideology. The inspectors, at any rate, held the woman to be responsible for the problem: when the cleaning staff had come, they could not spray insecticide in her flat because her kitchenette was full of food and dirty dishes. She was requested to 'contribute to the cleanliness of the hostel and to cooperate with the cleaning staff in the destruction of insects and germs in the future'.[209]

The letters reported also of cases where incompetence on the part of the staff rendered life difficult in the workers' hostels. The tenants of three houses of the Kernberge workers' hostel complained that their families had suffered for years from extreme cold in winter because of the laziness of those who stoked and fed the boilers:

> Life in our hostels is becoming more and more unbearable because there is not enough heating. The central heating has been replaced, but the staff of the hostel can only achieve a temperature of 15–18°C in the rooms. Heating stops for hours because the manager of the hostel has no control over his people. He just lets them do what they want; he has no authority. These are hard words but they are true. We believe that if we pay a rent of 1.2 Mark/m² (out of this 0.40 Mark/m² for heating), we have a right to the minimum temperature that is set by law. Because of the low temperature in the flats people always catch cold. The most vulnerable ones are the children. Although the stokers are paid to work from 8.00 A.M. to 16.00 P.M. at weekends, the heating only usually comes on at 10.30. The reason is simply a lack of discipline. Since we have suffered from this situation for four years, we ask you now to take the necessary steps.[210]

One can wonder what the chief manager of the factory (or his secretariat that dealt with the correspondence) had to do with the lazy stokers; the letter, however, is a further example that social and labour policies were inseparably intertwined.

There were, however, differences among the hostels in terms of the level of comfort and general standards. This is supported by the letter of a student who complained that he had received better accommodation as a skilled worker than as a student:

> Having finished my military service, I started working as a turner in the VEB Carl Zeiss where I worked until I was admitted to the engineering school of precision instruments of Carl Zeiss. Since my home is 300 km from Jena, I need an AWU-place here. I received a place in Jena-Kernberge but the conditions make me doubt whether my decision to study here was the right one. These are the problems: first, there are only common kitchens, baths, toilets, poor hygiene (lack of cleaning staff); second, I have very noisy accommodation in a four-bed room (with shift workers); third, there is no entertainment at weekends because I can rarely go home; fourth, there are no opportunities to store valuable objects. When I worked in the factory, I lived in a reasonable two-bed room in the Am Herrenberge hostel. The requirements of the engineering school are high and one needs peace to prepare for the classes. I had this peace in my old hostel, where I could have fulfilled my obligations at school. But the conditions in the Bernhard Kellermann Straße do not enable me to concentrate on my studies. I am asking for your support and an investigation into the circumstances that I describe above.[211]

The student did not get a positive reply, though: he was ordered to meet his homework obligations because other students lived under the same conditions. In order to prevent further damage, it was decided that the tenants should be financially responsible for the state of the rooms.

Because of the bad living conditions it was understandable that many people declined to show the flat distribution committee any respect. Angry letters survived from the mid-1970s that show that not even an expert could get a flat that had been promised to him in his work contract:

> I came to work at VEB Carl Zeiss Jena in 1972 when the enterprise promised me that my family would get adequate accommodation. It turned out that this 'adequate accommodation' consists of an AWU. My family had to stay in the house of my father-in-law and I was told to wait for one year. Now, after one and half years I still cannot get a flat because of 'objective conditions' and because my case is not urgent! Should you give me a negative answer, I have to assume that you approve of the fraud by which the factory bought me. How else can I regard the treatment I have been given, after one and half years of promises, only to declare now that my family can't move to Jena? Even my contract of employment guarantees adequate accommodation, which after so much waiting cannot be an AWU where I, a family father have to share a room with a strange colleague! If you can find no solution to my problem, I will be forced to turn to the Court of Labour.[212]

The answer was, however, negative despite the threat: the writer was informed that the factory was objectively unable to solve every social problem, and that adequate accommodation was in practice an AWU for many employees in the beginning. He was, however, reassured that his problem would be solved as soon as the 'objective conditions' enable it.[213]

Even members of the party wrote angry and disrespectful letters concerning their housing problems and the role of the factory in them. One example is the following letter:

> Last year I wrote some letters of complaint to which I received the answer that the flat distribution committee does everything it can to help my family. I am doing my military service now but I am forced to write a letter again because my wife had just the opposite experience. When she enquired about our application for a flat, the responsible colleague knew nothing of it and he found our application only after a long search. Then he sent her to another colleague, who told my wife that there were free flats adding that 'had you moved to an AWU two years ago, you would have lived under difficult conditions for one year and then you would have got a flat!' I was outraged to hear that such practices exist in VEB Carl Zeiss Jena and that the tenants of AWU are advantaged even though we live under similar conditions in one room of my parental house. Does this mean that there are double standards or that I am not important for my plant now that I am in the army? [214]

The letter was finished with the formula 'with socialist greetings' (*mit sozialistischem Gruß*), and the writer also referred to his community work and his good results in the factory. The answer was, however, negative: the writer was informed that the tenants of AWU were not advantaged, and that there were other, objective reasons why his problem could not be solved in that year:

> We had to solve urgent production tasks and therefore some plants received more flats. Further, a number of political emigrants from Chile had to be accommodated in the town. Therefore the failure to solve your flat problem does not mean that we do not treat our employees equally but it means that we have to consider first economic interests in order to be able to improve the situation of working people.[215]

The last sentence was probably meant to be an ideological reprimand from the party.

There were resolute petitioners who decided to fight for their rights: they wrote repeated complaints, they demanded information about the criteria for the allocation of flats and they pestered the flat distribution committee with their perpetual complaints. As the following letter shows,

some of them were desperate (or tactical) enough to question the justice of the whole system:

> I have lived for five years in an AWU of the VEB Carl Zeiss. My daughter was born last year and since then three of us have been living in a room of 12 m². I think our situation needs no further description. Since we were on the priority list of our plant, we were supposed to get a new flat in 1980. To our great disappointment, instead of the promised new flat we received an offer of a totally miserable, sleazy, old, wet flat without a bath, toilet or functioning wiring. Under no circumstances would I move into this flat with a small baby. What has happened to the flats that our plant received? I was told that out of the 84 flats, 59 were allocated according to the decisions of the management, not by the flat distribution committee. Why do they make priority lists then if the managers allocate the flats anyway and it is connections that matter, not the situation of the family concerned? I cannot at all understand that there are couples without babies who spend only some weeks in the AWU and then they immediately get a flat. Where is justice here?[216]

After he received the flat list of his plant, the angry family man turned to the manager with a new complaint:

> I do not accept the reply to my former letter because my questions have been only partly or not at all answered. The list that I got confirms my main argument: flats are not allocated according to the social situation of people. Otherwise how can childless couples receive two-room flats while families with a child have to wait for years in the AWU? When I enquired about the concrete cases, the flat distribution committee was unable to justify these decisions. They referred to the 'summary of criteria' but they could not be concrete about them. I was told that the age of the child was not important. For us who are concerned, it is, however, a crucial question: how long do we have to live with our child under these miserable conditions? I expect a concrete answer to my question![217]

The reply was characterized by the authoritarianism of the managing director, even though it was most probably written by one of his administrators:

> In my answer to your repeated complaint I take the opportunity to explain to you once more the flat policy of the factory. According to the regulations of 1973 the factory has full responsibility for its employees with respect to housing. I have decided the following: first, every plant receives a flat contingent in each year; second, the managers of the plants are fully responsible to me in this question; third, there is a special contingent at my disposal so that I can personally solve special cadre problems or urgent social problems during the year. I am fully aware of my responsibility, and my decisions are in line with the

> social political requirements of the Ninth Party Congress. I do not tolerate any deviation in this respect. My colleagues told you about the tense flat situation of the town. That's why it is all the more incomprehensible to me that you have refused two offers for old flats (a three-room flat in Mühlenstr. 41 and a two-room flat in Dornburger St. 131) because of the external toilet and the lack of a bath. I once more inform you that according to the urgency of your case your name will appear on the list of the next year. That said, I regard your complaint to be once and for all settled.[218]

The correspondence between the persistent petitioner and the chief manager does, in fact, prove the *opposite* of his argument: his social situation was, after all, taken into consideration. Further, the many checks in the system (flat distribution committees, priority lists, letters of complaint and the need to justify decisions) show that the social rights of people were, in fact, strongly protected, and that the applicants who were waiting for flats were all entitled to this benefit. It is, however, remarkable that the sharp criticisms of housing policy did not affect negatively the chances of the stubborn man: this suggests that petitioning also had the psychological function of venting passions, and the official bodies therefore tolerated the disrespectful language.

Unfortunately, there are very few accounts of the activities of flat distribution committees, but there is evidence that some people used the same disrespectful manner during the personal discussions of their flat problem. A certain Miss R, for instance, refused two offers for old flats and another two for AWU rooms because:

> as she put it, the other tenants were 'dirty pigs'. However, because of the tense flat situation in Jena many young people and mothers with children live in AWU, and one cannot describe these people as this … After the members of the flat committee discussed the problem with Miss R, she answered that 'it is bad enough that other colleagues accept everything and they don't dare to open their mouths'. She wanted to know whether we, the members of the flat committee, had ever lived under similar conditions. She put this question to a 64-year-old comrade, who grew up under capitalism. … even though the members of the committee are trying to help Miss R, they are not ready to deal with her problem only. She received four acceptable offers in two years that she declined. She would like to have a dream flat that we cannot offer to her at the moment. She said that she would make a new complaint.[219]

It is quite remarkable that Miss R did not refrain from openly criticizing living conditions in the GDR in front of the flat committee. Despite the provocative conduct of Miss R, it was important for the committee to demonstrate that they did everything to help her. This again shows that

the officials were expected to consider the social situation of people (even though the question of whether the 64-year-old comrade had ever lived in AWU was evidently held to be a negative political comment).

Some letters of complaint had, however, more serious consequences. Members of the party were evidently expected to show a higher level of conformity and, like in Hungary, to lead a 'decent' family life. The following case shows that the party attempted to intervene in the private lives of its members to defend the family:

> I live with my wife and my two children (a six-year-old son and a two-and-half-year-old daughter) in a two-room flat. I am attending a one-year course at party school, and I have to study a lot at home. My wife also studies. For this reason there are a lot of conflicts in our family. Since after the school I am supposed to be the party secretary of our group, and I am a candidate for higher education in engineering, I would like to ask you to give a positive reply to our application for a bigger flat.[220]

According to the report, during the discussion with comrade D it turned out that the letter was written and sent by his wife without his knowledge. The report commented that his family relations had been tense for one-and-half years because he spent most of his free time with a lover. During this time members of the party asked him many times to resolve his marital problems. Eventually, he declared that he would seek reconciliation with his wife and he would stay with his family. The report also confirmed that comrade D was a candidate for party secretary.[221] The case introduces a 'typical' career with the help of the party (party work, selection for education, responsible post) but it also reveals that the members of the party were expected to respect the moral code of the party.

While petitioners could freely complain of poor living conditions, the threat to leave the GDR was considered to be a political threat, all the more so because the following letter was addressed to the Council of Ministers of the GDR:

> My husband is a technologist in the optical precision instruments' plant of VEB Carl Zeiss Jena. I work as a nurse at the women's clinic of the Friedrich Schiller University. We have lived for seven years in a small furnished room of the nurses' hostel. Since my childhood I have had lived in poor conditions: when I was six, my parents got divorced and my mother and I got one room in a house. This room was wet with mould fungus on the walls. It took my mother ten years to get a bigger flat. When I came to Jena, I lived for three years in a dormitory, where I had only a bed and a shelf that I could call my home. In 1977 I received a room of 9 m² with sloping walls. Half a year later I got married and my husband moved in with me. We lived for three years in

> this room where we could only sleep on a couch because there was no room for a bed. Then we got a room of 12 m² and we could finally have a double bed. Last year we had a baby so right now three of us have to live under these miserable conditions. The last offer that we received was a two-room AWU flat but I think that it is senseless to move from one AWU into another. I find it very unjust that after six years of waiting we can only get an AWU flat, and even this is too small. I hope that my family will get an adequate flat before the end of this year because I have no more strength to live in this state with my child.[222]

The petitioner also mentioned that she and her husband were both shop stewards in the trade union. The woman refused to appear in front of the committee because, according to her husband, she recognized that her letter contained incorrect and false statements. The husband himself did not know of the letter and he declared that he would have prevented its mailing:

> He found the sentence 'I have no strength to live in this state with my child' particularly shocking, and he could not easily accept it. He maintained, though, that the sentence had no political message, and his wife did not think of leaving the GDR.[223] The chairperson of the committee and another member visited the woman in her home where they were personally convinced of the bad living conditions of the family. The colleagues made it clear to her that her letter had a political message, particularly if one took into account that she was active in the trade union as a shop steward. They concluded that she just wanted to underline the urgency of her case for which she does not blame our state.

It was, at any rate, stated that the letter was written because of an administrative mistake since the flat problem of the family had already been solved. In 1983 a single mother with a child received a three-room flat by mistake. This flat was then allocated to the family of the nurse while the single mother moved to a two-room flat. According to the report the problem was caused by the slow flow of information between the offices.[224] The case, however, reveals that it was also in the interests of officials to be attentive to the social problems of people.

While the cited documents reported many problems relating to the impact of the housing shortage on workers, including the primitive conditions of AWU and long waiting times for new flats, the letters, in fact, unambiguously prove that the social situation of the applicants was an important criterion for the allocation of flats. The comments in the letters suggest that those who were in a difficult situation could rely on the sympathy of administrators. There is evidence that the situation of single mothers received special consideration: a young woman turned to the chief manager with the complaint that she did not receive the one-room

flat that the flat distribution committee had promised her, and the management of the hostel where she lived refused to store her furniture that she bought for the new flat:

> Two weeks ago colleague Mrs P invited me for a discussion with the management of the hostel. She did not let me speak or explain the situation and she was totally reluctant to help me. She told me: 'You can put your furniture on the street, that's your problem. By 30 September the room should be cleared'. It was not the first time that she spoke with me in this manner. I am no longer willing to deal with this colleague, and I really need a larger room for my furniture. I would like to ask for your support.[225]

The letter was marked with the comment 'Scandal!!!' The reply, unfortunately, has not survived but if the investigation proved the complaint to be true, Mrs P would have received a strong reprimand for her heartless words.

