

## CHAPTER 3

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# WORKERS AND THE PARTY

While the first and second chapters of the book discussed the rise and fall of welfare dictatorships, the third and the fourth chapters are directly engaged with the relationship between the workers and the ‘workers’ state’. The third chapter analyses party life from below: it describes the criteria and methods of recruitment, the role of working-class quotas in party building, attending meetings, party discipline, the ways and consequences of losing the membership of the party and the loss of the appeal of the party, which can be nicely documented in the Hungarian case. The fourth chapter compares the memory of the two regimes in the light of the East German and Hungarian interviews and it interrogates the question of how the different political climate of the two countries and the different trajectories of postsocialist transformation impacted on the subjective evaluation of the welfare dictatorships. To avoid repetitions, the conclusions of the third and fourth chapters are incorporated in the concluding chapter of the book.

In socialist regimes the ruling parties were mass organizations, whose membership encompassed a significant part of the adult population. The control of the party over the economic and social life was also maintained through the party organizations, which operated in the workplaces. The party made significant efforts to win the blue-collar workers for the membership: large enterprises such as Rába and Zeiss had their own party committees with a full-time party secretary. Thanks to the surviving party archives, organizational life can be well documented in Hungary in this period. The opposite is true for the East German case study, where the least well documented area of the social and political life of the working class in the Honecker era is the relationship between the party and the workers.<sup>1</sup> The papers of the party organization in the factory were supposed to be transferred to the Rudolstadt archive at intervals of every twenty years, but the change of regimes prevented a transfer in 1991.<sup>2</sup>

The materials were not found in the factory archives either. Since party membership of the party was seen as a sensitive issue, there was very little information in life-history interviews either. (When asked if they were members of the party, people gave an answer, but I rarely heard positive answers.) This explains the limited scope of the East German in comparison with the Hungarian case study.

In the Hungarian case the decreasing appeal of the party became more visible in the 1980s, when the party organizations regularly reported on the problems of recruiting workers in large industry. Despite the efforts to popularize the party among the working class, individualism was claimed to have affected organizational life after the economic reform: functionaries regularly complained that the membership neglected party work, and they were indifferent to political issues. There was a high percentage of workers among those who left the party, which, as the secretary of the county formulated, showed that the membership was not an existential question for them.

An even more serious warning was that discontent also mounted among the grass-roots membership of the party. Particularly valuable sources in this respect are the information reports, which the party organizations regularly collected in order to monitor the political mood of the population. The reports nicely illustrate the process of how the economic criticism of the people developed into a more encompassing criticism of the political regime: people recognized the failure of the standard-of-living policy, and they refused to believe in further promises. In the second half of the 1980s a large part of the population (including the party membership) was reported to be pessimistic about the future prospects, and many questioned the ability of the government to improve the situation. The party's authority declined and the first signs of disintegration manifested themselves: youth refused to join (the membership of the youth organization significantly decreased), recruitment fell, and more and more people requested the termination of their membership. An ever-increasing part of the population sympathized with the call for political reforms. In the light of the information reports it can indeed be argued that the attraction of the party and the system that it represented had decreased long before it lost political power in Hungary, and even those who envisaged a different, democratic socialism supported the reforms.

There is an important difference between the East German and Hungarian case studies that has to be pointed out.<sup>3</sup> In Hungary, ideological discipline within the party was never as rigid as in the GDR, and from the late 1970s onwards, increasing liberalization could be observed that enabled the grass-roots membership to articulate their discontent with the existing economic and political conditions. In this politically more

liberal atmosphere it was possible to detect the signs of the increasing unpopularity of the regime among the people, which rendered visible the decline of the system. In the GDR, on the contrary, ideological discipline was maintained practically until the fall of the Honecker regime. On the basis of the surviving party documents of the district, it is unlikely that the materials of the party organization of the Zeiss factory would have been more informative. There is some evidence that ideological life in Jena and the factory was a bit more liberal; at least the leniency of the latter was criticized in district leadership meetings. Given the lack of minute books of factory party meetings, it is difficult to say, however, what this leniency meant in practice and how far the grass-roots members could or did express their opinions in cell meetings. It is still unlikely that any criticism of existing conditions, let alone of the party, would have been recorded if we take into account that a satirical carnival publication almost cost the editor, a physicist, his job – and it was only through the intervention of the chairman of the IKPKK<sup>4</sup> that he ‘got off’ with a disciplinary transfer.<sup>5</sup> This story explains why it is so difficult, if not impossible, to detect the signs of the decline of the regime in the official party documents.

The policy of intimidation was not, however, successful. It was possible to hide the signs of the decline, but the collapse of the Soviet control over Eastern Europe revealed in stark fashion the unpopularity of the regime. While in the Hungarian case it is possible to distinguish between the 1970s and 1980s (the latter being characterized by gradual marketization and liberalization of the political climate), in the case of the GDR the two decades of the Honecker regime were more uniform in terms of the approach to both economic policy and the practice of political rule. The regime could, however, maintain the silence of the population only with the help of repressive methods; this was true of grass-roots party members also, where ideological discipline was taken even more seriously. By intimidating grass-roots party members, the leadership prevented internal debate, but it also blocked off official channels through which it could have been informed about the true political views of the members. It is remarkable that the party was never mentioned among those GDR institutions that were remembered positively later. The majority of those who contrasted the communality of the GDR with the individualism of the new, capitalist society were not members of the party. Even though it was recognized that there were some committed communists, party membership was usually associated with careerism in the eyes of the majority of my interview partners (including some members of the party). This suggests that its political education – despite, or rather because of the practice of oppression – was not very successful, and the SED<sup>6</sup> was seen rather negatively by many workers even before the collapse of the regime.

## The Workers' Party and the Workers in Hungary

### *Quotas*

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt = MSZMP) was by definition a mass party and a workers' party. In 1986, the party had 883,131 members across the country, which constituted 11.1 per cent of the Hungarian population. The membership of Győr-Sopron county numbered 31,893 in the same year.<sup>7</sup> Throughout the 1980s there was very little fluctuation: in 1981 the membership in the county amounted to 30,808,<sup>8</sup> and in 1983 it numbered 30,800.<sup>9</sup> In 1984, a figure of 31,000 was given for the membership of the party in the county.<sup>10</sup> Despite every effort of the party to increase the percentage of the workers in the membership, between 1975 and 1981 the number of party members in the county increased by 9 per cent while the number of the working-class party members increased by only 6 per cent. In 1981 less than half of the county membership (40.2 per cent) were blue-collar workers, while 10 per cent of all workers were party members (the percentages varied between 6 and 20 per cent in the factories). The majority of the workers admitted after 1975 were skilled workers and foremen. The overwhelming majority of those who left the party during the period were also workers (70 per cent).<sup>11</sup>

Since MSZMP was defined as a workers' party, the party aimed to maintain what it deemed a healthy percentage of the blue-collar workers within its organization through various forms of affirmative action, typically quotas for recruitment. In reports on enrolment, party functionaries freely spoke of the quotas that the party organizations filled and those that they had to 'correct' in the future. Quotas were set for the blue-collar workers, women and youth. These forms of affirmative action often had a contradictory effect because many workers were convinced the need to join the party was only because of the pressure on recruiters to meet the quotas. Their lack of commitment was also reflected in the statistics: the percentage of blue-collar workers was very high among those who left the party after only a short period of membership (65–70 per cent). The most frequent reasons people gave for a voluntary withdrawal were the refusal to pay the party dues, lack of time to participate in the party meetings and ideological disagreement with the party line (this usually meant religious commitment).<sup>12</sup> This shows that in many cases the requirements of admission to the party were not so seriously enforced.

The declining percentage of working-class party members was a particular concern among the party functionaries after the economic reform of 1968. Many thought that the decrease of working-class support was the result of the reform, which people linked with the increase of prices.