The following two cases are cited to show that letters of complaint could lead to real results if the recipient chose to decide that the social situation of the writer justified urgent help:

> I trained to be an electrician in VEB Carl Zeiss Jena, where I work now. I have had good results and I have never have received any reprimands. I live together with my parents even though I am already 27. We live in an old house (built in 1939), which consists of a living room, a bedroom, a children's room, a small room that can't be heated, a kitchen, a toilet and a bath in the cellar. The children's room has no heating either. Five years ago my son was born and our flat became too small because I also have a sister. In 1975 I applied for a two-room flat, and now, after four years of waiting, I received the answer that there are more urgent cases that take precedence over my problem. Now I ask you, Comrade Chief Manager, is not my case also urgent?!! My father treats me as a child in front of my son and he thinks that he is responsible for his education. I am deprived of my parental rights! I have to add that I have a fiancé who lives with us, so you can imagine the tense situation in our family. Now I ask you again, Comrade Chief Manager, is it not an urgent case?!![226]

The inquiry confirmed that the woman worker lived under difficult conditions and she received a positive reply to her letter: the chief manager promised that he would personally attend to her case.

The second case was that of a woman who lived with her daughter under similar conditions in the parental flat:

> I have a room of 8.5 m² in my parents' flat where I live with my daughter. My sister also lives with her child in the flat and she has an even smaller room than mine. She can't even put a children's bed in her room. A further problem is the common use of the kitchen and bath. Since we all start working at the

> same time, I have to get up very early so that the others can use the bathroom in the morning. The flat distribution committee decided that my case was urgent after they visited our flat. Now I have learnt, however, that my name does not appear on the priority list. Since my fiancé works in the same plant and he has a room of 6 m², this complaint is our only opportunity to improve our situation and unite our family. For this reason I would like to ask you to find a speedy solution to end our misery. The flat committee can visit our flat at any time so that they can be convinced once more of our untenable situation.[227]

The woman was reassured that her case was regarded as socially urgent and that the chief manager would deal with the case personally.

Even though all of these cases describe individual situations and problems, they show how the system of the flat allocation functioned in practice. The largest group that was dependent on the factory for housing was either the new settlers, or those local people who could not rely on parental help. Often the latter were in a more difficult situation because, as the letters show, the family lived in cramped conditions in the parental home. Early marriages and the birth of children rendered the waiting time for a flat very difficult, as many generations had to occupy the same space. At the same time, however, a decision to have children at a particular time may have been motivated by the desire to obtain a new flat.[228] The social responsibilities of the enterprises towards its workers created a comprehensive work-based social security system, but it enabled a high degree of employer intervention into the private sphere. Letters of complaint addressed family problems such as divorce and adultery, and there were jealous spouses who used the opportunities such a system provided to denounce their partners to the workplace or to the party. Others asked for the help of management in order to expel a husband who drank heavily and engaged in drunken violence against family members from their home: solving one problem created another, for this employee needed a new home. The system of flat allocation rendered the factory to a large extent responsible for the social problems of their workforce. It helped to maintain a certain level of social justice (it was shown that the social situation of people received consideration in the factory), but it reinforced patterns of patriarchal dependence.

While the letters of complaint understandably focused on the negative aspects of community life, centralized mechanisms for distributing housing contributed to a strengthening of collective identities based around the workplace. Young people lived together in hostels, and the new housing estates ensured that Zeiss employees were not only colleagues, but also neighbours, given that the various plants received whole blocks of flats. In a similar fashion to Hungary, the intense community life in the GDR was recalled with a sense of loss in many life-history interviews:

> In GDR era there was much greater solidarity among the colleagues. We met more frequently – also in the workplace – people went bowling, they organized garden parties or when the children first went to school, there were youth fêtes or the colleagues went together somewhere after work … this is different now, people go to work, then they go home and they lock their doors … with the neighbours it is not like it used to be. In the earlier time we had a housing community (*Hausgemeinschaft*) in these houses. We were all young people with mainly one or two children, we were all around 23–24 when we moved to our first flats, people sat together a lot, there were club nights organized, people had a good time together; it is different now, people don't do it any longer because everybody has his or her own problems and people withdraw from community life. People don't chat with their neighbours on the stairs; they say 'Good afternoon' to each other if they meet, and they close the door. I think that today people are much more stressed, they have to think about things that were natural in the GDR, everybody or almost everybody was treated equally, everybody had work and a stable income. Very few people had really big problems. I say again, people had work, every family could send the children to nursery or kindergarten – many things that used to be natural but today they are not. Today everybody is uninterested … people don't care about their neighbours; they might hear that he is unemployed or she is now again at home but it is not their problem. Today people are concerned only about themselves.[229]

The living communities that were formed on newly built housing estates played an important role in social networks. Regular social contact and common activities in the neighbourhood were mentioned in many other interviews:

> People used to organize parties, I mean here, in the garden in front of the house. Or there were small parties on Saturdays, people made a fire, they had a beer and they talked to each other. The neighbours helped each other, there was social work, they did something for the environment. Today a firm does this kind of work in the neighbourhood. I don't know why this has developed in this way. For instance, on Saturdays there were always three or four men in the yard, they repaired their cars, they had a chat. Today people don't repair their cars, they take them to a garage. Sometimes I think that it is difficult to make friends with new neighbours.[230]

According to many interview partners, the housing communities were part of a communal life that declined after the fall of the GDR:

> Solidarity declined both at work and in private life. Take the collective of our house – there were forty-four flats in the house, families of similar age, we did a lot together, there were parties, we enjoyed ourselves. After '89 this has disappeared, people did not sit together, everybody stayed in the flats; it was not

> like as it was, more together, people organized children's parties in the houses, they were nice and they have disappeared, too. There were house parties twice a year but today people don't want to sit together and speak of their things, perhaps they are afraid that they give themselves away and that others take an advantage of them. Today people are afraid to share their ideas or problems with their friends, that's why they turn inside.[231]

Regardless of how one evaluates community in the GDR, the system of flat distribution undoubtedly reinforced a feeling of community and strengthened the relationship between workers and the factory. According to the official expectations, the flat generated feelings of gratitude from the population. Indeed people were most probably very happy when they could move into their first flats, particularly if they had had to live for years in various types of 'mass accommodation'. Yet 'dream flats' were not regarded as such forever by their new occupants. While community life in the GDR was seen positively after unification, their nostalgia did not spread to their view of the quality of housing:

> I started work at Zeiss in May 1968 and by October I had already received a flat. Five months. At that time many people came to Jena because of the flats. That's a fact, there were many. There were factories like Zeiss in Jena, and the large chemical factories in Eisenhüttenstadt – I don't know if the name means anything to you – many young people moved there. You can see from here the houses … to the left. I moved afterwards because it was a two-room flat, you could get only a two-room flat if you did not have children. … My son is not married and he has a flat. I find this good. He is better off now than we were.[232]

The letters of complaint and life-history interviews suggest considerable discontent with housing in the GDR. While community was positively evaluated, state social policy was at best an ambiguous means of rallying the population behind the regime. Many people regarded the flats as fringe benefits rather than the realization of an egalitarian social programme. Furthermore, in the light of the letters connections continued to matter: experts enjoyed an advantage over the others and, since education (including adult education) was controlled by the party, the selection of the candidates for higher education (and thus, upward mobility) was largely dependent on their ideological reliability. The following letter is cited to show that there were people who felt that they were cast to the margins of the socialist social welfare state, despite waiting for years:

> I have read the article about our social policy in the 30 January 1987 issue of *Volkswacht* with interest. The report argues that two-thirds of working-class families received new flats between 1971 and 1986 and that adult people have

> at least 26 m² at their disposal. Further, 76 per cent of the flats are equipped with baths or showers and 68 per cent have internal toilets; 42–45 per cent of the new houses would be given to working-class people. I have to say that the living conditions of my family (four people) are very different. We live in a flat of 48 m² in an old building. We cannot use the largest room (11 m²) in winter because it is wet and cold and it has no heating. So my eight-year-old daughter and my two-year-old son have to share a bedroom (10 m²). The flat has neither a bath nor a shower and the toilet is in the common stairwell. There is no drying room so we have to dry our washing in the flat. The building is in a very bad state (the gutters are broken, the plaster falls off, and the windows can't be closed properly). I received this flat in 1978 – I accepted it because I lived with my baby in half a room in my parents' house. After my second marriage and the birth of my son, four of us lived in a flat that I received for two people. My husband and I are both blue-collar workers and my husband works on two shifts. I applied for a cooperative flat in 1971 but after sixteen years of waiting I was told to file a new application. I have the impression that the flat distribution committee consciously deceived me, so I just don't trust them any more. Because of the circumstances that I described above, I consider this complaint as my only opportunity to improve my living conditions. I would like to ask for your support in this matter.[233]

The answer of the chief manager has not survived but the letter reinforces the picture of a tense relationship between the workers and management in which authoritarianism and social justice were often paradoxically combined.

The 'balance' of Honecker's great housing project is therefore, at best, ambiguous. In the light of the interviews, housing communities reinforced private contacts and solidarity among the workers, many of whom knew each other already from the training school and the dormitories. Since they belonged to similar age groups, they shared several family experiences: taking their children to nurseries and kindergartens, family festivals and other common leisure programmes. There is no reason to doubt that many young couples were very happy to move to their first homes – especially if they had to spend years in overcrowded AWUs or the parental home, where couples often lived in one room with their babies. Social rights, however, encompassed the right for 'appropriate' housing and, as we have seen from the letters, East German workers did not refrain from criticizing the management if they felt that these rights were not respected. Honecker's welfare policy therefore led the GDR into a similar debt trap as was the case with Hungary, because their planned economies were ill equipped to compete with the market economies and consumption levels of the advanced Western countries. And the Western television channels and Western trips rendered this difference painfully obvious, even in the eyes of the East German population. In Hungary we

can find abundant criticism of the increase of prices and the failure of the standard-of-living policy in the information reports of the 1980s. In the GDR, political repression provided for the quiescence of the population; the mass flight of the citizens in 1989 when Hungary opened its Western borders, however, demonstrated that East German youth no longer saw its future in the socialist system.

'Du und dein Werk'

Even though community building was an integral part of the labour policy of the factory – as we have seen with the example of housing – given the fact that the minute books of the meetings of the party leadership of the factory have not survived, there is very little documentation of the social activities that were undertaken for this purpose, including the socialist brigade movement. In 1973, when the Zeiss factory celebrated the 25th anniversary of the nationalization of the enterprise, the work plan of a special publication survived, which underlined that its main purpose was to stress workers' identification with the collective and the factory. The title of the publication was called characteristically 'Du und dein Werk' (You and your Plant). The most important aspects of the concept for the publication were the following:

> It should be, above all, introduced how under socialist conditions people – in particular the members of the leading working class – are trained to be socialist personalities with the help of their collective in the workplace. It is a process that cannot take place without conflicts because we have to overcome the biases and influences of bourgeois ideologies. In this respect you should describe the relevant, purposeful activities of the socialist brigades (the work pledges of the collectives) and the results of the socialist work contest. You should represent how the workers in partnership with the intelligentsia – under the leadership of the party – manifest themselves as socialist proprietors, producers and the possessors of power. The idea is not to give a historical outline of the past 25 years of the VEB Carl Zeiss Jena but to show that – as a result of a historically determined process – a landmark event took place 25 years ago that decisively determined the future of the Zeiss factory. In order to have an emotional effect, you should use the Du-form,[234] so you will directly address the reader and immediately engage him in the narrative so that he can commit to memory that his work serves the strengthening of the GDR and of the socialist world system, and thereby the defence of peace. And he is part of all of these with his work, with his initiative, with his collective, with his personality.[235]

The above text, albeit it was prepared for propagandistic purposes, expressed the main message of the community policy of VEB Carl Zeiss

Jena. The German language distinguishes between the formal ('Sie') and informal ('du') ways of addressing people. The use of 'du' shows that the party sought to eliminate the social distance between workers and managers, at least in interpersonal communication; hierarchical relations were supposed to be replaced with a homogenous working community. The state strongly supported working-class communities and community life. The German system was traditionally characterized by solid hierarchies and the separation of social classes. The party made great efforts to democratize the relationship between workers and managers. This was partly achieved through a levelling wage policy (it was a frequent complaint that foremen earned nearly the same money as skilled workers, especially if they were shift workers) and partly through a conscious decrease of social distance (workers lived in the same quarters as managers, they ate in the same canteens, there were common state festivals and equality was an important social message of the party). Workers gave credit to the emancipating policy of the party: the greater social equality of the old system was recalled in the interviews with a sense of loss.

In spite of the apt title of the chapter, the intensive community life of the factory that workers reported in the interviews has little archival documentation. The materials of the factory party organization are very scattered for this period so it is difficult to reconstruct the community life of the factory. A report of 1973 gave the following account of voluntary social work that was undertaken by the factory collective:

> Since the beginning of the year the number of brigades has increased from 598 to 664 in the plants of Jena (including Saalfeld). Out of them, 401 brigades participate now in the contest for the title of the 'Collective of Socialist Work' (*Kollektiv der sozialistischen Arbeit*) while at the beginning of the year there were only 389 participants. At the same time the number of brigades that won the title increased from 219 to 229. Currently, there are twenty schools with around 11,650 children who are patronized by our factory. Within the framework of this program 6,779 pupils participate in the training programmes of comprehensive schools and 445 pupils who are in the 11th and 12th classes are engaged in the scientific-political programmes of our institutions. More than 2,000 employees work in the eighty-two cultural groups of the factory. The political and cultural activities of our youth manifested itself particularly in preparation for the tenth world festival: there were 480 youth programmes with more than 20,000 participants. The high proportion of our youth who participated in 'Messe der Meister von Morgen'[236] (88 per cent), the socialist work contest and the discussion of the youth act show that young people are actively engaged in the solution of the problems. It expresses the increasing consciousness of responsibility that there were 2,100 meetings that discussed the plan of 1974 with the participation of 80 per cent of the members of the

> brigades. Out of the 7,300 contributions there were 3,309 proposals for the improvement of working conditions, work culture and labour protection.