The party secretary of MVG argued that the bad political mood of people was reflected in the declining political activity of party members:

In my view we should indicate that after the Tenth Party Congress<sup>13</sup> the relationship of the party with the masses did not improve to the extent that we had expected after the successful congress. Quite the contrary, our experience is that after the parliamentary and local council elections the political activity of the masses decreased and our relationship to the masses became weaker. Our political work fails to increase the activity to the desired level. I think that we should say it bluntly to the highest party leadership so that they can draw the right conclusions.<sup>14</sup>

The old party workers explained the declining force of political mobilization by referring to the material discontent of workers:

Concerning people who have dropped out of the party, I fully agree with Comrade Gy., who spoke of the problem of the enrolment of blue-collar workers in that it expresses the political mood of people in an area. I would even go further to argue that it reflects their opinion about the policy of the party. In general employees agree with our political line but workers have a different view of particular issues, for instance, the question of wages and the setting of prices. It influences the local political mood of people. Party membership is not a matter of livelihood to workers, who 'go from one workbench to the other'. When we prepare the candidates for the enrolment, I am not sure that they know their obligations to the party. Suppose we asked party members in MVG, five out of ten would not give a right answer.<sup>15</sup>

The social and material discontent of the workers undoubtedly influenced recruitment. The party organization of Rába MVG reported frankly on the problems of building local organizations:

In the case of the majority of the new members it is the party organization that initiates the recruitment, and only occasionally the volunteers. These [new members] are primarily young people who are either discharged from the army or apply for membership on the basis of their work in KISZ (Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség = the youth organization of the party). There are sometimes problems with the responsibility of the patrons and the supervision of the candidates' work, because out of the new members whom we admitted in 1969–1970, we had to exclude one, strike off four and take party disciplinary action against two. Another problem is that some party secretaries do not consult with the party members and the leaders of other party groups. That's why it happens that instead of the set quotas of workers, they enrol white-collar employees. The efforts of the party leadership to increase the number of blue-collar workers in the party was not successful enough. Although we succeeded in increasing our membership, the percentage of the newly admitted

workers shows only a slight increase (1970: 61.5 per cent, 1972: 62 per cent). In 1971 and the first quarter of 1972 we admitted 170 new members out of which 105 (62.5 per cent) are workers.<sup>16</sup>

The low percentage of working-class party members was criticized at county level, too:

We fulfilled the enrolment quotas in the county sooner than the national average but the percentage of workers among the new members is 0.5 per cent lower, which is significant in an industrial county. Our experience is that the blue-collar workers are more difficult to win and they leave the party more easily. In the enterprise party committees the intellectuals constitute the majority, and they often encourage the enrolment of the intelligentsia.<sup>17</sup>

A further problem was religious commitment, which was reported to be strong in the county. An information report urged the purge of religious party members: 'In our county there are around five hundred party members who send their children to Bible classes and regularly participate in church programmes. We should be more consequent to get rid of this influence.'<sup>18</sup> Religious commitment was an obstacle to recruitment as late as the beginning of the 1980s: 'Religiousness is still widespread in the villages. This could not influence the new admissions: many people had to be rejected in the town just for this reason. A further problem is that many of those who moved from the villages to the town only want to be members of the party in the hope of certain advantages.'<sup>19</sup>

The summary report of the new admissions in 1983 also complained about the under-fulfilment of the most important quotas in the county:

We did not succeed in increasing the percentage of workers among the newly admitted members; on the contrary, there is a decrease mainly in the cities of Győr and Sopron. We could not ensure that of the new admissions in the large enterprises, a majority would be workers (25–28 per cent of the newly admitted members are employed in the nineteen large enterprises of the county). We could not – or hardly – hit the target that two-thirds of the new members be young people (aged below thirty). In the past years – because of the weakness of the leadership of the party organizations and the political education of the base cells – we could not ensure the significant majority of the workers and the two-thirds majority of youth among the new members mainly in the cities of Győr and Sopron.

The percentage of youth among the party membership of the county decreased from 12.3 to 8.9 per cent, while nationally it decreased from 12.4 to 10.7 per cent. The ratio of the age group between 18 and 26 decreased from 5.9 to 3.4 per cent in the county.<sup>20</sup> Even though 73.8 per cent of

the party members enrolled in 1983 were originally workers, only 44.4 per cent worked in production at the time of their enrolment. The county also failed to reduce the percentage of workers leaving the party: nearly 80 per cent of the drop-outs were workers or peasants of the collective farms. The report stated that in spite of the requirements, '*the number of new admissions in the large enterprises did not increase but it rather showed a decreasing trend in the past years*'.<sup>21</sup>

The decrease in new admissions in the large enterprises was a particularly negative sign because the working class of the large enterprises was the traditional social base of the party. In the city of Győr there were seven enterprise party committees: MVG, Construction Works, Richards Cloth Factory, Cotton Mill, Textile Industry, MÁV (Hungarian Railways) and VOLÁN (state bus company).<sup>22</sup> In 1975, the membership of the enterprise party organizations numbered 4,300 people, which constituted 37.14 per cent of the party membership of the city. The enterprises had eighty base cells, around half of the number of the base cells citywide. The seven large enterprises employed 33,000 people, and 77 per cent of them were blue-collar workers. This meant that the overwhelming majority of the local working class worked in the large enterprises.<sup>23</sup> Since MVG was the largest one of them, it had the largest party organization. In 1975 it had twenty-eight base cells (the base cells of the six other large enterprises in the town varied at between six and eleven) and a full-time party secretary. In 1975 the party membership of MVG in its Győr plants numbered 1,965 people. The overwhelming majority (86 per cent) of the party members were men.<sup>24</sup> In 1983, the party organization of MVG numbered only 1,786 people (while the membership of the county increased during the period). The party organization could not replace those of its members who left: between 1975 and 1980, it admitted 6,412 new members, while 9,573 ceased to be members (the reasons could have been the change of workplace, retirement, death, exclusion or voluntary withdrawal).<sup>25</sup> The party organization admitted that it was difficult to win over young workers:

It is a problem that few young skilled workers are admitted to the party. Many of them are commuters; after their marriage, the family and the building of the house takes up much of their free time. Their environment accepts that they have no time for political work, only 'after they have got settled'. The reorganization of labour within the enterprise, the conflicts about the dismissals and the wage disputes increased the number of drop-outs. Many people thought that the party did not defend them, therefore they resigned their membership.<sup>26</sup>

There is some evidence that white-collar employees were admitted to fill the ranks of the party: 17 per cent of the employees of MVG in 1983 were members of the party, while the percentage of the party members among the blue-collar workers was 15 per cent. The workers still constituted a majority among the party members: 64 per cent of the membership belonged to the working class. The percentage of youth (below thirty) was around 10 per cent among the party members.<sup>27</sup>

In the second half of the 1980s policies of affirmative action in favour of workers were less and less observed. This was paralleled by the decreasing rate of expansion of the party. In 1980, the rate of increase was 1.8 per cent, in 1982, dropping to 1.5 per cent in 1984, and 1 per cent and in 1986 (0.5 per cent in the country). The main reasons for this were resignations, deaths and a decreasing number of the new admissions.<sup>28</sup> In the county the number of new admissions continually decreased from 1983.

The enrolment of the workers did not increase according to the requirements. More workers ceased to be members of the party than those who were enrolled. In spite of our efforts we could not significantly improve the building of party organizations in the large enterprises of the county. *New admissions decreased in MVG, the Textile Industry Factory, Graboplast, Rába MMG.*<sup>29</sup> The reasons are closely related to our socio-economic problems, in some places the weakness of the base cells, the indifference of the party members and their failure to set an example to people.<sup>30</sup>

The national data likewise showed a decrease in the percentage of the workers: between 1980 and 1986 the percentage of the workers among the new members decreased by 6 per cent and in 1986 they constituted only 42 per cent of the party membership of the country.<sup>31</sup> This shows that despite the quotas the traditional social basis of the party had started to crumble.

### *Organizing Women*

There were special quotas used to increase the percentage of women in the party and the leadership. The improvement in the situation of women was on the political agenda of the party. The party statistics of the large enterprises in the county in the mid-1970s show that in traditional industries the number of female party members and leaders significantly lagged behind the men.<sup>32</sup> In MVG, 25 per cent of the employees were women while they constituted only 14 per cent of the membership in 1975. Out of the forty-one members of the party committee of MVG only five were women. The percentage of women in the party committees lagged be-



hind also in traditional 'female' industries: in Richards Cloth Factory, 60 per cent of the party members were women but the percentage of women members of the party committee was only 50 per cent. In the Cotton Mill, 35 per cent of the membership and 30 per cent of the party committee were women. In MÁV and Volán the percentage of women party members hardly reached 10 per cent.<sup>33</sup>

A report of 1973 found that even though there were improvements in the situation of women, more effort was needed to assert the policy of equal rights in every field.

In spite of the increase of the percentage of women in the party, state and social organizations, it is a frequent experience even today that the engagement of women is considered to be a matter of statistics. In these fields many women get no help to improve their skills and leading competence. We consider the preparation and employment of women leaders to be unreasonably slow.<sup>34</sup>

According to the report, the percentage of women in the party committees of the county increased from 10–12 to 20 per cent. A closer look at the statistics shows, however, that women occupied the low-level leading positions, and their activity mainly focused on organizations directly involved in work in local communities: 43 per cent of the members of KISZ, 40 per cent of SZMT (Szakszervezetek Megyei Tanácsa = County Council of the Trade Unions) and 32 per cent of the municipal committees of the People's Front were women. At the same time, women constituted only 17.2 per cent of the full-time party workers in the county. The comments in the report showed that a certain bias continued to exist against women leaders in the county: 'Even though we can meet less open misogynist remarks and backward opinions mainly among the leaders and the leading bodies than in the previous years, in practice they frequently set higher requirements for women than for men, and they sometimes only look for excuses to reject women.' The report stated that there was a low percentage of women in the party apparatus (with the exception of KISZ), in the apparatuses of the councils and among the leaders. It was a further problem that there were not enough women candidates for membership who had the necessary political education. There was an initiative to increase the number female students at party schools: their percentage increased from 5–8 to 20 per cent.<sup>35</sup>

Concerning the construction of party organization among women, the report argued that the party organizations had to concentrate their efforts on recruitment among women workers because they were often disadvantaged:

Even today we can often meet the opinion that the party uses double measures for men and women. This opinion causes much harm to the party because with this we renounce the political mobilization and the communist education of women. We agree that the special situation of women should be considered individually and we should adjust their party work to their situation but this cannot lead to any distinction between the members of the party. This distinction renders many women timid and indifferent. It reveals the weakness of our political work among women that there are still many passive, politically indifferent women. In many places the party and mass organizations simply accept that a significant number of women 'have no time' or 'they are not interested in public affairs'. They often won't even invite these women to the meetings of the enterprise. The behaviour of the majority of the passive women can partly be explained by the fact that their political knowledge and intellectual horizon is lower than the average. The reason is often in the family circumstances, the conservatism of their husbands, their relatives, and their household duties.<sup>36</sup>

Women workers had another disadvantage: their lack of skills. The party mainly sought to win the skilled core of the industrial working class, while even though 35.8 per cent of the workers of the county were women, only 16.5 per cent of them were skilled workers.

The number of skilled workers among women increased but their percentage did not change much. The reasons are the following: there are still attitudes both among men and women that negatively influence the choice of profession. Many parents allow their daughters to go to training schools only in the worst case, and even then they look for jobs in other fields after they finished training. Even today it is a problem that the girls and their parents are interested in fashionable trades. We expect some results from the increase of the number of comprehensive schools<sup>37</sup> but we have to wait for their effect.<sup>38</sup>

In MVG the percentage of women slightly increased in the admissions between 1980 and 1983: out of the 250 new members 50 were women.<sup>39</sup> At the level of the county the percentage of women in the new admissions was 40 per cent between 1983 and 1986 and it even increased to 42 per cent in 1987.<sup>40</sup> There is no data about the percentage of women in the leading bodies. From the report of 1973 it can, however, be concluded that traditional biases against the political activity and role of women continued to exist in the county; and even though the party set quotas for women, attitudes did not change together with the statistics.

### *Party Life*

The forum of the base cells were the party meetings, which members were obliged to attend regularly, at least in principle. In MVG few minute

books of the meetings of the base cells survived, but the existing documents suggest that party members often voiced their grievances in these meetings, and there was room for real debate. One example is the critical contribution of the mechanic, which was quoted in the introduction, in which he openly expressed his discontent with his economic situation as opposed to what propaganda said of it. The quoted comments of the former brigadiers likewise suggest that people did not refrain from speaking of problems that they had in production (e.g. the comment that ‘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’<sup>41</sup>). As the contribution of the mechanic shows, criticism sometimes even went beyond to address more general problems with the building of socialism.

From the surviving documents it is, of course, difficult to estimate the political activity of the membership in these meetings or in general. The reports were generally more optimistic than the comments of the party officials. In the discussion of a report on exemplary communist conduct, the first secretary of the county stated bluntly that one had to look for it with a magnifying glass. Although he did not relate his comments to economic reform, his moral criticism well expressed the view of the old party workers that the life of the movement was undermined by the spread of materialism and indifference:

We can experience passivity also in the party. I don’t want to argue about the 5 per cent,<sup>42</sup> but we can multiply it safely by five and even then we are too optimistic. No numbers can express the indifference to party work and political questions. When it comes to a political debate, party members just stand there open-mouthed and they do not stand up to defend the party’s standpoint. This question does not even come up in the factories and still we are all satisfied and declare that everything is all right.<sup>43</sup>

A member of the executive committee argued that in his opinion the grass-roots members learned only one-quarter to one-third of the important central decisions. ‘The secretaries of the ground cells have to write down or memorize very important tasks at one hearing. Unfortunately, the majority of them are unable to do this.’<sup>44</sup>

In the discussions there was much criticism of the formality of party life and the difficulties of mobilizing party members. Indifference was allegedly characteristic of both the managers and the workers. The party secretary of MVG took the side of the workers in a meeting of the executive committee:

It is difficult to engage the workers in party work but you can look at the workers' militia, which the people have to do after work: most of them are workers. At the same time we write down that it is difficult to convince the workers of the importance of party work. What is written here does not agree with the facts even if a committee of fifty-two people examined it. The other problem: the report discusses the activity of the party membership, the number of party commissions and the ratio of the participants. According to this report it is like sport. We declare that we organized three foot races with 100-100 participants but if the same people showed up at three different times, we will still report that there were 300 participants. We put down that 2,300 people have party commissions but in reality it could be only 1,000 people. We could fold our hands if 85 per cent of the party membership actively participated in the party and mass organization work. I have a feeling that the 85 per cent does not show the reality. You should not think that my hobby horse is the worker policy but we write down that we stroke ninety-seven members off the party list. The majority of them, seventy-something were stroked off for their failure to attend the party events, and sixty-seven of them are workers. At the same time when the leaders don't come because they are busy, nobody asks them: do you want to remain in the party or not? I think that our party organizations counter the workers a bit more assertively.<sup>45</sup>

Allegedly, it was more difficult to recruit commuters because they did not want to stay for the regular party meetings after they finished work. Since the same reason was used to explain their withdrawal from adult education, it may well have expressed the anti-peasant bias of the party functionaries, who thought that the 'village people' were politically less developed than the urban working class. Since the economic reform, commuters were reported to be more materialistic, and interested in their private wealth rather than community life.<sup>46</sup> In the 1980s, the criticism of materialism became more lenient in relation with the growing social inequalities: party functionaries did indeed explain the reluctance of working-class youth to join the party through the increased burdens of establishing an independent household.<sup>47</sup>

The few surviving registers give no information about how often the base cells actually met. With respect to the brigade meetings, the party committee of the factory demonstrated a remarkable lenience when it was recognized that people who performed heavy physical work during the day did not always have time for the common meetings.<sup>48</sup> There is some evidence that the obligations of regular party life were likewise not so seriously enforced; at least the report of the leadership of the enterprise party committees sharply criticized the leadership of MVG in this respect. It was reported that thanks to their lenience, there were party groups in the factory which had not meet for months:

Regarding the monthly party meetings in MVG we saw the problem earlier. We even made a compromise when we thought that Comrade K can solve the problem that we indicated to him. Unfortunately, there was very weak leadership in MVG. Things declined to the point that there were base cells that did not have regular party life. We had to send a comrade from the town committee to reproach the local comrades. We think that this question is solved with the appointment of Comrade L.<sup>49</sup>

The monthly party meetings of the base cells of MVG triggered a debate even in the executive committee of the county. One member of the committee observed that ‘it almost looks like a punishment to participate in the party meetings. Where there are problems in the base cells, they should be solved. The party groups should hold a meeting in every month.’<sup>50</sup> Given, however, that Comrade L was nicknamed ‘Comrade Simpleton’ in the factory, it can be questioned whether he had the authority to significantly improve party life.<sup>51</sup> In 1977 it was reported that the relationship between the party and the mass organizations was good and 50 per cent of the leaders of the mass organizations were members of the party. The report, however, indicated that there was less agreement between the party and the management: ‘We still need to develop the political leading activity of the managers. They tend to neglect political work referring to the production tasks.’<sup>52</sup> Even though the manager of MVG was member of the Central Committee between 1970 and 1989 – or perhaps because of it – the interest of production preceded party work.