The report, however, concluded that despite these results, the tempo and the results of the process of socialist rationalization were still inadequate and more ideological work was needed to increase the number of shift workers.[237]

The cited documents suggest that memory of the special nature of Zeiss's history – that is the form of ownership and the generous social policy of the factory before the Second World War – survived as late as the beginning of the 1970s, and the functionaries considered it necessary to underline that the new, socialist system had established stronger bonds between the workers and the factory than did the capitalist system. Given the oppressive ideological climate and the lack of survey evidence it is difficult to determine to what extent this project was successful. The cited documents of the investigation of 1969 in the instrument plant, at any rate, suggest that the majority of the old guard of the factory kept a distance from the party and politics. With respect to the politics of factory identity and especially working-class engagement with official ideologies of socialist proprietary consciousness, it is worth recalling the comment of one of the managers that people work conscientiously because of their old loyalty to the factory, rather than because of their political commitment.[238] Beyond militant party language it is possible to detect the signs of the conflicts and attitudes of previous eras, for instance the admission that the nationalization of the enterprise was a contested process and that socialist rationalization did not have tangible results. Such comments reveal that despite the over-ideologized language, scepticism towards the campaigns of the party manifested itself among the employees.

The leadership of the district was also discontented with the political work of the party organization of the factory; at least at a meeting in 1978 the work with workers to improve socialist rationalization was met with a sharply hostile response:

> Certainly we all share the opinion that the concrete organization of the daily offensive work with the masses is of a remarkably low standard in the Zeiss factory. The much debated problems of the supply of consumer goods and the wide range of questions concerning foreign and domestic policies require that all of the employees should get a clear picture and they should be fully conscious of their personal responsibility for the ongoing development of the whole republic. You should explain to them that the increasing needs of the population that, as we all know, increases at a higher rate than our production, demand a high level of achievement from everybody.

The following contribution suggests that the whole town was regarded to be ideologically 'unreliable' – or more liberal – in the district: 'The IKL should pay more attention to concrete political work with the masses in the future. The criticism that this work needs to be more comprehensive and diverse concerns not only IKL but also the town of Jena, where there is much to be done in this respect because some problems cannot be solved through better economic propaganda alone.' The report of the IKL, not surprisingly, stressed the results of political work, amongst others the increase in the number of young workers who received awards for their quality work, the results of the innovation movement (*Neuererbewegung*) and the mass movement entitled 'Initiativpaß 30' in the optical instrument plant. Within the framework of the latter the employees undertook the task of sparing thirty working hours with the help of socialist rationalization.[239]

Although political campaigns (including the socialist brigade movement) were expected to lead to increases in production, even the above cited documents suggest that the campaigns mainly aimed to improve the relations between the party and the people.[240] This, at least, explains that the work with the masses – on the basis of the account – had few, if any, concrete results and neither were the methods of socialist rationalization more closely determined. Unfortunately, there are no overall figures regarding activity of socialist brigades in the factory. The 'Salvador Allende' brigade was the only brigade whose diary survived in the factory archive. It reinforces the argument that the brigades were more important for community building than for production. Amongst its work pledges there were general objectives listed such as fulfilment of the plan targets and the undertaking of special control tasks.[241] The brigade's cultural and social activities were very similar to those of their Hungarian counterparts: participation in adult education, movie programmes (visits to the Soviet film festival), bowling, the celebration of the International Women's Day, common excursions with the families of the members of the brigade, brigade evenings and the patronage of schoolchildren. The members of the 'Salvador Allende' brigade also committed themselves to studying the Soviet media, which suggests that more political work was expected from the socialist brigades in the GDR than in Hungary.[242] The accounts in the brigade diary recorded various aspects of community life: tours, excursions, nights at the cinema, visit to libraries, wine tasting, walking in the forest, a reading group, and the celebration of International Women's Day. The accompanying photographs showed that brigade life did not exist merely on paper, but that people did indeed participate in the common activities.

On the basis of contemporary sources it is very difficult to see to what extent the socialist project of community building was successful and how it shaped popular consciousness. Even though there is some evidence that the

party could not win over the majority of the factory's old guard to its cause, this probably did not influence their attitude to the factory itself. In addition, with the rapid increase of the workforce from the late 1960s, the social composition of its personnel changed too: many young people came from distant towns and villages to be trained in Jena, and those who settled in the town grew up practically together with this new collective. The dormitories, the common training and the community life of the AWU inevitably established closer contacts among young people, and reinforced feelings of solidarity. Even though there is no documentation of their integration into the factory collective, the common fêtes, sporting events and socialist brigades undoubtedly played a role in the process. This type of socialization rendered people more responsive to the values of the community they had joined.

On the basis of life-history interviews, community building could be regarded as successful because the overwhelming majority of my interview partners stressed that there was a higher level of communality among colleagues and their neighbours during the Honecker era than under the capitalist system post-unification. In this context the positive values of the socialist brigades (solidarity and communality) were frequently contrasted with the individualism and egoism of the new system:

> This collective spirit that existed at the time of the GDR had a very different background. People helped each other because they had common problems to be solved. Today one speaks of team spirit but this team spirit is actually needed to achieve a goal. Not to solve problems but to achieve a goal. In the brigades it was not the goal that was important but collective social work, to have good results as a collective, for instance if someone did not have enough points, the others helped them and together they could achieve a good result. Today the system does not work like that. This is a pity because people had a greater sense of togetherness, in order to help each other. Today this help is not wanted. People are required to work together for the same goal but they are expected to work on their own and to achieve the maximum output.[243]

The majority of my interview partners felt a change in people's relation to their workplace and consequently that solidarity and human contacts among workmates declined.[244] They maintained that the communities that were built in the GDR had disappeared together with the socialist system:

> The collective was much better united in the time of the GDR. We went on excursions, held common festivals to celebrate Christmas in the workplace and other celebrations that we had at the time; we did many things together, we had many common trips and we had a rest. After work we always had a rest. But it is not the same now as it used to be. The collective is not what it used to be. I have work, I do my work – and the others? Earlier it was not like that. You can try but it no longer works. 'I work here, and what I do afterwards –

> that's my business, that's my private life' – that's what many would tell you now. It hurts a bit, really. People need time to relax – it would be good if we had a little time for each other![245]

In this context the socialist brigades were linked with a higher level of solidarity that was held to be a positive feature of the previous system:

> Today people are occupied with themselves. In the period of the GDR we had a community. Neighbours helped each other, we had common excursions with colleagues in the workplace, there were common activities … There was a good climate in our plant, we regularly held brigade evenings, brigade parties. There were very many events organized amongst brigade members, among workmates, in the workshop, in the plant and in the whole factory – regular events. Workmates met privately, they mutually helped each other with various household jobs, for instance, repairing things or decorating the flat – that was totally normal. It was totally normal we helped each other. It is not like that today. It has been lost.[246]

Interview partners also told about cases when the brigades gave psychological support to their members:

> Earlier there was a totally different feeling of solidarity between colleagues. Today it is more like a fight because people think that they cannot keep their jobs otherwise. It was different in the GDR era … We had a colleague who had an alcohol problem and it was precisely this environment, her socialist brigade, that helped her to lead a normal life. After the *Wende* she became a real alcoholic.[247]

Like in the Hungarian case, community building in the GDR was a part of the labour policy of the regime that received strong institutional support. While the mutual assistance of workmates had its spontaneous aspects, the role of the brigade movement – organized from above – was recognized:

> One has to admit that earlier everything was a bit more organized. Fêtes in the workshop, brigade parties … such things … and then everybody was there, and there were groups formed that understood each other well. And the framework was also very different then, there were 250 people in the workshop; when there was an excursion, they sometimes hired a whole ship. Workmates meet much less frequently now.[248]

There were interview partners who reported of a kind of nostalgia for the organizational framework of the brigade movement:

> We made work pledges, newspapers for the walls, sometimes it was a bit childish but … we wrote in the brigade diary to record what we did together, there were reports, photos … they have been all thrown away, these diaries; it is a pity – for instance, our boss whom we have now, he would be very happy if he could write such a diary now.[249]

In the light of my life-history interviews, the brigade movement left mainly positive memories behind. It is, however, questionable as to the extent the communities of the factory and the neighbourhood influenced working-class political opinions and strengthened their loyalty to the regime. While many interview partners linked these communities with socialist values (solidarity, unselfishness, equality), they did not hold the system itself to be socialist (none of the cited interview partners were members of the party, and many had a negative opinion of the party and the 'comrades'). As the following citation shows, community work and participation in common activities had no relationship to the political opinions of people:

> I was not a member of the party. I was pressured many times because my husband was a member, and they told me that if my husband is a member, I should be a candidate, too. Then I said to the woman, okay, convince your husband first that he should join and then I will join, too. I knew that he was not a member of the party. No one forced me. I know this is how they would tell it now – but it is not true. Neither were people forced to celebrate 1 May. Allegedly they checked the names of those who were not there but I have never seen any such lists … At that time there was practical training for schoolchildren, one day a week, and I was persuaded to become a teaching assistant. I liked it very much, to organize the children, to find relevant tasks for them and to evaluate their work … I enjoyed it very much. But I would not have gone to party meetings on every Monday.[250]

Surely there were people who could take advantage of their community work, but for the majority these collectives offered no material advantages and they were primarily appreciated as social spheres which were relatively independent of state control. Brigades were not, of course, organized from below since the socialist brigade movement received strong support from the factory party organization. Independently of state support, though, people could participate in the community life of the brigades without identifying themselves with the party or the state ideology. In the light of the interviews workers held the work and housing communities to be social spaces free of state control. Private contacts formed on this basis reinforced a common working-class consciousness in opposition to the privileged cadres of the regime. Solidarity among workers was also

nourished by the oppressive ideological climate, omnipotent state control and the interdependence of people within the shadow economy of favours necessitated by goods' shortages. This kind of solidarity, however, helped to reinforce a critical attitude towards the regime and its privileged cadres.

Emancipated? Labour Policy for Women

Labour policy for women was a distinguished area of Honecker's welfare policy and the image of the emancipated, working East German women frequently appeared in the propaganda of the state as opposed to West German women, who were held to be confined to the household and the private sphere. Women's entrance to the labour market did not, however, mean full-scale emancipation; studies showed that household duties remained to be mainly the women's chore. In her book, where she analysed the women's policy of the East German state, Harsch shows how working women could exert pressure on the party to secure concessions in the sphere of private life and family.[251] The goal of this chapter is much more limited. In the light of the surviving documents from the women's commission in Zeiss, I seek to offer a case study of how women's policy functioned in a large factory such as Zeiss, and how far the party succeeded in emancipating women at the workplace. Since the sources do not enable the study of family life, statistical analysis will be limited to productive work.

Helping working women was a central aspect of the labour policy of the regime; it was so for two reasons.[252] First, the government sought to solve the problem of labour shortage by ensuring that women were integrated fully into the labour market. In addition to propaganda, this was encouraged by an extensive programme of state provision of child care: nurseries, kindergartens and afternoon schools. Places in these institutions were in principle offered to every family at highly subsidized prices. This kind of state support was meant not only to encourage female employment, but also to enable women to complete household chores. The second aim was to level the differences between the sexes in income, education and career opportunities (in fact, full female employment was an important element of the state's general egalitarianism). Thanks to the work of women's commissions,[253] whose task was to assist and control the realization of these goals in the enterprises, the situation of women workers in the Zeiss factory is better documented than that of their male counterparts (for instance, with respect to education).

Between 1960 and 1980 the proportion of women among the employees of the factory showed a slight increase: it was 37.8 per cent in 1960, increasing to 39.4 per cent in 1970, up again to 40.3 per cent in

1975, and then 43.5 per cent by 1980. The Zeiss plants located in Jena had a workforce that was 42 per cent female, and in some plants such as the optical plant women constituted a majority (60 per cent).[254] In the district the percentage of women of working age employed was 82.5 per cent in 1972,[255] and it increased to 90 per cent in 1975.[256] The town of Jena had a similarly high proportion of working women: 93 per cent of women were employed in 1976.[257] In the light of these figures we can speak of almost full female employment in the district and the town.

The factory made considerable efforts to provide conditions for full female employment. In 1976 in the town of Jena it maintained eight nurseries with 407 places, nine kindergartens with 856 places and two afternoon schools with 172 places.[258] The town could offer proportionally more places in nurseries than in the GDR as a whole (number of places per number of children) while the proportion of the kindergarten places lay a bit below the national average. Reports critically commented that there were not enough afternoon schools in the town. There are general figures with respect to the whole of the factory including plants outside Jena that show a slight growth in the capacity of the institutions for delivering child care in the second half of the 1970s: in 1976 the factory had 1,749 nursery and 2,762 kindergarten places, while in 1980 these numbers were 2,206 and 2,859 respectively. This improvement was demonstrated by the fact that, in 1980, only 141 women out of the employees of the factory (including all plants outside Jena) could not work because they could not get nursery or kindergarten places for their children,[259] whereas in 1970 nearly 500 women were in this situation in Jena alone.[260] It can be correctly claimed that the demand for child-care places could be almost fully satisfied. This was reflected also in the development of female employment.

Full female employment had, however, a negative side, too. Even though one cannot make general statements about how household work was divided within the family, the surviving documents suggest that shopping and provisioning were largely the task of women (for instance, in the information reports it was usually women who criticized the supply of consumer goods). This explains the high proportion of women among part-time workers: according to a 1973 report, out of the 2,347 part-time workers at the Zeiss factory 2,234 (95 per cent) were women. Around one-fifth of the female employees of the factory were part-time workers: their proportion was 19.5 per cent in 1973 and 20.8 per cent in 1980.[261] The proportion of part-time workers in 1973 was almost the same among the women workers: it was 18.1 per cent in 1980 (a slight decrease in comparison with the previous year, when it was 19.3 per cent as the report commented). During this period it was the task of the women's commissions to win over women for full-time employment:[262] even

though the proportion of part-timers among female workers was lower than the national industrial average (25.8 per cent) in the Zeiss, they had regular discussions with part-time workers to this end. The report underlined that new part-time contracts could be given for a determined period of time only, and they had to be very well grounded. The following 'ideological obstacles' to full-time jobs came up from the women during the discussions: insufficient places in the afternoon schools, the issues around the supervision of children; an inadequate supply of consumer goods; household chores; the negative attitude of husbands; and financial calculations (the money was enough for the family budget).[263] This shows that in this case the interest of the state as an employer preceded the interests of working mothers, since many women would have preferred working part-time for as long as they had small children.