### *Losing Members*

The high percentage of workers among those who walked out of the party shows that the membership was not an existential question to the workers. They could be persuaded to join but the commitment was often not strong enough to keep them in the party. One could leave the party voluntarily (withdrawal) or upon the initiative of the party (through exclusion or being struck off). Withdrawal usually happened upon retirement or after a change of place-of-work, but people sometimes resigned because they did not have time for party life or they did not want to pay dues. With their withdrawal the workers could also express their disagreement with the ideology of the party (religious commitment), its policy or the policy of the factory (e.g. dismissals in MVG). According to the information reports resignation was frequently a sign of protest (wage disputes, the distribution of premiums, etc.): in the introduced case of the regulation of paid holiday of 1986, many people gave back their trade union cards and refused to pay the trade union or party dues in order to show their disa-

greement with the measure.<sup>53</sup> Such cases reveal that people expected the defence of labour interests from the party and the mass organizations, and their failure to do so frequently motivated voluntary withdrawals.

Many people decided to resign membership upon retirement, and they constituted a significant group of those whose membership terminated. In 1982, of the drop-outs 23.3 per cent were retired people, in 1984 it was nearly one-third (27.8 per cent)<sup>54</sup> and in 1987 almost the same (27.4 per cent).<sup>55</sup> The high percentage of the retired among the drop-outs shows that the party organization was closely connected with the workplace in the eyes of people. When they finished their active working life, they were unwilling to continue political work in their local party organizations. The most frequent reasons that they gave for their withdrawal were the high party dues and their bad health. A report of 1985 gave the following reasons for the withdrawal of retired people:

27.8 per cent of the drop-outs are retired; many of them were engaged in social and political work full of struggles for decades. A significant part of them suffer from chronic health problems by the time they retire. They grow tired, indifferent, passive, which is largely understandable. Of course, this does not justify their complete withdrawal from political and social life. Some of them are offended without due reason.<sup>56</sup>

But there were people who had a reason to be offended. In the executive committee of MVG, the party secretary told of a comrade who performed very good work until his last work day and in the farewell dinner he said that ‘I worked here for forty-five years; there is one thing that hurts me that I tell you now. After I was fifty-eight, I did not get a pay increase because they told me I was too old.’<sup>57</sup> The secretary added that this was a justified complaint. The executive committee of MVG was also responsive to the financial problems of the retired. The average pension in the factory was 3,000 Ft, but those who retired earlier often had a very low income. The party due of 100 Ft could, argued that party committee, indeed burden their budget.<sup>58</sup> The grass-roots members would also complain about the lack of attention that they experienced from the leaders. In the Rear Bridge Unit, a party member who had worked there for eighteen years noted that during this time nobody asked him if he and his family were well. The questions asked are only ‘how long you stay, how many pieces you do, etc.’<sup>59</sup>

The withdrawal of the active workers was an even more sensitive loss to the party because it was usually a direct sign of disagreement or discontent with its policies. The high percentage of the workers among the drop-outs therefore also reflected the weakness of political work. A reason

for resignation had to be given – even though by 1987 many people refused to give a reason.<sup>60</sup> The party could also initiate the termination of membership. Exclusion was used as a punishment if a party member seriously and repeatedly offended the community (e.g. by committing criminal offences, or stealing from the property of the collective). Those who emigrated to the West were also excluded from the party.<sup>61</sup> There was a less drastic way to leave the party: to become an inactive party member – those who regularly did not attend the party meetings, did not participate in party life and did not pay the party dues were struck off. The judgement of the activity of the members could be, of course, subjective. The party secretary of MVG was probably right to argue that the managers could find better reasons to miss the party meetings than the workers.<sup>62</sup> The party reports of MVG likewise complained that the weight of the management increased at the expense of the party organization: ‘In the past when the party secretary wanted to talk to a manager and asked him into his room, the manager would grow white with fear about why the secretary wanted to see him. Today the manager would answer without hesitation that he does not have time.’<sup>63</sup>

The statistics suggest that the party rarely resorted to purging its members. In 1985, 192 members withdrew from the party, 150 were struck off and 52 were excluded in the county. Between 1980 and 1984, 699 people withdrew from the party in the county: 20.2 per cent of them explained it through family and religious reasons, and 14.3 per cent said that they could not meet the party requirements.<sup>64</sup> There is some evidence that at that time the party showed more flexibility on religious issues: a report of 1984 noted that in the villages the parents often expected their children to marry in church and to christen their grandchildren in exchange for their financial support.<sup>65</sup>

People were mainly struck off because of the negligence of organizational life or their failure to ask for a transfer to the relevant party organizations upon changing their workplace.<sup>66</sup> It was mentioned in a report of 1977 that some people would not transfer to the party organization of the new working place, and thus drop out of the party.<sup>67</sup> This suggests that the workplace was often central to the organization of people. It would be wrong to assume that the party encouraged the exclusions: from the 1980s a defensive attitude can be observed in the documents. The party aimed to keep rather than lose its members. Between 1979 and 1983 the party membership of Rába MMG was reduced from 502 to 411 people: 123 were transferred to other party organizations, 20 were struck off, 9 withdrew, 3 were excluded, and 7 people died. The organization admitted 49 new members, and 22 arrived from other party groups. The balance was still an almost 20 per cent decline in the membership.<sup>68</sup> With

a shrinking membership, it is unlikely that the party organizations looked for reasons to exclude or strike off party members.

The less strict form of punishment was the party reprimand. The party disciplinary proceedings suggest that the main aim was to maintain the moral respectability of the party rather than to reinforce organizational life. Improper conduct and an unorganized family life were likely to be punished with a strong reprimand, but these offences could also lead to exclusion from the party. People who outraged the public with their behaviour received a warning and they risked being excluded from the party. It was, for instance, reported to the party that the new party secretary of a collective farm 'got so drunk after a council meeting that he vomited through the window of the building of the party committee. This was a very bad introduction and it triggered very negative responses in the village.'<sup>69</sup> The case was investigated and the secretary received a strong reprimand. The party also respected – and promoted – settled family life and relations. Adulterers also risked a strong reprimand. This, in turn, often led to denunciations to the party committee by jealous partners.<sup>70</sup> Between 1980 and 1984, 268 party members (among them 180 workers) were excluded from the party in the county (so perhaps it is true that the party organizations countered the workers more assertively). More than one-third (35.7 per cent) were excluded because of offences against socialist property. Indecent private life was the second most frequent reason for exclusion: it amounted to 25.9 per cent of the punishments; 6 per cent were excluded because of negligence of party duties, 5.3 per cent for causing accidents, 4.5 per cent for violating labour discipline and 3 per cent for their failure to meet the ideological requirements of the party (this meant the demonstration of religious commitment, participation in church ceremonies, etc.).<sup>71</sup> The party evidently watched over the moral respectability of the membership, and it adhered to the 'bourgeois' rules of conduct regarding family life. The referees were frequently warned to consider the moral character of the candidates so that they could not bring disgrace to the party with their behaviour.<sup>72</sup> Since most of the members were excluded for offences against socialist property, political education in this sense was not always effective.