The political goal of fully integrating women into the workforce was high on the agenda of the women's commission, but improvement of the conditions of working women was also an integral part of this policy. In the optical plant of the Zeiss factory, 15 per cent of the women workers undertook shift work in 1976; the report of the commission added that the plant had one of the youngest staffs in the factory, with an average age of 23 (because of the mass recruitment of young skilled workers) and the mothers who had small children were not willing to work in shifts. The report also mentioned that the shift nursery had to be closed because mothers refused to leave their children there.[264] The women's commission paid special attention to the full use of working hours:

> Many women leave their workplace earlier reasoning that 'I have to pick up my children from the kindergarten or nursery on time because they are always the last'. An inquiry found that all of these institutions were open until 17.30 but parents usually picked up their children at 17.00. In the meantime we have arranged that all of the child care centres in Jena should be open until 18.00. Thus, women can spend more time in their workplace, they can participate in social life better than earlier, and they can also go shopping without being worried about their children.[265]

Despite their political commitment, the women's commissions did, however, represent the interests of working women sometimes even against management:

> *We can conclude from our work with big families that there are a number of ideological problems in the attitude of the managers and state leaders.*[266] In many cases the managers refused to recognize that working mothers carried the bulk of the responsibility for household chores and for homemaking beyond their work in the plant. These tasks were only rarely recognized and appreciated.

> Concerning the extension of shift work, it should be taken into consideration that it is not primarily mothers with small children who should be convinced to work in shifts.[267]

This comment shows that the commissions also acted as mediators between working women and the party and state leaders.

Even though, as the above comment also suggests, housework remained mainly the responsibility of women, in the life-history interviews the state network of child-care institutions and the extension of female employment were unambiguously positively evaluated. Most people regarded child care, the education system, health care, and full employment among the positive features of the socialist system. Full female employment was stressed among the differences between East and West Germany: many women interview partners mentioned that it was natural for them to work as opposed to the more traditional family model in West Germany: 'It was different here than in West Germany where so many women who are below fifty stay at home or they have other interests. No one wants to sit at home here. Those who grew up in work and have always worked as young people want to be active again, not to sit at home and play dominoes. I think that it is depressing to live like that.' In this context some interview partners consciously contrasted the family policy of East Germany with that of West Germany: 'In the old West Germany there were fixed gender roles. In our country never. I have never had any problems with housework. Equal rights – the whole marriage developed like that.'[268] In many life-history interviews, work was an integral part of women's lives; this was why the loss of a job was a particularly painful experience of the new system:

> When the children were small, I would have liked to work part-time, six hours in a day, but at that time it was not possible. I would have liked to spend more time with the children, I have had a bad conscience because I was too tired in the evening, I could not always pay attention … The right to work, this is what I would like. I was unemployed for one and half years, I did not like it. That was not something for me. I was bored, one needs the stress of work somehow, the children have grown up, in the afternoon one can only wait for my husband to come home … that was not self-realization. I wanted to do something on my own. I always went to the Office of Labour, I was looking for jobs, I wrote applications that were sent back in two weeks with a refusal and I was sometimes invited to interviews, three or four times. Once I received an interview for a date when I was on holiday, so my son went there, and they said that they want to see me because if the son is so attractive then the mother should be as well [laughs] – this rarely happens but this is how it was.[269]

The role of state-provided child care was a hotly debated issue in the two Germanies; many interview partners felt the need to defend socialist child care against the charge that they would be harmful to the education of their children:

> In my opinion our daughter only benefited from the nursery. My acquaintances from West Germany, well, they would say that in the socialist kindergartners children were educated collectively. But my daughter has become a more individual person who knows her strengths and weaknesses, and she learnt to live in a community, to adapt herself to other people. I think that child care did her only good, as it had a positive effect on the development of her personality. It is totally wrong to believe that mothers have to stay at home with their children for three years in the family home. Child care teaches the children how to live and behave themselves in a community, which is important for the co-existence of people and their social relations. My grandson also goes to nursery. I see no harm in it.[270]

Some interview partners consciously contrasted the Western image of socialist child-care institutions with their own experience:

> First we should get to know each other better. The West Germans likewise don't know much about us. Take childcare. Beautiful kindergartens, children played and they learnt nice songs, and they [the Western relatives of the speaker] thought that the children learnt communist songs only! They also exaggerated things the same way as it was done here.[271]

Child care was evaluated positively even by those who would have preferred working part-time when their children were small:

> Work was from 7.00 to 16.45. It was a long day, mainly for the children. I had to take them early to the nursery, to the city by tram, undress them, run to the workplace, work until the last minute, then back to the nursery, dress the children, pick them up, catch the tram – it was a long day. But I believe even now that the nursery and kindergarten did no harm to the children. In West Germany they believe that these institutions are bad for the children. I don't think so; they don't cause any harm whatsoever. But I think it would have been better if the mothers could have worked part-time.[272]

Others thought that they were in a better situation than young mothers are today:

> I have always worked full-time. I left at 6 in the morning, I took my son to the school, kindergarten or nursery and I picked him up at 5 in the evening. In the meantime I was working. But it was nice. There was stress but it was nice. Today

> I can't imagine this stress and after all … many young people who today have children say 'why should I have all that stress?' At that time I paid 20 Marks (Ostmark[273]) for the nursery and kindergarten places, today one pays 200–300 Euros. These are not comparable. Many would say: 'I rather stay at home, I don't do anything. I have enough money, I need …' yes, many think like that.[274]

Apart from promoting full female employment, the party also sought to improve the career opportunities of women, the main means of which was through subsidizing education. This was of course linked with the egalitarian policies towards gender relations, as women belonged disproportionately to low-skilled groups. With respect to the training of women there was a clear improvement during the period immediately after the opening of the factory's comprehensive school. In 1966, of the female workforce of the VEB Carl Zeiss Jena, 31 per cent were unskilled, 45 per cent were semi-skilled, and 24 per cent were skilled workers.[275] By 1974, now 22 per cent of the women workers were unskilled, 22 per cent learnt other professions (dressmaker, etc.) and 49 per cent were skilled workers.[276] In the optical plant in 1976, skilled workers were 51.7 per cent of all female workers, university or college graduates 3.7 per cent, and semi-skilled and unskilled workforce 44.6 per cent.[277] Despite the marked improvement, the proportion of unskilled workers was still much higher among women than among men (in VEB Carl Zeiss Jena it was 6.4 per cent in 1974).[278] The proportion of skilled workers was also higher among male workers of the factory: it was 81 per cent in 1974.[279] According to the general figures of the factory (including the plants outside Jena) the proportion of unskilled workers among women was 17.2 per cent in 1980, which shows a slight decrease in comparison with previous years. The proportion of skilled women workers, however, increased to 68.6 per cent, which shows that the qualification level of the female workforce started to be comparable with that of their male counterparts.

The further education of women was supported by several means. Apart from the free education of selected candidates and paid study leave, in 1966 the factory organized special women's classes (*Frauensonderklasse*) in which working women could study during the regular working hours. These classes were very positively remembered by their participants (two of the interview partners attended classes of engineering economics and two of them trained to be designers):[280]

> In 1979 I took up an engineering course, I trained to be an engineer-economist for four years. It was a special women's class, I don't know if you have heard of it. We were only women, we had class two days a week … I liked it very much at that time, there were many of us in a similar situation, with small children, it was easier to help each other.[281]

Special women's classes were also organized to improve the qualifications of women: 511 women finished their vocational training in these classes between 1966 and 1974.[282] There are no overall figures for students in higher education but we know, for instance, that in 1976 ninety-nine women attended *Frauensonderklasse* in engineering economics.[283] In 1984, twenty women employees of the factory's research centre[284] studied in classes specially laid on for women, and nine participated in adult education. In that year six other women started studying in *Frauensonderklasse* and three in adult education.[285] These numbers show that women's classes significantly helped the higher education of women.

While with respect to vocational training the differences between the men and women workers were significantly reduced, differences at the top of the hierarchy proved more persistent. In 1972 only 16 per cent of the employees of VEB Carl Zeiss Jena who had university or college degrees were women, and their proportion was likewise low; 18 per cent among those who finished comprehensive school and had a high-school leaving certificate (*Fachschulkader*[286]).[287] According to the overall figures of the factory, 6 per cent of the female workforce in 1976 had only the *Fachschulkader* and 3.5 per cent were university or college graduates. In 1980 the proportions were 8.1 per cent and 5.2 per cent respectively, which shows that the proportions of university or college graduates among women workers nearly doubled over this period.[288] In 1984, of the women employees of the research centre, 37 per cent belonged to the above two groups and the figures show that the proportion of educated women increased in the younger cohorts: of those between 40 and 60 years of age, the proportion of women was 13 per cent among those who finished *Fachschule*, college or university, while in the age group between 25 and 45 it was 40 per cent.[289]

Table 2.8 gives an overall view of the development of the education of women in the second half of the 1970s.

On the basis of the statistical evidence, the education of women improved much faster than the appointment of female managers. In 1972, of the direct production managers of the VEB Carl Zeiss Jena, 7.1 per cent were women,[290] and according to factory statistics the proportion of direct production managers was still very low among women in 1976 (0.6 per cent) and in 1980 (0.9 per cent).[291] The proportion of women was not much higher either among the managers or leading functionaries: 2,041 people had leading positions in the factory in 1976, and 10.6 per cent were women, while in 1980 out of the 2,376 leaders and managers 12 per cent were women.[292] The critical comments of the reports suggest that this was the field where it was the most difficult to implement the

Table 2.8 Development of the education and qualification of female employees in the Zeiss factory (in number and %)

	1976		1980	
	Number	%	Number	%
University, college	639	3.5	949	5.2
Fachshulkader	1,096	6	1,478	8.1
Direct production managers	110	0.6	164	0.9
Skilled workers (1+2 years)	12,137	66.5	12,514	68.6
Without qualification	4,270	23.4	3,138	17.2
Total	18,251	100	18,243	100

Source: UACZ, WB Nr. 487, Abrechnung der Frauenarbeit 1980 nach Schwerpunkten, Qualifikationsstruktur.

policy of equal rights and that misogynist attitudes continued to influence the selection of cadres: 'It contradicts the above development [the improvement of the education of women] that out of the 89 graduates of *Frauensonderklasse* (from 1970) only 12 (13.5 per cent) received mid-level or leading positions.'[293] But even a report in 1981 complained that there was not much progress with respect to the promotion of women leaders and managers in the factory:

> We cannot be satisfied at all with the rate of promotion of qualified women from the lowest to the highest levels. On the contrary, we have to say that there are huge shortcomings in this respect. The proportion of female brigadiers and direct production managers has almost totally stagnated for the past four years and the proportion of women among managers and leading cadres has even declined.[294]

It seems that of all the gender differences, career opportunities were the most difficult to level.[295]

The levelling policy was more successful with respect to the differential between male and female workers. The factory conducted several surveys to show that the principle of equal pay for equal work was realized in each individual plant. With respect to the overall figures, no abuses were reported in this respect: a detailed analysis of the wages of men and women

Table 2.9 Differential between men and women workers in VEB Carl Zeiss Jena in 1978 (monthly average wages)

	Wagegroup 4	Wagegroup 5	Wagegroup 6	Wagegroup 7	Wagegroup 8	Wagegroup 9	Wagegroup 10	Wagegroup 11	Wagegroup 12	Wagegroup 13
Average wage of female employees (M/month)	457	507	570	630	669	764	878	1,050	1,289	1,595
Average wage of male employees (M/month)	455	554	576	675	724	836	960	1,163	1,378	1,707
Difference in M/month	2	47	6	45	55	72	82	113	89	112

Source: UACZ, VA Nr. 03740, Analyse zur Entlohnung und Eingruppierung werktätiger Frauen im Vergleich zu werktätiger Männern, 12. Oktober 1978.

in 1978 found that there were very small differentials between men and women workers who belonged to the same wage groups (see Table 2.9).

A report of 1979 found that the average monthly wages of male workers were higher than those ofwomen, but the principle of equal pay for equal work was not violated. The reason for the higher average wages of male workers was that their proportion was higher in the high wage groups while the majority of women belonged to the lower wage groups Of the employees in the lowest wage group 84 per cent were women, while in the highest wage groups their proportion was 5–10 per cent (see Table 2.10).[296]

Table 2.10 The distribution of men and women workers among the various wage groups in VEB Carl Zeiss Jena in 1978

	Wage group 3	Wage group 4	Wage group 5	Wage group 6	Wage group 7	Wage group 8
Number of female employees in the wage group	99	2062	4571	1375	289	46
% of female employees within the wage group	79.8	73.4	59.7	26.5	8.2	2.2
Number of male employees in the wage group	25	747	3,082	3,803	3,232	1,334
% of male employees within the wage group	20.2	26.4	40.3	73.4	91.8	96.7

Source: UACZ, VA Nr. 03740, Analyse zur Entlohnung und Eingruppierung werktätiger Frauen im Vergleich zu werktätiger Männern, 12. Oktober 1978.

There were other factors that negatively influenced the development of the average wages of women workers: the overwhelming majority of part-time workers were women, and the proportion of shift workers was higher among men (shift bonuses counted towards average wages). Besides, the report observed that there were 'typical' women's jobs that were badly paid such as secretaries and wages clerks (even though there was a handwritten comment asking 'Does it have to be like that? Are these

jobs inferior?') The analysis of the wages therefore concluded that the higher average wages of men workers could be explained through their position in production and the women's greater responsibility for the household and the family.[297]

The above information, however fragmentary, reveals that the system did indeed do much to level the differences between the sexes in employment, education and income, partly for ideological reasons (competition with West Germany) and partly for economic reasons (labour shortage), but it also points out the contradictions that it could not solve, most notably the problem of how to reconcile the professional life of women with the family and household duties. The comments of the cited documents clearly show that in this respect, emancipation was a slow process, and in most cases women were expected to undertake the bulk of the housework. The state greatly facilitated full female employment both through propaganda and the provision of institutions of child care (nurseries, kindergartens, afternoon schools) at highly subsidized prices (which can be considered symbolic). True, shopping itself was a difficult task in an economy which continued to suffer from a shortage of consumer goods, in spite of all the heroic efforts of party functionaries. Zeiss was in this respect in a privileged position: when women workers complained about the shortage of women's underwear, the chief manager Biermann ordered a truck of the missing product, which could be purchased only by the Zeiss employees. The slow progress of the promotion of women leaders and managers likewise shows that misogynist biases were not easy to overcome.

While recognizing the failures of this policy, it should, however, also be emphasized that the majority of the interview partners thought that the socialist system did a lot for working mothers. All interviewees told me that work was an integral part of their life, and those who lost their jobs in the new system did everything that they could to find new employment, even if their husbands could support them. Men likewise said that it was 'natural' for them that their wives worked and the partners shared household duties. In this respect, the labour policy towards women was one of the few things that was unambiguously positively remembered and appreciated. In the light of the interviews, the GDR was indeed 'advanced' in this respect. Labour policy for women was also facilitated by the more advanced German industrial society – in the Hungarian case, the emancipating goals of the party were contradicted by the traditional gender roles characteristic of rural societies. As we have seen in the example of commuters, in Hungary large groups of workers preserved their rural residence, culture and mentality.

Comparing Welfare Dictatorships

With the end of the reform era of the 1960s a 'tacit' compromise was concluded between the party and the working class. The party in both countries concentrated on the increase of the standard of living of the people and the satisfaction of consumer needs in exchange for the political support – or at least quiescence – of the working class. State-driven technical development and an export-oriented economy were expected to provide for the material basis of the continuous increase of the consumption levels of the people. Ulbricht had a similar vision, but the politics of austerity that he employed and the decrease of consumer goods in favour of huge state investments in the so-called strategic sectors led to an economic and a political crisis. Frightened of the mounting discontent of the population, the party leadership decided to increase the plan targets for consumer goods while they lowered investment. Even though Honecker called this policy the 'unity of economic and social policy', in essence it was the same as Kádár's standard-of-living policy.

This second part of the book introduced and analysed the local functioning and reception of this policy in the two countries. In Hungary there was indeed a significant increase of the standard of living in the 1970s. Even in the 1960s, however, Hungary's reform policy relied more heavily on the private initiative than the East German reform. The example of commuters nicely demonstrates how workers participated in both the state and the private sectors (through *háztáji*) to increase their family income. Private initiative also played a more important role in the solution of housing in Hungary than in East Germany where the state could finance a grand-scale housing programme. The increase of the standard of living was therefore based on people drawing income both from the state and private sectors rather than pay increases in the state sector alone. The survey of 1976, which gave a picture of the conditions and opinions of the most privileged group of the working class in the county (concerning wages, housing conditions and education) highlighted some important relationships in this respect. Firstly, nearly half of the respondents said that they worked in their free time, which means that in order to live better, people had to work more. Secondly, the survey concluded that people were not 'fully' contented with the increase of the standard of living, even at a time when real wages increased at the highest rate in the examined period. This criticism could have been a warning for the party that legitimacy based on the satisfaction of consumer needs was essentially fragile. Thirdly, one-fifth of the respondents said the achievement rarely or never determined the wages (in Rába MVG, 25 per cent gave this answer) and only another one-fifth thought that people were paid according to their

work.[298] This, in general, shows the declining social prestige of work in the 'workers' state' – even in the eyes of the working class.

After the failure of the East German reform and the mounting discontent of the population, which was documented in the first chapter of the book, the 'unity of economic and social policy' in the GDR aimed to increase the appeal of the party for the people. The satisfaction of consumer needs became the most important task of party functionaries – or if we want to keep to the language of the party, consumption policy became the main 'battlefield'. The party leadership of the district sent regular reports to the high party leadership in which they meticulously listed how they won the 'struggle' for the continuous and satisfactory supply of the people with consumer goods. At the beginning of the 1970s the struggle had uneven results, judged from the long list of products which could not be purchased in the local shops. Later there were shortages, mainly of such 'luxury' goods as coffee, bananas and women's underwear. The deepening crisis of the late 1980s was indicated by the expanding lists of shortage goods: judged from the party materials, there was a shortage of paper and indigo, but in the light of the life-history interviews even the purchase of nails met 'objective obstacles' in the language of the party.

The shortage of consumer goods was, however, not the only Achilles' heel of the Honcker regime. It was namely an important difference between the GDR and Hungary that while Hungarian reformers experimented with the expansion of the private sector, Honecker, on the contrary, sought to nationalize the (still) existing small private companies, and he wanted to satisfy consumer needs through a centralized system of state redistribution. The section entitled '*From Hostels to Flats*' showed that this system created much unnecessary frustration, discontent and grievances and many felt that their social rights were violated. Even less successful was the 'struggle' to provide for the continuous and satisfactory supply of the population with consumer goods. The information reports regularly listed – along with the compulsory, triumphant production records – that there was a shortage of *x* or *y* consumer goods, and even party members complained of the shortage of certain products – for example building materials or parts for cars. In addition, the GDR had to compete with one of the most advanced market economies of Europe, which widely advertised its 'consumption paradise'. Even though the GDR could boast of important results within the socialist camp (the East German working-class wages and housing conditions were significantly good, and the results of the social political programme, education and women's policy have been discussed above), the East German citizens compared their situation with the West German people, who did not have

to wait for years for a car or use informal contacts to purchase 1 kg of bananas. This designated the limits of the standard-of-living policy.

In Hungary the failure of this consumption-oriented policy became visible earlier than in the GDR, where the repressive political climate concealed the true opinion of the people from the party. This was documented in the section entitled '*Opposing the Management*' where we could observe that with the failure of the standard-of-living policy informants started to openly criticize the programme of the government and the party. Canteen food, bad roads and overcrowded buses all provided topics for political jokes, which indicated the deterioration of the political mood of the people. The information reports of the 1970s can be characterized by an overall optimistic tone: people expect the party to correct the mistakes but they do not question the legitimacy of the ruling regime. The reports of the 1980s are abundant in negative criticisms, which reflect a general loss in the credibility of the party line and an increasing mistrust of the political power.

The party paid a heavy price for the 'tacit' compromise with the working class in both countries. The working class was integrated into the regime, which provided for political stability. However, despite the revival of elements of the old social democratic programme, the main social message of the party became the standard-of-living policy, which constructed workers as 'consumers' and reinforced material values and an essentially petit-bourgeois mentality.

This was reflected not only in the policy but also in the language of the party. In Hungary working-class topics were struck from the agenda of the party meetings. The information reports of the 1980s are abundant in criticisms that people who have access to the private sector have higher incomes than the workers of the state sector. Money became more important than class position. It is at best doubtful to what extent commuters possessed a working-class consciousness. The expansion of the private sector in the 1980s led to further divisions within the working class and a weakening of class consciousness. Although the East German collectivist model of the welfare dictatorships was more resistant to concessions to the market, the orientation towards consumption likewise led to the downgrading of the working class. From the second half of the 1970s, the party materials of the district essentially inform us only about the fulfilment of plan targets, production results and the celebration of the topical state holidays. Even though the speeches of the party leaders abounded in quotations from Marxist classics, the 'working class' was increasingly used as an abstract category; real workers disappeared not only from the party documents but also from the rhetoric of the party. It seems that with the new, consumption-oriented policy the working class lost its social reality even from the perspective of the party, and the idea of emancipating

them received an ever-decreasing emphasis in the official ideology. The dogmatic speeches of the party leaders suggest that they did not even feel a need to address the workers as a class.

Interestingly, even though the party had a pronounced social policy towards labour, labour-related issues were discussed much less in the meetings of the party leadership of the East German district than that of the Hungarian county (if we disregard the continuous reports of the provision of the people with consumer goods). There was more scattered information about the working class of the former than about that of the latter. While in 1972 it could have happened that when the members of the old factory guard of a Silbitz plant did not get the premium, the workers threatened with a strike and even referred to 17 June[299] in front of the party members,[300] in later times the local party leaders saw no reason to disturb the peace of mind of their superiors. Judged from the sources, it seems that they themselves believed their own propaganda that the satisfaction of consumer needs rendered the people satisfied with the system. There is some sad irony in the fact that the most numerous sources of working-class lives are the surviving letters of complaint, which mainly addressed the accommodation problems of the writers (even though the housing conditions in the GDR were not at all bad when placed in comparative perspective); but it seems that despite its pronounced policy to labour, the regime preferred to communicate with the workers in the form of applications only.

Despite the egalitarian socialist rhetoric of the party, the standard-of-living policy in effect created new social inequalities and reinforced materialist values. In the Hungarian case already in the reform era working-class criticism was targeted at the increasing material inequalities, the gap between managerial and working-class wages and the prosperity of the 'peasantry'. The expansion of the private sector reinforced material inequalities between workers and entrepreneurs. In the light of contemporary surveys and literature, materialist values became more important than community life: the social rank of the people was increasingly determined by the quality of consumption.

The standard-of-living policy had contradictory results for the party even in the more egalitarian East German society. In spite of the results of the generous social policy, the visible gap between the full supermarkets of West Germany (which were widely advertised in the Western media) and the supply of the East German shops, where bananas and coffee were held to be 'luxury' products, failed to convince the East Germans of the superiority of socialism. It is unlikely that apart from the party functionaries anybody would have read the information reports, written in a heavily bureaucratic and clumsy language, with interest; but if a capitalist spy had done so, he would have surely been content to read that in the 'work-

ers' state' people thought that those who had Western currency preceded 'normal' consumers, who stood at the bottom of the imagined social hierarchy.[301] The opening of Intershops and Exquisit shops rendered the differences among the consumers all the more visible. The new inequalities nourished social criticism and they did not help much to render the socialist ideology more appealing for the people.

An even more important consequence of the tacit compromise was the party's consistent refusal to tolerate any leftism other than the official legitimizing ideology. This in effect meant the persecution of any left-wing subcultures and communities which did not fit in with the socialist communities of the regime. In Jena the associations and housing communities of dissident young people were ruthlessly persecuted. One member of the *Jenaer Friedengemeinshcaft*, Matthias Domaschk, was arrested and committed suicide in custody. Other members of the group were forced to leave the GDR. In Hungary leftist critics of the regime also met harsh retaliations: there was a show trial against Haraszti because he painted a too-critical picture of the relationship between the workers and the state in his ethnographic study, and members of the so-called Budapest school, who had contacts with the New Left, were persecuted and forced into exile.

The tacit compromise therefore preserved an essentially patriarchal relationship between the party and the working class. The 'workerist' ideology of the party was not merely propaganda because the standard-of-living policy, the support of working-class housing, culture and education, the socialist brigade movement and the party's policy towards women that were discussed above did in fact serve the interests of the working class. And it cannot be denied that this was the field where the 'workers' state' had real emancipating achievements. In spite of the complaints, there were not really great differences between the working-class and managerial wages. In the GDR a shift worker earned more money than a young engineer or researcher, and the party committees of both factories held long debates about how to motivate skilled workers to become foremen, because the greater responsibility was not rewarded materially. Even though the expansion of the private sector in Hungary decreased the opportunity for the party to influence directly the incomes of the population, the large industrial working class remained a privileged group until the collapse of the Kádár regime.

Community-building and the support of working-class culture and education were elements of the progressive tradition of the old social democratic movement. However, while the original aim was to strengthen working-class consciousness and increase the political participation of people, the socialist brigade movement essentially depoliticized the workers in both countries. While people were encouraged to build com-

munities and spend their leisure time together, there was no political will to involve these working-class communities in managerial decisions or any other grass-roots political activity, as is documented by the conflicts between the brigadiers and the managers. The socialist brigades had no political role, and that is why people could regard them as communities relatively free of state control.

Albeit working-class education continued a progressive tradition, we have evidence from both countries that, with the expansion of higher education, workers' universities and adult learning lost their former significance. In Hungary, Ferge's studies showed that educational inequalities increased in the 1960s and later when working-class quotas were abolished, the ratio of working-class children in higher education further declined.[302] But even the East German data show that educational mobility declined in the Honecker regime and the children of the cadre elite were positively discriminated in admission to higher education.[303] The support of working-class culture therefore played a diminishing role in the social mobility of the working class.

The emancipating programme of the party should not, however, be altogether dismissed. The East German–Hungarian comparison well illustrates the relative educational backwardness of the Hungarian workforce. In the mid-1970s, a quarter of the Rába workers did not finish the primary school – and Rába was a model factory in one of the most developed regions of the country and manufacturing industry received generous state support. At the same time only 6 per cent of the male workers of Zeiss did not have a training certificate, and 80 per cent were skilled workers. In Rába 65 per cent of the male workers were skilled workers and 16 per cent did not finish primary school. Among the unskilled workers of the county this ratio was significantly higher: two-thirds of them did not finish primary school. The library movement must be mentioned as a positive initiative; this should, however, be evaluated along with the information that the cultural committees found 'striking deficiencies' in the linguistic competence of the population. It can, however, be listed among the achievements of the library movement that 65–70 per cent of the population of the county sometimes or often read books.

This chapter has introduced detailed statistics of the improvement of education and community life. Even though community life was supported and organized from above, this social experience was uniformly recalled with a sense of loss, both in the East German and Hungarian interviews. The East German interview partners all said that solidarity was stronger in the old regime than in the new one, and that colleagues could expect more support from each other than under capitalism which was characterized by fierce competition and more egoism.

The balance of the welfare dictatorships is therefore ambiguous. The skilled, large industrial working class became part of the socialist middle class. This was mainly reflected in the standard of living: we have seen that working-class wages were relatively high in comparison to other social strata in the examined period. Even though educational inequalities increased in the period, the state programme of 'educating the masses' sought to level cultural differences through cheap tickets to theatres and concerts, the popularization of libraries and free scientific lectures. Even if part of the cultural undertakings of the brigades remained on paper, many workers had positive memories of the subsidized forms of 'high culture'. The greater equality of the old regime was also positively recalled in the interviews. Postsocialist surveys likewise support the thesis that the welfare dictatorships had certain emancipating achievements: in both the GR and Hungary there was a relatively high ratio of people who identified themselves with the working class, while in West Germany the majority said that they belonged to the middle class.[304] It can therefore be argued that the socialist regime attempted to 'speed up' certain emancipating processes but the outcome of these efforts was contingent on the existing social structure. A good example of this is the party's policy towards women. Although the party sought to emancipate women in both countries, this policy was more successful in the industrially more developed GDR than in Hungary where the emancipating goals of the party were hindered by a more conservative attitude to gender roles.