Even though the party strove for moral respectability, being a party member was not in itself enough to win social respect. This was true also for the membership: according to a survey of 1972 conducted within the county membership, a tiny minority (3.3 per cent) thought that there was a difference between the Marxists and non-Marxists in their attitude to work, and only half of them thought that there was a difference in political opinions.<sup>73</sup> In 1983 people who were not members of the party rejected political discussion with party members on the basis 'that they



would not talk to those who can't do their daily work properly. Some people said that no one asked them when they spoil the standard of living. Others refused to state their opinion saying that they would not consider it all the same.<sup>774</sup> In the second half of the 1980s party reports in fact complained of instances of discrimination against the members of the party. With the increasing economic problems of the 1980s (increasing prices, high inflation, and the stagnation of real wages), more and more people raised the question of responsibility: grass-roots members charged the leaders with incompetence, while those who were not members of the party blamed the whole party membership. People would ask why they had to 'pay' the price of the bad decisions of the leaders. It was reported that in the Industrial Tool Factory 'people complained that the leaders again want to shift the responsibility onto the producers. *But the making of the plans and the command of the economy are not done from the machines.*<sup>775</sup> It would be good if the leaders took responsibility for their bad decisions and removed the hair-cracks that had appeared between the party and the people.<sup>776</sup> Another report noted that 'today it is not rewarding to be a communist. Many people refuse to take the responsibility for the mistakes – this explains the high number of withdrawals.'<sup>777</sup> Ever more people refused to identify themselves with the policy of the party; the increase of resignations was indicative of the political weakening of the regime.

### *The Failure of the Standard-of-Living Policy*

With the help of the information reports it is possible to give a very good documentation of the mounting economic discontent of the population.<sup>78</sup> Since the reports were mostly written by low-level party functionaries, the criticism that they formulated reflected the deteriorating political mood of the grass-roots membership for the regime. It is worth comparing the reports of the early 1970s with those of the late 1970s and 1980s in this respect: while the former mainly addressed local issues that had to be improved, the latter critically reported on the 'general questions' of the social and economic development of the country. In particular two criticisms were stressed: the first was the failure of the standard-of-living policy, which people bitterly experienced as opposed to the government's promises, and the second was the issue of growing material inequalities – again as opposed to the egalitarian ideology that the party propagated. In the light of the information reports these factors effectively undermined the credibility of the government.

The increase of prices, understandably, never had a positive reception among the population. The reports of the late 1970s, however, stressed

that the measure was socially unjust because it hit mainly those who lived from wages, while other, wealthier strata who worked in the private sector could compensate for the increase of prices by increasing their prices, too.

In the past weeks our employees were mainly concerned with the increase of prices. They agreed with some of the items but they found the increase of the price of meat definitely too much. They said that they cannot buy a sandwich from their hourly wage. They also disagreed with the increase of the prices of cars; they said that they had saved for a car for years but with these prices and the increase of the price of petrol they could not afford to buy a car. They thought that the peasants and the self-employed would have no problem to pay this higher price but for an urban worker, who had to work one hour for 1 kg of paprika, it would cause an almost unsolvable problem. They also found the increase of the price of utilities too much.<sup>79</sup>

It was likewise pointed out that the disappointment of the population would increase the number of those who have lost their interest in politics:

But more importantly, we have to accept that the key to solve this ‘more difficult’ economic situation is not the increase of prices! Sometimes society can expect restraint from its members if it is demanded by the economic situation, but this cannot be an alternative – because in the long run, modesty will be replaced with the lack of demands – which goes together with ‘indifference’. Indifference can be an almost incurable disease of society.<sup>80</sup>

Another informant put it bluntly that economic dissatisfaction was widespread among the party membership:

It influences the political mood and production that many of our party members and foremen do not understand the objectives of our economic policy. Their economic ‘agitation’ means that they emphasize only the mistakes together with the discontented people. They blame the higher leaders for our economic difficulties. They are convinced that they have always worked well and efficiently.<sup>81</sup>

That this was not an isolated phenomenon is supported by the minute books of the base-cell meeting of the forge shop on 22 February 1978:

Indifference is spreading among people. Nothing makes them interested in community and socialist work. The most important for them is economic work: this is what they want to do well. This is the opinion of the blue-collar workers but it is also characteristic of the managers. The older people are tired and the youth believes that it has no perspective. A still tongue makes a wise head, this is what the people think here. They don’t even argue, just nod to everything. Political work is a secondary issue here.<sup>82</sup>

The passivity of the party members was likewise criticized in the Industrial Tool Unit: ‘Many expect – even among those who finished a political school – to be themselves convinced by somebody else.’<sup>83</sup> The comments, similarly to the quoted contribution of the mechanic, revealed that the failure of the standard-of-living policy had become evident already in the late 1970s, parallel with the recognition that the party had nothing else to offer to the people.

Direct political criticism, which used to be a rare phenomenon, also manifested itself more often throughout the 1980s.<sup>84</sup> People openly started to express their doubts about the credibility of the socialist media, and the informants’ comments suggested that many of them, too, shared these doubts – for instance the question of ‘why the balance of the foreign trade is getting worse from year to year, our employees ask’,<sup>85</sup> or that of ‘will they increase the price of petrol?’<sup>86</sup> Officially nothing is said but the increase of the price in the world market makes one worried.<sup>87</sup> The comments likewise revealed that people refused to believe the economic explanations, particularly when the media had previously declared that the oil crisis would not influence the socialist countries.

It is difficult to understand and even more difficult to bear for a ‘simple’ worker that the unfavourable changes of the world economy have reached us, too. The workers don’t deny that it is necessary to spare reasonably but unreasonable sparing triggers antipathy only. The unduly high increase of prices and the stagnation of the standard of living reinforce a climate of insecurity. Those who live from their wages will never afford to buy a flat, which costs 500–800,000 Ft. The number of shortage goods increased, which means a big problem for the consumers and higher profits for private traders.<sup>88</sup>

Informants clearly expressed that people refused to believe that the economic problems were only temporary: ‘In our opinion, our leaders, who declare even today that we can preserve the standard of living of the 1970s, themselves do not think it seriously.’<sup>89</sup>

An even stronger argument was that failure of the standard-of-living policy mainly affected the industrial working class as the largest social group, which lived from the state sector. Throughout the 1980s it was frequently stressed that they were the main losers of the state’s attempt to reduce expenditures, while the state could not control the incomes of those who worked in the private sector. Growing material inequalities did not only trigger envy but they also revealed that the ‘building of socialism’ was limited to the propagation of socialist ideology. In the light of the information reports, scepticism towards the regime increased among the workers. They found it ever more ridiculous to believe that they were

the beneficiaries of the economic policy of the state; the real beneficiaries, in their eyes, were the managers, the high functionaries and those who worked in the private sector. Informants often consciously refused to write more ‘nuanced’ reports: ‘There is no positive change in the prices and transport so the people’s opinions (which we have reported earlier) have not changed, either. I request the acceptance of our information report!’<sup>90</sup> The informant elaborated his position in another report:

In the training courses we received many instructions concerning the structure of information reports. It is, however, difficult or impossible to satisfy these demands if people fail to react to events according to the given criteria. It was often criticized that information reports are limited to complaints about the provision with consumer goods and public transport. If we do not want to forge the reports (and we certainly don’t), we can only write about the things that really concern people. These are the increase of prices, the provision with consumer goods, transport and the ‘preservation’ of the standard of living. We cannot write new things about them because the circumstances have not changed; or better to say, they have deteriorated after the increase of the price of fuel. I request the acceptance of our information report!<sup>91</sup>

According to the reports, workers often directly contrasted their economic situation with that of the wealthier social strata. Such comparisons evidently reflected the workers’ mounting social discontent:

The pay increases are not proportionate to the increase of the prices, so the majority of the employees experience a gradual decline in their standard of living. This applies only to the people who live from their work and wages and not to the speculators – and there are many of them, unfortunately. According to the report of the OTP the savings of the people in the bank have increased, despite the price increases. Whose savings have increased, and how many of them earned their money with honest work?<sup>92</sup>

The informant argued prices had constantly increased since 1973, which made it more difficult for industrial workers to earn their living.<sup>93</sup> In a base-cell meeting party members argued that the increase of the prices hit most the urban industrial working class because they could only rely on the wages that they earned in the factory: ‘They are not satisfied with the reasoning of the price increases. They refuse to understand the necessity of these measures.’<sup>94</sup> Similar reports from other plants suggest that dissatisfaction and pessimism were widespread among the workers: people did not understand why they were expected to make sacrifices in the interest of the country while others – as they perceived – prospered at their expense: ‘The most important topic among the workers is invariably the

standard of living. They complain that prices have changed without an announcement. The newspapers and the TV always talk about the savings of the people, how much they increased, but no one investigates how much money the workers have in the bank.<sup>95</sup> In the Industrial Tool Unit the workers also complained about the decline of the standard of living:

Our statistical office always publishes data about the savings of the population, and then they can argue that people can afford to pay the higher prices. Our workers say that if someone investigated who were the lucky ones, who had money in the bank, one would find very few Rába workers among them.<sup>96</sup>

The visible material differences between the social groups urged many to question social justice. Few people believed that the rich earned their money by honest means; at least in the light of the information reports people spoke of non-productive work with disapproval. A report of the ideological training of the party membership concluded that the workers did not feel that their situation improved in spite of overtime:

In their judgement the basis of distribution is not the work that one performs. They think that the money goes to the non-productive sphere, and that the working class, which produces the national income, receives an ever-decreasing share. An 'upper class', which is not affected by the economic situation of the country, has emerged. The economic restrictions reduce only the income of the people who work in the over-regulated industry. They are worried about the expansion of the private sector, which will broaden this upper class.<sup>97</sup>

The reference to solidarity was rejected with the reasoning that social justice has disappeared from society:

In a TV-interview it was argued that our economic situation and the standard of living won't improve in the near future. According to the interview, there is a group which does not notice the economic situation, another where the standard of living stagnates, and a third, largest group, where it declines (which affects the majority of the employees). Question: why can't all the strata share the burdens equally? For example, while one builds a villa, another has a problem to buy one kilo of meat.<sup>98</sup>

People also argued that not everybody could find work in the private sector, which thus only increased existing inequalities:

It is a general opinion that today the urban workers have a problem to make ends meet. We don't think that this can be explained with the increase of the demands. Everybody who wants to achieve something – whether a car, family house or the support of the children and we are back to the flat problem

(parental support!) – needs an extra income. An opportunity<sup>99</sup> is needed to participate in the private economy.<sup>100</sup>

It was also pointed out that the high incomes that could be earned in the private sector rendered people more responsive to the capitalist ideology: ‘Here we have a political question: if the proportion between the state and private economy further shifts, which will be more dominant in the consciousness of a worker: where he goes to work or where he earns the money?!’<sup>101</sup>

The economic dissatisfaction of the working class was linked with the argument that their social and political role also declined. It was disputable even in the light of the reforms of the 1970s whether the workers regarded themselves as members of the ruling class; in the 1980s, however, there was an increasing complaint that instead of a solid integration into the socialist middle class, they found themselves at the bottom of the social ladder. The growing material differences rendered painfully evident this social decline:

Unfortunately, price increases continue in 1983, too. The monthly wage of an average worker – without overtime – is 4,500 Ft. As compared to this, engineers earn 6,500–7,000 Ft a month. We don’t think that this big difference is justified. It seems that the leading role of the working class is manifest only by the workbenches but it plays no role in the distribution of the incomes.<sup>102</sup>

The party membership of the Vehicle Unit criticized that everything was explained through the economic situation of the country, which became more important than the leading role of the party: ‘They therefore do not experience the leading role of the party’, the report concluded.<sup>103</sup> The unequal chances of young people to buy flats were likewise repeatedly stressed: the children of working-class families were reported to belong to the disadvantaged groups.<sup>104</sup> But workers had to cut back their demands in other fields of life, too, which reinforced their bitterness against the more fortunate social groups, who had enough means to finance their luxuries. According to an extraordinary information report of the forge shop, the workers were very surprised to hear that the price of petrol increased while it went down in the world market:

The question is who are the most affected by the price increase? Those who have a higher income will have no problem to drive in the future. For the low-income groups the car is often the only means of entertainment. According to the employees these groups are the working class, the retired and the big families.<sup>105</sup>

In the Industrial Tool Unit people wondered ‘how high the prices can be increased’.<sup>106</sup> Holiday trips also started to be regarded as a luxury; people particularly complained of the increasing prices of the holiday resorts at Lake Balaton, which were also frequented by foreign tourists:

There is no cheap accommodation or catering; for instance, one week of camping costs 1,000 Ft. The prices in the restaurants are beyond the means of a simple Hungarian worker. The private shopkeepers perhaps exploit this because their prices are dishonestly high. A pancake costs 6–8 Ft, the maize 10–15 Ft and the fruit costs two to three times more than in Győr. The local councils should do something against these unfair profits!<sup>107</sup>

The mounting discontent of people was manifest in their political opinions, too. The information reports of the 1980s speak of the gradual deterioration of the political mood: the criticism that the economic situation of the industrial working class deteriorated was followed by openly critical political comments:

The constant price increases negatively influence the public mood. In our opinion, the workers are not enlightened enough to regard this process as natural. Particularly if we take into account that the only ‘effect’ of the world market on our country is the increase of the prices; we can never experience its opposite effect. The workers say that according to our leaders the prices of our products are going down in the world market, but nevertheless, they continue to increase in Hungary.<sup>108</sup>

Price increases were reported to strongly influence the mood of the employees of the Energy Unit because ‘they feel that they cannot preserve their former standard of living’.<sup>109</sup> According to the informant of the Motor Unit ‘the public mood of the majority of the workers is deteriorating from day to day. They relate this to the ever greater and varied taxes, price increases and the attempt of the state to put the public burden on the working class.’<sup>110</sup> The discussions with the party members concluded that it irritated the workers that while their standard of living declined, there were more opportunities for the ‘speculators’ and self-employed to get rich. This contributed to the passivity of the membership.<sup>111</sup>

It was argued that after the economic reform, there was a relatively sharp criticism of the managers; political criticism, however, remained a taboo. This changed strikingly in the 1980s: in the light of the information reports, people openly questioned the credibility of their leaders and the official media: ‘We do not understand why we can’t know how much debt the Hungarian state has while they tell us the debts of Poland and Romania. Why can we know only the military expenses of the USA and

not that of Hungary?’<sup>112</sup> It was also criticized that the state leaders were actually afraid of the people, and they enjoyed unjustified privileges:

It can be safely argued that people were outraged by the exaggerated security measures concerning the Austrian visit of György Lázár in a private train. This is not only the opinion of the grass-roots membership but also that of those who had to wait 30–45 minutes because of the closed bridges. People criticize this sterile isolation of the leaders during the visits of other state leaders, too. A state leader should have more confidence in the people even if it implies some risks.<sup>113</sup>

It was also reported that people refused to believe the reasons that the leaders and the media gave for the restrictive measures, and they blamed the leadership for the wrong economic policy of the country even though they suffered the least from it. The following comment shows how ‘far’ people went in political criticism: ‘Today the Hungarian people work very hard in Europe and they still get nowhere. Our socialist way of life means that everybody works himself to death and achieves nothing while society goes to the dogs.’<sup>114</sup> The ‘Hungarian lifestyle’ was evidently associated with too much work and low pay: ‘Our employees find it remarkable that with respect to the health condition of the middle-aged, we are among the last in Europe. According to our employees, it is not only the result of the ‘unhealthy’ Hungarian ‘cuisine’ but also that of too much work.’<sup>115</sup>

The quotations well illustrate the process of how the regime increasingly lost working-class support. People recognized that while the state failed to improve the standard of living of the industrial working class, its economic policy opened new opportunities for other social groups, which lived significantly better than the workers. The situation of the 1980s was in some aspects similar to the reception of the economic reform of 1968 when growing social differences were criticized strongly. There were, however, two important differences: first, at that time the state still had reserves to appease the working class; and second, there was still space for a social dialogue. The reports of the 1980s reflect that the increasing gap between the policy and ideology of the party effectively undermined the credibility of the regime. This deeply rooted disappointment rendered it unlikely that the majority of the workers would have accepted the party as a conversation partner; and, contrary to the era of the new economic mechanism, the party in fact made no noticeable attempt to start a dialogue with the workers.



*‘Would you call the capitalists back?’*

In the 1980s the decreasing appeal of the party became more visible. Functionaries reported of the increasing problems of recruitment, in particular the diminished appeal of the party for young people. The executive committee of MVG reported that young people attached too much importance to material things upon leaving school, and if the party failed to organize them in their twenties, ‘it is very difficult to persuade them when they are thirty’. It was, however, added that materialism was characteristic of older people, too: ‘today people count too much; for example, a blue-collar worker would pay his car tax from party dues’. That indeed some workers or candidates would make this point is supported by the awkward defence of the workers: ‘We have to say that these people are not at all against the system but it is the consequence of exaggerated materialism that has become characteristic of society.’<sup>116</sup> A concrete case was mentioned that threw bad light on the party: a direct production manager, who was a candidate, declared that he did not want to be a party member.<sup>117</sup>

The party organizations were apparently aware of the ‘difficult political situation’ and the decreasing appeal of the party membership. The executive committee of Rába MMG openly spoke of interest in relation to the membership, and recommended that the party should make the membership attractive to people, which implied that it was not attractive enough. The membership of the party organization of Rába MMG had decreased by 20 per cent between 1979 and 1983.

The party members are the same people as everybody else. The individuals always have an interest and if we want to increase the attraction of the party, we should tell people where it brings advantages. We have to be ‘cunning’ to win the new party members. We have to make the party attractive to the individuals and the collective.<sup>118</sup>

One member of the executive committee proposed it be more lenient with its requirements:

Besides showing to the individuals that their interest and ambition can be realized in the party, we could increase the attraction of the membership if we accepted the party members together with all their faults and lapses on condition that they do not violate the party regulation ... It is very dangerous what natural selection means. It means the reduction of the party membership. We can afford it only if there are sufficient new candidates.<sup>119</sup>

Other speakers openly admitted that this was not the case. The members complained that it was difficult to win over working-class youth for the party:

We had a negative experience with the political education of the young skilled workers. They do not know the basic concepts and it is very difficult to involve them in political work. We experience an increasing materialism. Young people are unwilling to undertake a task that has no financial benefit. They find their wages too low and then they run to their second workplace where they would undertake any work. They need more money because they established a family, started building a house, etc.<sup>120</sup>

It was also reported from MVG that people thought that a young couple has to work so much to establish their life that they hardly have time to undertake social and political tasks.<sup>121</sup> In 1987 the party members in Rába MMG complained that youth is passive, that they do not feel the honour of work, and the materialistic attitude is developed already in primary school.<sup>122</sup>

The members of party committees usually explained the withdrawal of youth through increasing materialism. There is some evidence, though, that it was not the only, nor the most important reason; it indicated the declining prestige of the membership and political work. A report on the influence of KISZ in Győr frankly stated that young people were ‘in general not indifferent; they are interested in the issues that directly influence their life. Passivity means a distance from the official organizations.’<sup>123</sup> In 1987 the party committee of Rába MMG reported a radical decline of the interest in the mass organizations. Only 12.4 per cent of the youth of the factory (below thirty) were members of KISZ, whose membership had decreased by more than 50 per cent since 1985: ‘The figures show the indifference and the lack of interest of the youth and the continued decline of the influence of KISZ.’<sup>124</sup> Since KISZ was the youth organization of the party, its decreasing membership indicated the problem of the new enrolments.

Given the closeness of prosperous, capitalist Austria, it was very difficult to argue that socialism offered a higher standard of living to its subjects than did capitalism. One member of the executive committee of Rába MMG mentioned the cases of two party leaders in Mosonmagyaróvár who emigrated to the West.<sup>125</sup> There is some evidence that the reformers’ news of the bad economic situation of the country confused part of the grass-roots membership:

We were very surprised to hear the justification of the increase of the price of petrol (22 April, *Hírháttér – Behind the News*). For years we have told to people that one should not compare the Western prices with ours because it gives an unrealistic picture. Now the chairman of the price office does this on TV. What can we say to the argument that ‘we have to increase the price of petrol because it costs 10 schillings in Austria, which is 22 Ft’? If we take

this into account, an Austrian worker can buy 1,000 litres of petrol from his wage while his Hungarian counterpart can buy only 200 litres. Why should one make such comparisons? After this how can we argue that the prices are incomparable? People understand that the prices will increase but they don't want to be treated as fools. It is more and more difficult to make a living with honest work!<sup>126</sup>

Rába MMG reported that the Austrian standard of living was envied by workers:

The more courageous (and the least informed) even question the superiority of the socialist system over capitalism. These arguments are supported by the transitional economic difficulties. Because of the deficiencies of our propaganda, they do not judge the situation according to the decisive role of socialist property, the power of the proletariat, and social redistribution. The overrating of the economic and technological achievements of capitalism renders it more difficult to realistically evaluate our situation.<sup>127</sup>

In the second half of the 1980s the decline of the regime evidently accelerated; in the various reports both the economic and social problems received an ever-greater emphasis. The reasons for the declining social support of the party and the government were well summarized in the county report of 1986:

The decrease of the real wages of the workers and the employees increases the sensitivity of the population. They frequently mention the social injustices, which seem to be known to everybody and still nothing happens. There are opinions that the dependence of the employees becomes stronger and the will of a narrow stratum (those with property) is realized. Moral judgement does not correspond to the rules of law and private business, and incomes are uncontrollable. There is an ever-decreasing number of people who have the moral right to call anybody to account.<sup>128</sup>

More and more people demanded the punishment of the responsible leaders, which showed the declining authority of the party:

Our economic problems should be discussed more frankly. People want to know who got the country into this situation. The leadership is largely to be blame for this. Why don't they take the responsibility? There is much cunning in this country, ever more people are making illegal profits. How long will it go on like this? There is much expectation for the programme of the government but people would like to hear a clear speech. Not that one leader says this and the other leader says that.<sup>129</sup>

The lack of confidence in the leadership manifested itself in many other information reports:

Our employees are displeased with the fact that the leaders relieve themselves from the responsibility referring to the unpredictably and unfavourably changed circumstances. Comrade Gáspár admitted in his recent TV-speech that the leadership was not always truthful to the public. Many people ask: how can we believe the official declarations after this? The mood of our employees is not optimistic, to put it mildly. They do not see the beginning of the real development and they say that they are afraid of the future. Neither can the leadership guarantee the success of the development.<sup>130</sup>

The workers of the Gear Unit doubted that the leadership that let the conditions deteriorate to this point would be able to make a tangible progress.<sup>131</sup> These were not sporadic manifestations of social discontent; according to a county report of 1987 the process of disintegration irresistibly continued, and the party possessed an ever-decreasing authority while distrust in the government increased:

Even though the population understood the decrease of the standard of living from the planned increases of the prices, in practice they refuse to accept it. The concrete announcements receive negative comments and the drastic increase of the prices of some products triggers repulsion. People think that the 15 per cent increase of the prices is too high as compared to the strict regulation of the wages. The permanent increase of the prices has tested the patience of people in the last two to three months. There is no trust because the government has not done anything against the uncontrollable increase of the prices. People are afraid that it will trigger a spiral of inflation, which renders it impossible to plan the future. Some people believe that since the acceptance of the September programme of the government there have been no substantial results. ... The decrease of the real wages of the workers and employees increases the sensitivity of the population. People more frequently mention the social injustices, which everybody knows but there are no efficient measures against them, for instance getting income without work. Some people think that people are becoming more dependent, the will of a small minority (the wealthy) is enforced, and the incomes in the private sector are uncontrollable.<sup>132</sup>

The diminished appeal of the party was manifest in statistics, too. In 1987 – for the first time in the examined period – the enrolments failed to balance the reduction of the membership, and the party membership decreased by 1.3 per cent in the country. The decreasing trend could be observed in the county, too: on 1 January 1988 the membership numbered 31,862 – which was 445 less than one year before. Those who resigned

their membership were more willing to give their political discontent as a reason. In 1986, it was only three people in the county who justified their withdrawal with political reasons while in 1987 thirty-five people said that they did not agree with the policy of the party.<sup>133</sup> The number of people who resigned their membership also showed an increasing trend: 192 people withdrew from the party in 1985, then 241 in 1986 and in 504 in 1987 (half of them workers).<sup>134</sup> In the beginning of 1988, discussions with party members revealed that many of them thought that the leading role and the authority of the party weakened and so did public confidence in it. It was a general opinion that the party failed to call to account the leaders who were responsible for bad decisions and that the development was slow. The grass-roots members expected more personal changes. But the most important criticism was that the leading role of the party was only manifest in the possession of power, it reacted slowly to the changes and lacked initiative:

They see the weakening of the leading role of the party in the decrease of the trust in the party leadership, the declining authority of the local party organs, the insulting comments of people who are not members of the party and the difficulties of the party building. Party members think that the failure to explain the economic and social processes of the past years confused the membership and hindered their emotional identification with the party. The difference between the taught concept of socialism and today's reality causes a conflict for some of the membership.<sup>135</sup>