Notes

1. It is a very much debated question, of course, to what extent the policy towards women that was followed in the socialist countries was eventually successful in emancipating women. For a challenging analysis of the GDR see Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*; for Hungary see Tóth, *Kádár leányai*.
2. Information from the interviews conducted with East German and Hungarian workers in 2003.
3. See: Szalai, *Beszélgetések a gazdasági reformról*.
4. T. Kolosi. 1987. *Tagolt társadalom: Struktúra, rétegződés, egyenlőtlenség Magyarország*on, Budapest: Gondolat.
5. Szelényi, *Új osztály, állam, politika*.
6. Keren, 'The Rise and Fall of the New Economic System', 79.
7. D. Cornelsen, 'Die Wirtschaft der DDR in der Honecker-Ära', in Glaeßner, *Die DDR in der Ära Honecker*, 357–70.
8. H. Stephan and E. Wiedemann. 1990. 'Lohnstruktur und Lohndifferenzierung in der DDR. Ergebnisse der Lohndatenerfassung vom September 1988', *Mittelungen aus der Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung* 23. For a comparison between the incomes of blue-collar and white-collar households see: P. Krause and J. Schwarze. 1990. 'Die Einkommensstichprobe in Arbeiter- und Angestelltenhaushalten der DDR vom August 1988 – Erhebungskonzeption und Datenbankzugriff' Diskussionspapier No. 11. Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung. For East German working-class wages see also: M. Kaufmann.

1990. 'Arbeitseinkommen in der DDR', *Leistung und Lohn*, Nr. 223/224, Sonderheft DDR. For an analysis of household incomes see: K.-D. Bedau. 1993. 'Untersuchungen zur Einkommensverteilung und –umverteilung in der DDR 1988 nach Haushaltsgruppen und Einkommengrößenklassen auf der methodischen Grundlage der Verteilungsrechnung des Deutschen Instituts für Wirtschaftsforschung'. Beiträge zur Strukturforschung, Heft 143.

9. Bouvier, *Die DDR- ein Sozialstaat*?, 180–93.
10. In 1976 the enterprise disposed of 10,500 flats and 3,342 places in the workers' hostels in Jena. Unternehmensarchiv der Carl Zeiss Jena GmbH, Jena (UACZ), VA Nr. 1583, Unterlagen zur Direktion Kultur und Sozialwesen, 20.5.1976.
11. Bouvier, *Die DDR- ein Sozialstaat*?, 264–72.
12. I did not work with Stasi files.
13. GYML, X. 415/128/1, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A bérfejlesztés és a különböző bérezési formák bevezetésének hatása a dolgozók helyzetére és a munkaerőmozgásra (a KB november 14–15.-i határozata alapján). 1973. június 28.
14. A bérfejlesztés és a különböző bérezési formák bevezetésének hatása, op. cit. 3–4.
15. Information from the interviews.
16. GYML, X. 415/128/1, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Tájékoztató a KB 1970. február 18-19-i, a nők politikai, gazdasági és szociális helyzete megjavítására hozott határozata végrehajtásának tapasztalatairól, 17, 1973. május 4.
17. GYML, X. 415/4/31, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A Győr városi V. B. jelentése az üzemi PB alapszervezeteket irányító tevékenységéről. 1975. november 26.
18. According to the interviews, men objected to the equal pay even if their women colleagues had the same qualification and performed the same job as they did. A woman electrician for instance recalled that when she joined a men's brigade in the Vehicle Unit of Rába MVG, who all received special bonuses because of their qualification, the members of the brigade strongly objected to giving the same money to a woman. The brigadier who later married her confirmed the story, adding that at that time he also resented the equal pay.
19. The fourth five-year plan in Hungary (1971–75).
20. Jelentés Győr-Sopron megye munkássága helyzetéről a KB 1974. márciusi állásfoglalása alapján, op. cit.
21. From the contemporary literature see, for instance, J. Berényi. 1974. *Életszínvonal és szociálpolitika*, Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó; E. Jávorka. 1970. *Életszínvonal a mai magyar társadalomban*, Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó; Á. Losonczi. 1977. *Az életmód az időben, a tárgyakban és az értékekben*, Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó. For contemporary statistical analysis of the evaluation of the standard of living see: R. Angelusz, L.G. Nagy and R. Tardos. 1980. *Munkásvélemények az életszínvonalról, a személyes anyagi és az országos gazdasági helyzetről*, Budapest: Tömegkommunikációs Kutatóközpont; R. Angelusz, L.G. Nagy and R. Tardos. 1981. *A megfelelőnek tartott jövedelem*, Budapest: Tömegkommunikációs Kutatóközpont.
22. GYML, X. 415/118/27, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, 1972. április havi információs jelentés.
23. GYML, X. 415/7/14, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Az életszínvonal-politikánk értelmezése a gépipari nagyüzemek párttagsága körében, 1. sz. melléklet, 1976. április 27.
24. Az életszínvonal-politikánk értelmezése a gépipari nagyüzemek párttagsága körében, op. cit.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. The enterprise even had a delegate in the executive committee of the county.

29. For contemporary debates on labour shortage under socialism see e.g.: I. Buda. 1977. 'A munkaerő-gazdálkodás és a bérgazdálkodás időszerű feladatai', *Társadalmi Szemle* 32(5); K. Sz. Falusné. 1969. *Munkabér, ösztönzés, elosztás,* Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó; K. Losonczi. 1973. *A munkaerőmozgásról*, Budapest Kossuth Könyvkiadó; Cs. Makó. 1979. 'Technika – munkásigények – munkakövetelmények I-II', *Ergonómia* 12(3–4); F. Munkácsy, 1976. 'A munkaerőhiány és a munkapiac sajátosságainak összefüggései', *Munkaügyi Szemle* 20(6); F. Munkácsy. 1979. 'Munkaerő-átcsoportosítás tervszerűen, szervezetten', *Munkaügyi Szemle* 23(3); S. Oroszi and J. Veress. 1979. 'Szükségszerű-e a munkaerőhiány a szocialista gazdaságban?' *Közgazdasági Szemle* 26(12); Gy. Pogány. 1982. *Munkaerő-gazdálkodás és munkaerő-politika*, Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó; A. Rácz. 1980. 'Munka szerinti elosztás, ösztönzés', *Társadalmi Szemle* 35(1); T. Sárközy. 1976. 'Felelősség a vállalati vezetésért és gazdálkodásért', *Társadalmi Szemle* 31(3); É. Szeben. 1979. 'A munka szerinti elosztás érvényesítésének néhány problémája a fejlett szocialista társadalom építésének időszakában Magyarországon', manuscript. Budapest; J. Tillmann. 1977. 'Teljesítménykövetelmények és munkaidőalap-kihasználás' *Munkaügyi Szemle* 21(3); J. Tímár. 1977. 'Foglalkoztatáspolitikánkról és munkaerő-gazdálkodásunkról', *Közgazdasági Szemle* 24(2); L. Iványi. 1979. 'A vállalati profitbővítésre és az önellátásra való törekvés hatása a munkaero˝helyzetre', *Munkaügyi Szemle* 23(4).
30. GYML, X. 415/3/23, MSZMP Gyo˝r-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyár vezérigazgatójának beszámolója a KB 1974. december 5.-i határozatáról a minőség, a takarékosság és a munkaerő-helyzetről, 16, 1975. július 22.
31. Ibid., 19.
32. GYML, X. 415/121/1, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A vállalatok üzemi és munkaszervezésének korszerűsítésére indított mozgalom feladatairól, 11–14 1972. március 24. See also Katalin Bossányi's interview with the manager: Bossányi, 'Made in Rába'.
33. GYML, X. 415/117/7, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A munkaerő-gazdálkodás helyzete és az első félév fő tapasztalatai a megye ipari vállalatainál, 1971, augusztus 3.
34. Ibid. 19.
35. According to the ground-cell information reports many workers thought that the managers received too many premiums.
36. Information from the interviews.
37. A Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyár vezérigazgatójának beszámolója a KB 1974. december 5.-i határozatáról, op. cit., 3.
38. GYML, X. 415/26/29, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A Rába Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyár értékesítési, termékszerkezeti, korszerűsítési, termelésfejlesztési és szervezetfejlesztési célkitűzése a VI. ötéves terv időszakában, 1980. november 18.
39. Az életszínvonal-politikánk értelmezése a gépipari nagyüzemek párttagsága körében, op. cit.
40. A közvetlen termelésirányítók helyzete, politikai-szakmai felkészültségük értékelése, op. cit., 2.
41. Ibid., 6.
42. Ibid., 2.
43. Ibid., 5.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., 6.
46. GYML, X. 415/12/4, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A vállalati belső irányítási és érdekeltségi rendszer fejlesztésének eredményei Győr város könnyűipari vállalatainál, 1984. május 29.

47. GYML, X. 415/12/4, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A Sopron városi Pártbizottság Végrehajtó Bizottságának jelentése a munkaidő utáni tevékenységből származó jövedelem növelésének lehetőségeiről, 1983. május 17.
48. Bossányi's interview with Horváth is a good example of this positive image of the profitable socialist factory (Bossányi, 1986, op. cit.). Bossányi also published articles about the enterprise in *Népszabadság*, the national daily. The county daily *Kisalföld* regularly reported about the economic results of Rába and the international recognition of Rába products (Collection of Rába archive).
49. The profitability of Rába was also frequently emphasized in the factory newspaper *Rába* (Collection of Rába archive). Horváth himself took very seriously the economic criterion. According to his recollection he initiated the closing of the Kispest Tractor Works in spite of the objection of the local party organs: 'After the film many people asked me how I was able to smile. Well, I am in the habit of smiling either at myself or my partner when I have to repeat something twenty times. When we had the great conflict with Kispest, everybody propagated with a big mouth that we have to close the loss-making factories. At the same time, they were making a big sensation out of one case when exactly this happened.' E. Horváth, *Én volnék a Vörös Báró?*, 107.
50. GYML, X. 415/537/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Motorgyár Pártalapszervezetétől, 1986. július.
51. GYML, X. 415/537/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerszámgépgyár Pártalapszervezetétől, 1986. november.
52. GYML, X. 415/537/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. A Vagongyár Pártbizottságának információs jelentése, 1986. október.
53. *Statisztikai évkönyv 1980* (Budapest, Központi Statisztikai Hivatal), 355. The index of real wages increased by 17 per cent between 1970 and 1975 (100%=1970) while only by 4 per cent between 1975 and 1980 (100%=1970). In 1980 the real wage index was lower than in 1979 and the net nominal wage index increased less than the consumer prices.
54. 'Beszélgetés Horváth Edével, a Rába MVG vezérigazgatójával', op. cit.
55. 'Jelenlegi gazdaságirányításunk kritikája', op. cit.
56. For an analysis of the role of working-class culture under socialism see D. Mühlberg. 2002. 'Konnte Arbeiterkultur in der DDR gesellschaftlich hegemonial sein?', *Utopie kreativ* 145.
57. Several interview partners reported about similar careers. Even the appointment of foremen required a high school certificate. GYML, X. 415/200/3, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, A közvetlen termelésirányítók helyzete, politikai-szakmai felkészültségük értékelése – az emberi kapcsolatokra gyakorolt hatásuk, 1979. szeptember 21.
58. Az üzemi demokrácia helyzete, az egyszemélyi vezetés érvényesülése és a továbbfejlesztés feladatai, op. cit. 25–26, 1974. március 29.
59. Many retired interview partners reported of a managerial career that they followed after they finished an evening university course in the 1960s or 1970s. Some of them actually said that party membership was a prerequisite.
60. Jelentés Győr-Sopron megye munkássága helyzetéről a KB 1974. márciusi állásfoglalása alapján, op. cit.
61. On the perspectives of working-class youth see: D. Maros. 1976. 'Fiatalok a munkáspályán. Gondolatok az ifjúmunkások társadalmi beilleszkedéséről', *Társadalmi Szemle* 31(3).
62. The social inequality in the Hungarian educational system was discussed by the sociologist Zsuzsa Ferge. There were important differences between the types of secondary schools: training schools did not offer a high school certificate, which was the prerequisite for university admission. Comprehensive schools did, but they mainly trained technologists. The elite grammar schools, which more or less guaranteed university admission, were mainly attended by the children of the intelligentsia (See: Zs. Ferge. *Az iskolarendszer*). For a more

ethnographic approach on the social inequality of the Hungarian school system see also: K. Dogossy. 1987. *Baj van a gyerekkel*, Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó. The argument of the book is similar to that of P. Willis. 1977. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

63. GYML, X. 415/134/1, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Közművelődésünk helyzete, 1974. július 10.
64. See, for instance, J. Füleki. 1976. 'Mérlegen a közművelődési határozat végrehajtása. Beszélgetés három nagyüzem pártbizottságának titkárával', *Társadalmi Szemle* 31(7).
65. GYML, X. 415/118/27, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, 1972. április havi információs jelentés.
66. A közvetlen termelésirányítók helyzete, politikai-szakmai felkészültségük értékelése, op. cit., 2.
67. Jelentés a munkásművelődés tapasztalatairól, helyzetéről és szerepéről, fejlesztésének feladatairól a Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyárban, op. cit., 1. táblázat, Fizikai dolgozók iskolai végzettsége.
68. Ibid., A szakmunkásképzés adatai 1972–1976.
69. GYML, X. 415/122/6, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyár vezérigazgatójának jelentése a termelőkapacitás kihasználásának helyzetéről, 16, 1972. július 18.
70. Jelentés a munkásművelődés tapasztalatairól, helyzetéről és szerepéről, op. cit., A szakmunkásképzés adatai 1972–1976.
71. Jelentés a munkásművelődés tapasztalatairól, helyzetéről és szerepéről, op. cit. 5, 1977. július 6.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., Melléklet, Esti, levelező oktatásban résztvevők 1972–1976.
74. GYML, X. 415/200/3, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, A közművelődés helyzete. Az MVG végrehajtó bizottságának jelentése az 1975-ös pártértekezlet után, 12, 1979. december 11.
75. A közművelődés helyzete. Az MVG végrehajtó bizottságának jelentése az 1975-ös pártértekezlet után op. cit., 12.
76. Ibid., 13.
77. GYML, X. 415/204/4/3, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, A vidékről bejáró dolgozóink helyzete, 4, 1980. szeptember 12.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., 5.
80. Ibid.
81. Jelentés a munkásművelődés tapasztalatairól, helyzetéről és szerepéről, op. cit.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid., 2.
84. GYML, X. 415/204/4/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, A szocialista munkaverseny és a brigádmunka fejlesztésének feladatai vállalatunknál, 1980. augusztus 29. The cultural activity of the socialist brigades also received a positive evaluation in the interviews.
85. The new building of the theatre was inaugurated in 1978. In 1979 the Győr Ballet was founded, which soon became very popular in the town and also won international recognition.
86. Jelentés a munkásművelődés tapasztalatairól, helyzetéről és szerepéről, op. cit., 4.
87. Ibid., 3–4.
88. A közművelődés helyzete. Az MVG végrehajtó bizottságának jelentése az 1975-ös pártértekezlet után op. cit., 14.
89. Ibid.
90. Jelentés a munkásművelődés tapasztalatairól, helyzetéről és szerepéről, op. cit., 3.

91. A közművelődés helyzete. Az MVG végrehajtó bizottságának jelentése az 1975-ös pártértekezlet után op. cit., 16.
92. The role of socialist brigades in community-building is discussed in a separate chapter.
93. Az életszínvonal-politikánk értelmezése a gépipari nagyüzemek párttagsága körében, op. cit.
94. We can find reflections on the nationally high number of commuters even in the contemporary sociologist literature. See: Bőhm, *Társadalmunk ingázói*; Bőhm, 'A bejáró munkások társadalmi-politikai magatartása'.
95. A vidékről bejáró dolgozóink helyzete, op. cit.
96. GYML, X. 415/197/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, Jelentés a vállalati lakásépítési hozzájárulás felhasználásáról, 3, 1978. január 30.
97. GYML, X. 415/200/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, Szóbeli tájékoztató vállalatunk dolgozóinak lakáshelyzetéről. A vállalati lakástámogatás felhasználása, 3, 1979. március 21.
98. Jelentés a vállalati lakásépítési hozzájárulás felhasználásáról, op. cit.
99. Szóbeli tájékoztató vállalatunk dolgozóinak lakáshelyzetéről, op. cit., 1.
100. Jelentés a vállalati lakásépítési hozzájárulás felhasználásáról, op. cit., 2.
101. Szóbeli tájékoztató vállalatunk dolgozóinak lakáshelyzetéről, op. cit., 3.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid., 4.
104. GYML, X. 415/156/1/3, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Tájékoztató 'Az ifjúság társadalmi helyzete, a párt feladatai' c. anyag vitájáról, 1984. június 26.
105. GYML, X. 415/236/4, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, Jelentés a KISZ munkájáról, 1, 1986. december 27.
106. GYML, X. 415/528/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerszámgépgyár Pártalapszervezetétől, 1982. október.
107. GYML, X. 415/533/30, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Futómű Pártalapszervezetétől, 1984. szeptember.
108. GYML, X. 415/534/12, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. A Vagongyár Pártbizottságának információs jelentése, 1985. október.
109. GYML, X. 415/529/8/5, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, A Mosonmagyaróvári Mezőgazdasági Gépgyár (MMG) pártbizottsági ülésének jegyzőkönyve, Jelentés a Rába MMG ifjúságának társadalmi helyzetéről, 1985. október 8.
110. According to the interview partners, the yard of the enterprise and the neighbouring empty estate were full of bicycles during working time.
111. A vidékről bejáró dolgozóink helyzete, op. cit., 1.
112. Ibid.
113. The airport plant was located outside of the town.
114. A vidékről bejáró dolgozóink helyzete, op. cit., 3.
115. Ibid., 2.
116. The name of the state bus company.
117. GYML, X. 415/528/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerszámgépgyár Pártalapszervezetétől, 1982. június.
118. Bus line between Adyváros and the airport plant.
119. ABC=chain of state food shops. Verseny=competition.
120. GYML, X. 415/534/3, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. A Vagongyár Pártbizottságának információs jelentése, 1984. október.
121. GYML, X. 415/534/5, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a T. M. K. Pártalapszervezettől, 1984. április.
122. GYML, X. 415/211/28, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Kovács Pártalapszervezettől, 1982. július.

123. Canteen food also gave rise to political jokes in the Zeiss enterprise.
124. GYML, X. 415/533/30, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Futómű Pártalapszervezetétől, 1984. április.
125. GYML, X. 415/211/33, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Jármű II. Pártalapszervezetétől, 1982. november.
126. GYML, X. 415/211/41, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. A Vagongyár Pártbizottságának információs jelentése, 1982. december.
127. Burawoy, *The Radiant Past*.
128. Information from interviews with former brigadiers.
129. For contemporary literature on socialist brigades see: G. Béky and Z. Zétényi. 1977. 'Szocialista módon dolgozni, tanulni, élni. Helyzetkép a brigádmozgalomról', *Valóság* 20(11); D. Kalocsai. 1978. 'A nagyipari üzemek munkáskollektíváinak társadalmi-politikai aktivitása', *Társadalomtudományi Közlemények* 8(2–3); D. Kalocsai. 1978. 'A szocialista brigádok közösséggé fejlődéséről', *Társadalomtudományi Közlemények* 8(1); E. Sőtér, 'Gondolatok'. From recent literature see: Tóth, *'Puszi Kádár Jánosnak'*.
130. A szocialista munkaverseny és a brigádmunka fejlesztésének feladatai vállalatunknál, op. cit., 3.
131. Ibid., 4.
132. Jegyzőkönyv a Motor Pártalapszervezet 1977. január 26.-i taggyűléséről, op. cit., 5–6.
133. GYML, X. 415/202/3/5, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve. A szocialista munkaverseny 1977. évi előkészítésének tapasztalatai, az anyagi-erkölcsi ösztönzés forrásainak további fejlesztése, 14–15, 1977. február 18.
134. A szocialista munkaverseny és a brigádmunka fejlesztésének feladatai vállalatunknál, op. cit., 5.
135. For an interesting study of contrasting the representation of socialist brigades in the contemporary media with postsocialist memories see: E. Zs. Tóth. 2003. 'Egy kitüntetés befogadástörténete: Egy állami díjas női szocialista brigád képe a sajtóban és a tagok emlékezetében', in: Horváth, *Munkástörténet*.
136. Citation from an interview conducted with Éva (55), a Hungarian female production worker in her home in 2003. She was a skilled worker. Since I promised anonymity to all of the interview partners, I use pseudonyms. The age refers to the age of the interview partners at the time of interviewing.
137. The interview was conducted in the weekend house of the interview partner.
138. Citation from an interview conducted with Lajos (62), a former Hungarian brigadier, who represented MVG in the executive committee. He retired as a senior engineer.
139. Citation from an interview conducted with Béla (53), a former Hungarian brigadier in his home in 2003. He was a skilled worker and a shop steward.
140. Citation from an interview conducted with Zsuzsa (49), a Hungarian female production worker in Rába in 2002. She was a skilled worker.
141. GYML, X. 415/12/22, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. Gazdaságpolitikai osztály, Tájékoztató az MVG Vagon 28-as üzemében végzett vizsgálatokról és a 2 heti jutalom kifizetéséről, 1977. augusztus 16.
142. GYML, X. 415/197/4, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Jelentés az 1977. évi bérek és jövedelmek alakulásáról, az alkalmazott ösztönző bérrendszerek hatékonyságáról, normakarbantartás végrehajtásának szükségességéről, 1977. június 15.
143. Tájékoztató az MVG Vagon 28-as üzemében végzett vizsgálatokról, op. cit., 2.
144. Ibid., 3.
145. GYML, X. 415/198/7, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Vagon Fémipari Alapszervezettől, 1978. december.
146. GYML, X. 415/198/7, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Vagon Fémipari Alapszervezettől, 1979. május.

147. GYML, X. 415/199/28, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a V. J. Kovács Pártalapszervezettől, 1979. július.
148. L. Tóth (ed.). 1984. *Győr-Sopron*, Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 107. In an interview Horváth said that the revision found a surplus of 804 employees (Bossányi, 'Made in Rába', 38). The *Rába* newspaper gave a rather one-sided picture (and limited information) of this step. Some characteristic titles are: 'Capacity and quality decide: Only the necessary number of people should be employed for a given job' (2 March 1979), 'We should reinforce a basic economic principle' (16 March 1979), 'The experiences of the revision of the personnel: We have to get the support of the decent employees' (30 March 1979), 'Comments on the revision of labour management' (6 April 1979), 'The revision of the personnel was finished also in Szombathely' (May 25 1979).
149. GYML, X. 415/202/32, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés az Új Acélöntödéből, 1979. április.
150. Stress is in the original.
151. GYML, X. 415/202/29, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a T.M.K. Pártalapszervezettől, 1979. május.
152. The county reports that support this statement are introduced in the following chapter.
153. GYML, X. 415/187/2, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák, 1986. április.
154. GYML, X. 415/187/3, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák, 1986. május.
155. GYML, X. 415/187/4, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák, 1986. június.
156. GYML, X. 415/537/3, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Hátsóhíd Alapszervezetétől, 1986. május.
157. GYML, X. 415/537/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerszámgépgyár Pártalapszervezetétől, 1986. június.
158. GYML, X. 415/537/5, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés az Új Acélöntödéből, 1986. október.
159. GYML, X. 415/187/5, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A Vagongyár Pártbizottságának információs jelentése, 1986. december.
160. A. Dusza, *A birodalom végnapjai*, 12.
161. Die sich aus den Beschlüssen des 8. Parteitages ergebenden Schlussfolgerungen für die Arbeit der Bezirksparteiorganisationen. op. cit.
162. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/3/1/154. Die Sicherung der Versorgung der Bevölkerung im 2. Halbjahr 1974 und über die Verwirklichung der Aufgaben an den Versorgungsplan des Bezirkes zur Verbesserung der Versorgung mit Dienstleistungen und Baureparaturen, besonders in den Zentren der Arbeiterklasse. Sekretariatssitzung, 20 Juni 1974.
163. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/6/440. Zur Einführung von Grundlöhnen 21 September 1976.
164. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV B-2/3/170, Über Erfahrung bei der Qualifizierung der Arbeiterklasse, 25 März 1971.
165. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/17/612, Frauenarbeit.
166. UACZ, WB Nr. 487, Abrechnung der Frauenarbeit 1980 nach Schwerpunkten. According to the report the proportion of part-time women workers was 20.8 per cent, which was higher than the average of the GDR (29.5 per cent) but it showed a slightly increasing trend.
167. Frauenarbeit, op. cit.
168. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/3/959, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, 29 Juni, 1972, Ergebnisse und Probleme auf den Gebiet der Verbesserung der Arbeits- und Lebensbedingungen der werktätigen Frauen insbesondere der Arbeiterversorgung, der Betreuung der Schichtarbeiter und der Entwicklung des geistig-kulturellen Lebens in den Arbeiterzentren des Bezirkes.

169. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/1/15, Protokoll der Sitzung der Bezirksleitung, 8 Januar 1974.
170. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/17/612, Probleme die sich aus der Entwicklung der Berufstätigkeit der Frau in der sozialistischen Industrie ergeben. 21 April 1976.
171. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/3/66, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, 24 Juli, 1972, Ergebnisse und Probleme bei der Entwicklung der sozialpolitischen Maßnahmen von Partei und Regierung zur Erleichterung des Lebens der berufstätigen Frauen und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Entwicklung der Berufstätigkeit der Frauen im Kombinat.
172. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/17/612, Einschätzung der Durchsetzung der Frauenpolitik im VEB Carl Zeiss Jena durch die Leitungen der Gewerkschaft, 28 Juni 1974.
173. Ergebnisse und Probleme bei der Entwicklung der sozialpolitischen Maßnahmen von Partei und Regierung, op. cit.
174. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/1/7. Sitzung der Bezirksleitung, 4 Mai 1972.
175. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/3/721. Informationsbericht der IKL Zeiss, Februar 1975.
176. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV B-2/6/489, Die Leitung und Organisation der Produktion im Rahmen der Schichtarbeit. 2 August 1968.
177. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/7/612. Frauenarbeit: Aussprache mit Produktionsarbeiterinnen im Papiersaal. 29 Oktober 1976.
178. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/6/441. Information über die Arbeiteraussprache in der Dreherei im Stahlwerk Silbitz am 12 Juni 1972.
179. For a similar argument see: Hübner. 1993. 'Balance des Ungleichgewichtes: Zum Verhältnis von Arbeiterinteressen und SED-Herrschaft', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 19. The party sought to de-politicize labour demands, and to this end it was willing to offer material concessions to the workers. For a study of labour conflicts in the GDR in the 1950s see: Hübner, *Konsens, Konflikt*, 178–210.
180. This phrase was also used in the Hungarian sources, and it usually meant a vehement protest against the measure in question.
181. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/6/440. Information über die Auszahlung der Jahresendprämie 1972 im Bereich der IG Metall.
182. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/6/440. Information über die lohnpolitische Probleme in den neuen VEB. 10 April 1973.
183. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/6/440. Die Einführung neuer Grundlöhne in Verbindung mit der WAO. 15 September 1975.
184. See the comment: 'Some of the workers believe that socialism has already been realized and now people can have a rest but they should get their rightful reward.' Bericht der IKPKK (Gen. W), op. cit. Welche Probleme sieht der Betriebsleiter?
185. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV B-2/5/379. Eingabe der Bevölkerung, 2. Halbjahr 1968.
186. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV B-2/3/255. Informationsbericht, IKL der SED des VEB Carl Zeiss Jena, 12 Juni 1968.
187. Jelentés a párttagság ideológiai nevelésének eredményeiről, problémáiról, a feladatokról, 1972. augusztus 15, op. cit.
188. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV B-2/1/10, Referat zur Auswertung der 9. Tagung des ZK. Die weiteren Aufgaben der Bezirksparteiorganisationen zur Gestaltung des entwickelten gesellschaftlichen Systems des Sozialismus. Sitzung der Bezirksleitung, 18–19 November 1968.

189. From 1972, for instance, the employees of the state apparatuses received their class category after the occupation that they had before they were sixteen so that they could count among the workers. According to the investigations of Heike Solga the socialist cadre class started to close its ranks in the period (H. Solga. 2001. 'Aspekte der Klassenstruktur in der DDR in den siebziger und achtziger Jahren und die Stellung der Arbeiterklasse' in: Hürtgen, *Der Schein der Stabilität*.
190. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/3/721, Informationsbericht des 1. Sekretärs der IKL Zeiss, 12 Mai 1975.
191. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV D-2/9/1/408, Zur inhaltlichen Fragen der politisch-ideologischen Arbeit die gegenwärtig besonders im Mittelpunkt der Diskussion der Bev0lkerung stehen (Jena-Stadt, Jena-Land, Zeis, Gera-Stadt, Rudolstadt), 5 Mai 1977.
192. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV D-4/13/76, Informationsbericht von IKL Zeiss, 10 November 1977.
193. Zur inhaltlichen Fragen der politisch-ideologischen Arbeit, op. cit.
194. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/3/721, Informationsbericht des 1. Sekretärs der IKL Zeiss, 24 Oktober 1977.
195. Bericht der IKPKK (Bericht, Gen. W). op. cit.
196. For a study on housing programme for workers in the 1960s see: Hübner, *Konsens, Konflikt*, 171–76; under the Honecker era see: Bouvier, *Die DDR – ein Sozialstaat?*, 152–201.
197. UACZ, VA Nr. 3741, Ihre erneute Eingabe vom 24 April 1980, 8 Mai 1980.
198. UACZ, VA Nr. 1583, Unterlagen zur Direktion Kultur und Sozialwesen, 20 Mai 1976.
199. Mühlfriedel, *Carl Zeiss*, 305.
200. Probleme die sich aus der Entwicklung der Berufstätigkeit der Frau in der sozialistischen Industrie ergeben. 21 April 1976, op. cit.
201. AWU=Arbeiterwohnunterkunft (workers' hostel).
202. UACZ, VA Nr. 3453, Eingabe 17.07.1980.
203. It should be added that there were differences among the standards of the workers' hostels because the hostel of Josef-Klose Straße was mentioned negatively in other letters of complaint, too.
204. UACZ, VA Nr. 3741, Eingabe 04.22.1983.
205. Stress is mine.
206. UACZ, VA 933, Eingabe zur schlechten Unterbringung in der AWU, 09.03.1974.
207. UACZ, VA Nr.3742, Eingabe 09.06.1983.
208. UACZ, VA Nr. 3742, Untersuchungsbericht zur Eingabe des Kolln. X, 24.6.1983.
209. UACZ, VA Nr. 3742, Aussprachеprotokoll zur Eingabe der Kolln. X, 20.6.1983.
210. UACZ, VA Nr. 3453, Eingabe 06.12.1980.
211. UACZ, GB Nr. 1569, Eingabe zur unzureichenden Unterkunft in AWH, 21.05.1987.
212. UACZ, VA Nr. 933, Eingabe,04.04.1974.
213. UACZ, VA Nr. 933, 15.05.1974.
214. UACZ, VA Nr. 934, Eingabe, 05.01.1975.
215. UACZ, VA Nr. 934, 29.01.1975.
216. UACZ, VA Nr. 3741, Eingabe 01.04.1980.
217. UACZ, VA Nr. 3741, Eingabe 24.04.1980.
218. UACZ, VA Nr. 3741, Ihre erneute Eingabe vom 24.04.1980, 08. 05.1980.
219. UACZ, VA Nr. 934, Aussprache mit Kollegin R am 4.2.76.
220. UACZ, VA Nr. 3741, Eingabe, 28.02.1983.
221. UACZ, VA Nr. 3741, Untersuchungsbericht zur Eingabe des Gen D, 17.03.1983.
222. UACZ, VA Nr. 4617, Eingabe an den Ministerrat der DDR, 14.03.1983.
223. People could apply for permission to leave the GDR (*Ausreiseantrag*), which would mean the loss of their GDR citizenship.
224. UACZ, VA Nr. 4617, Untersuchungsbericht zur Staatsrat- und Ministerrats – Eingabe in der Wohnungsangelegenheit Frau X, 27.04.1983.

225. UACZ, VA Nr. 3453, Eingabe 23.09.1980.
226. UACZ, VA Nr. 3453, Eingabe 09.04.1980.
227. UACZ, VA Nr. 3455, Eingabe 06.12.1982.
228. Information from the life-history interviews.
229. Citation from an interview conducted with Gisela (48), an East German female production worker in Zeiss in 2002. She was a skilled worker and a shop steward.
230. Citation from an interview conducted with Edith (49), an East German female production worker in her home in 2002. She was a skilled worker.
231. Citation from an interview conducted with Paul (51), a former East German brigadier in Zeiss in 2002. He was a skilled worker.
232. Citation from an interview conducted with Ernst (57), an East German production worker in Zeiss in 2002. He was a skilled worker.
233. UACZ, VA Nr. 5170, Eingabe, 30.03.1987.
234. To address someone as 'du' instead of 'Sie' (speaking on familiar terms).
235. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-4/13/124, Konzeption zu 'Du und die Werk' VEB Carl Zeiss Jena.
236. Fair of the Future Experts. It was organized at the level of the district.
237. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/3/126, Sekretariatssitzung vom 29 November 1973, Erfahrungen der IKL/SED des VEB Carel Zeiss Jena bei der ideologischen Leitung, langfristigen Planung und Entwicklung des geistig-kulturellen Lebens in Einheit mit der sozialistischen Rationalisierung und Verbesserung der Arbeits- und Lebensbedingungen.
238. Bericht der IKPKK (Gen. W), op. cit. Welche Probleme sieht der Betriebsleiter?
239. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV D-2/3/102, Sekretariatssitzung vom 28 September 1978, Wie entwickeln die GO [GO=Grundorganisation, base organization] der IKL Zeiss eine offensivepolitische Massenarbeit in den Partei- und Arbeitskollektiven zur weiteren Vertiefung der sozialistischen Intensivierung, besonders zur Beschleunigung des wissenschaftlich-technischen Fortschritts und der sozialistischen Rationalisierung?
240. On the establishment of socialist brigades, their structure and their role in production see: Hübner, *Konsens, Konflikt*, 212–32. For their role in conflict management see: J. Roesler. 1999. 'Die Rolle des Brigadiers bei der Konfliktregulierung zwischen Arbeitsbrigaden und der Werkleitung', in: Hübner, *Arbeiter in der SBZ – DDR*. For a study of cultural life in the factories see: A. Schumann. 2003. 'Veredlung der Produzenten oder Freizeitpolitik? Betriebliche Kulturarbeit vor 1970', *Postdamer Bulletin für Zeithistorische Studien* 29; A. Schumann. 2005. '"Macht die Betriebe zu Zentren der Kulturarbeit": Gewerkschaftlich organisierte Kulturarbeit in den Industriebetrieben der DDR in den fünfziger Jahren: Sozialhistorisches Novum oder Modifizierung betriebspolitischer Traditionen?' in: Hübner, *Arbeiter im Staatssozialismus*.
241. UACZ, GB Nr. 1205, Brigadebuch, Abrechnung des Brigadeplanes/Kampfprogramms 1984 der Brigade 'Salvador Allende' zur 10. Wiederholverteidigung des Staatstitels 'Kollektiv der sozialistischen Arbeit' am 04.02.1985, 14.00 Uhr.
242. Ibid.
243. Citation from an interview conducted with Karl (51), who was a male production worker in Zeiss and a shop steward. After he lost his job, he participated in a training course. At the time of interviewing he worked for a bank (*Sparkasse*). The interview was conducted in his house in 2003. He said that the bank planned lay-offs, and one of his colleagues with whom he worked on a similar project explicitly told him that he would do everything to keep his job. This might be one explanation for his bitter comment.
244. This is also supported by the findings of W. Schmidt. 1995. 'Metamorphosen des Betriebskollektivs. Zur Transformation der Sozialordnung in ostdeutschen Betrieben', *Soziale Welt* 45(3); W. Schmidt. 1999. *'Jeder hat jetzt mit sich selbst zu tun': Arbeit, Freizeit und politische Orientierungen in Ostdeutschland*, Konstanz: Univ.-Verl.-Konstanz; R. Bittner.

1999. 'Kleine Leute, Bastler, Pfadfinder – Transformationsfiguren. Ethnografische Versuche im Feld des regionalen Strukturwandels', *Berliner Debatte Initial* 10(2).

245. Citation from an interview conducted with Magda (48), an East German female production worker in Zeiss in 2002. She was a skilled worker.
246. Citation from an interview conducted with Anna (60), an East German unemployed woman in her home in 2002. Before 1991, she was a skilled worker in Zeiss.
247. Citation from an interview conducted with Magda (48).
248. Citation from an interview conducted with Chris (57), an East German production worker in Zeiss in 2002. He was a skilled worker.
249. Citation from an interview conducted with Theresa (54), an East German quality controller in her home in 2002.
250. Citation from an interview conducted with Francesca (52), an East German production worker in her home in 2002. She was a skilled worker.
251. Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*.
252. For studies of gender in the GDR see Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*; Ansorg, 'Ich hab immer von unten Druck gekriegt und von oben'; Merkel. … *und Du, Frau an der Werkbank*; Schüler, '*Die Spinne';* Weil, *Herrschaftsanspruch und soziale Wirklichkeit*.
253. The women's commissions were controlled by the party.
254. UACZ, WB Nr. 487, Abrechnung der Frauenarbeit 1980 nach Schwerpunkten, Entwicklung der Berufstätigkeit der Frau.
255. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-4/13/115, Frauenkommission.
256. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/17/612, Frauenarbeit.
257. UACZ, VA Nr. 1583, Unterlagen zur Direktion Kultur- und Sozialwesen, 1976.
258. Ibid.
259. UACZ, WB Nr. 487, Abrechnung der Frauenarbeit 1980 nach Schwerpunkten.
260. Informationsbericht des 1. Sekretärs der IKL Zeiss, 12 November 1970, op. cit. Another report estimated that around 1,000 women could not work in the whole district in 1973 because of the lack of places in the nurseries and kindergartens (Frauenarbeit, op. cit.).
261. The proportion of part-time workers among women was considerably higher, 34.1 per cent, in the district. (ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-4/13/115, Frauenkommission, op. cit.).
262. On the development of part-time female employment see: A. Rietzschel. 1997. 'Frauenerwerbstätigkeit und Teilzeitarbeit in der DDR, 1957 bis 1970', *Postdamer Bulletin für Zeithistorische Studien* 9.
263. UACZ, WB Nr. 487, Abrechnung der Frauenarbeit 1980 nach Schwerpunkten, Teilzeitbeschäftigung.
264. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/17/612, Frauenarbeit, Carl Zeiss Jena, Optik-Betrieb, 21. April 1976.
265. Ibid.
266. Stress is mine.
267. Unterlagen zur Direktion Kultur- und Sozialwesen, op. cit.
268. Citation from an interview conducted with Chris (57).
269. Citation from an interview conducted with Ina (58), an East German quality controller, in her home in 2002.
270. Citation from an interview conducted with Sebastian, an East German production worker in Zeiss in 2002. He was a skilled worker and a shop steward.
271. Citation from an interview conducted with Susan, an East German production worker (58) in Zeiss in 2002. She was a skilled worker.
272. Citation from an interview conducted with Francesca (52).
273. The name of the currency of the GDR.

274. Citation from an interview conducted with Rita (53), a female quality controller, in her home in 2002.
275. *Gleichberechtigt. Die Entwicklung der Frauen und Mädchen im VEB Carl Zeiss Jena*, op. cit., 6.
276. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-4/13/115, Frauenkommission, op. cit.
277. Frauenarbeit, Carl Zeiss Jena, Optik-Betrieb, op. cit.
278. *Gleichberechtigt. Die Entwicklung der Frauen und Mädchen im VEB Carl Zeiss Jena*, op. cit., 7.
279. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-4/13/115, Frauenkommission, op. cit.
280. The classes also provided lasting friendships (I have found two interview partners with the help of one former student).
281. Citation from an interview with Rita (53).
282. *Gleichberechtigt. Die Entwicklung der Frauen und Mädchen im VEB Carl Zeiss Jena*, op. cit., 6.
283. UACZ, WB Nr. 487, Abrechnung der Frauenarbeit 1980 nach Schwerpunkten, Qualifikationsstruktur.
284. The research centre that employed 4,741 people in 1975 was one of the most 'elite' plants with a proportion of 51 per cent of those who obtained a high-school leaving certificate or a degree of higher education. The proportion of skilled workers and direct production managers was 47 per cent (Mühlfriedel, *Carl Zeiss*, 369, 33. Tabelle).
285. UACZ, WB Nr. 564, Referat des Direktors W zum Frauenforum am 8. 11.1984.
286. This was a special type of school in the GDR that was meant to give education after training school. Apart from vocational training it offered a special high-school leaving certificate to the students with which they could apply to technical colleges and universities.
287. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-2/17/612, Frauenarbeit, Einschätzung der Durchsetzung der Frauenpolitik der Partei im VEB Carl Zeiss Jena durch die staatliche Leitung. Wie werden die Frauen politisch-ideologisch befähigt, ihrer Rolle und Verantwortung bei der Durchsetzung der Beschlüsse der 8th Parteitages gerecht zu werden? 28. Juni 1974.
288. Qualifikationsstruktur, op. cit.
289. Referat des Direktors W zum Frauenforum am 8. 11.1984, op. cit.
290. Frauenarbeit, Einschätzung der Durchsetzung der Frauenpolitik der Partei im VEB Carl Zeiss Jena durch die staatliche Leitung, op. cit.
291. Qualifikationsstruktur, op. cit.
292. Abrechnung der Frauenarbeit 1980 nach Schwerpunkten, Frauen in Leitungsfunktionen, op. cit.
293. Frauenarbeit, Einschätzung der Durchsetzung der Frauenpolitik der Partei im VEB Carl Zeiss Jena durch die staatliche Leitung, op. cit.
294. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV C-4/13/115, Frauenkommission, 1981, op. cit.
295. A separate subchapter discusses the role of women in the party and other mass organizations.
296. UACZ, VA Nr. 3740, Analyse zur Entlohnung und Eingruppierung werktätiger Frauen im Vergleich zu werktätiger Männern im Kombinat VEB Carl Zeiss Jena, 6. September 1979. Verteilung weiblicher Werktätiger auf die einzelnen Lohngruppen im Vergleich zu männlichen Werktätigen.
297. Ibid.
298. Ibid.
299. On 17 June 1953 the East German workers had protested against the higher norms and price increases with an uprising.

300. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV C-2/6/441.
301. ThStA Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera, IV D-4/13/76, Informationsbericht von IKL Zeiss, 10 November 1977.
302. Ferge, *Az iskolarendszer*.
303. H. Solga. 1995. *Auf dem Weg in eine klassenlose Gesellschaft? Klassenlagen und Mobilität zwischen Generationen in der DDR*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
304. R. Angelusz and R. Tardos. 1995. 'Társadalmi átrétegződés és szociális-politikai identifikáció'. *Szociológiai Szemle* 2.