From 1987 the 'value' of party membership radically deflated. In 1985 the industry of the county admitted 350 new members; in 1988 the increase was only 124. The loss of the membership of the county significantly exceeded that of the previous year with the withdrawal of 2,051 people. Thus, the number of those who resigned the membership quadrupled in one year.<sup>136</sup> In the first three quarters of 1989, as many as 2,372 people resigned their membership in the county, and 542 gave the reason that they did not agree with the policy of the party. In Győr 1,194 people withdrew from the party, 241 for political disagreement. In Sopron, these numbers were 598 and 156 respectively.<sup>137</sup>

According to party reports, the economic policy of the reformers failed to win popularity; in fact, the population identified reform with increasing restriction. The discussions with grass-roots party members concluded that the conflict between its reformist and conservative wings impacted negatively on the political mood of the membership: a significant number of them were sceptical about the economic policy of the party and their future prospects:

In the past quarter of the year public opinion deteriorated to an unprecedented degree for the regime. The more hopeful mood after the national party meeting quickly disappeared because the execution of the former decisions had no palpable impact on the economy (change of production profile, the improvement of the balance). The population felt that the distance between ideas and practice was increasing. From the government programme only the decline of the standard of living, the price increases, the taxation and the inflation were realized. The majority of people identify reform with these negative phenomena. They think that instead of stabilization, only social injustice and tension are increasing, which approaches a crisis. This lack of any prospects irritates people and it increases their insecurity. Apart from the lack of economic prospects, the government, unfortunately, broke its past promises and took contradictory measures with which it generated inflation and lost the confidence of people. The loss of trust did not spare the party either because it seems that the economic reform was driven to a political level and now the people blame the party for the lack of perspective.<sup>138</sup>

The report from Sopron also argued the case that the old leadership had lost credibility and social support:

Party members ask: how does the government want to realize this ambitious programme if it loses the trust of the membership? We are frequently told what we have done wrong but the reasons are not discussed. It is not the working class who should be blamed. They have been working hard up to now. It is not their fault that they produced non-marketable goods; there was no structural change and a large part of the budget was spent on the subvention of state enterprises! Did we not have scholars, economists and respected experts who could have called attention to the problems? And if they did, why did their opinions receive no consideration? Is it not the party or the government or both to be blamed in the first place?<sup>139</sup>

An even more important question was how the grass-roots members responded to the announced reform of the party and its call to democratize. Few base-cell materials survive from this period, but they suggest that the majority of the population did not comprehend the accelerated political crisis of the regime. The system of democratic centralism was criticized but at that time the reform of the party was not linked with the reform of the whole political system:

People expect a change in the work style of the party that would testify to a more direct knowledge and representation of the problems of simple people, and strengthen their security and trust in the party. Many people think that the present political system does not even represent the democratic values that could be realized within the framework of this system.<sup>140</sup>

The demand to democratize the party rapidly developed into a more radical demand to increase political participation of the whole of society. In the political debates of how to transform the political system the intellectuals were the main actors. Even though some voices can be documented in the period that spoke of the necessity of the workers' political representation in the new system, it seems that the majority of the population was unprepared for the rapid and radical political change to come. Among the few documents that expressed concern about the future role of the working class, one can mention the discussion of the reform of the political system among the base organizations of MVG. The party organization of the Industrial Tool Factory did indeed anticipate a situation in which the social decline of the working class became inevitable:

We do not see unambiguously if the legalized multi-party system means a real economic opportunity for every Hungarian citizen or gives an opportunity for a very extreme situation: impoverished workers or unemployed on the one hand, and rich proprietors, bankers, speculators, etc. on the other hand. The rightful claims of the decent citizens of the Hungarian nation, including the right to work, should be fully considered, because if not, then long-term chaos and not decent, productive work will be characteristic of the Hungarian economy.<sup>141</sup>

From the New Foundry the following was reported: 'Life has created the conditions for the change of property relations and the establishment of the plurality of the parties. This does not depend on the will or objection of the people's democracy. ... The mixed property relations already exist; this is no longer a political question. The functioning of the system can still be, however, determined.'<sup>142</sup> Another party organization argued that the party had to initiate a substantial renewal otherwise people would desert the party in the election.<sup>143</sup>

While, in 1989, there were some East European intellectuals who still argued for a democratic socialism based on workers control, other groups, including many of the MSZMP reformers, were calling for a 'third way' between capitalism and socialism, and some for the creation of a social democracy based on a mixed economy and strong trade unions, even though it was also widely expected that the working class would either resist any attempt to restore capitalism or even support a reformist collectivist alternative. On the basis of the surviving documents it is difficult to say what kind of social and political alternatives were discussed among the workers. The opinion that there was a need for the political representation of working-class interests in the new system was voiced in the county conference of the party on 10 June 1989, which was held in the congress hall of MVG. The contribution is interesting not only because the speaker

criticized increasing populism and the practice of formulating demands in the 'name of the working class' without considering their real interests, but also because it shows that there were supporters of democratic socialism among the workers, who demanded a political change but considered it equally important to ensure the social rights of people:

Today in this country uninvited speakers agitate, act and demand in the name of the working class and the nation. I am a worker. In my place no one should make declarations, let alone demands. It would be good if people understood that in the past forty years we have learnt to think and work for ourselves, and not robots but thinking people stand by the machines. And one more thing: we learnt to appreciate and respect the intellectuals who serve social progress with their work and knowledge and they recognize us, workers as partners in their work. It does not move me if someone declares himself to be pro-labour even if he has a leading position. According to us a leader is pro-labour if he demands work from everybody, provides for decent conditions and performs his task in the market. The workers want no favours but work and livelihood ... I would like to mention how the Minister of Finance explained the restrictions: 'The achievement of the country has not increased!' Whose achievement has not increased? That of the workers, the institutions, the budget or the whole of society within the existing bad structure? I think the latter is true and we should not blame each other. Because it is not a good perspective that if something is good, we did it and there are plenty of applicants and if something is wrong, then we blame the executors, mainly the workers and the peasants. What kind of society do we want? Democratic. Socialist. I think that we want a society where everybody receives a fair share of the reward from what he produced. We want a society where a worker receives a real share of the political power that he deserves on the basis of his work. For us the socialist direction means a development built on communal democracy. It is incomprehensible to me that some smart, nationally recognized politicians, who declare themselves to be reformers, do not even dare to speak of socialism as a possible way of development. We, however, think that this is the real reform task. We would like to participate in its realization, in our own way – of course, only if the party also accepts and does not reject us.<sup>144</sup>

It is remarkable that the speaker spoke of a possibility of a reformed party finding a new social basis that was not the working class (and in the original text a strong expression is used for being rejected). This shows that the workers who did not give up socialist demands felt that the first cracks were appearing between the party and the working class.

Within the ruling party, however, this was very much a minority view. The 'hard facts' (the massive decrease of the membership) show that the general political mood was not pro-socialist. Even though there was a political move to attack the regime in the name of the working class, it was, nevertheless, true that the regime was not popular among the workers, which was also rec-



ognized by the manager of Rába in the quoted interview that he gave in the summer of 1989.<sup>145</sup> In the interview the manager admitted that the workers had good reason to feel deceived because many of the regime's promises (including socialist proprietorship) remained unfulfilled. It was perhaps symbolic that the interview was published on the same page as the readers' answers to the timely question of '*Would you call the capitalists back?*'<sup>146</sup>

It is a theoretical question why a leftist alternative failed to attract the majority of the working class. In the light of the information reports it can be argued that it reflected a deeply rooted dissatisfaction with socialism, the signs of which were visible throughout the 1980s. The party's policy towards the working class, which was strongly propagated after the economic reform of 1968, failed to achieve real results, and in the 1980s the party made no more attempt to fill the socialist ideology with a new content. Even the term 'working class' disappeared from the rhetoric of the party. As is evident from their mounting social discontent, workers believed that they had to pay the price for the wrong economic policy while those who worked in the private sector enjoyed a much higher standard of living than did the working class. The party and its ideology thus increasingly lost the support of the workers: as the abundant criticisms show, people were conscious of the political decline of the regime.

This political climate was not very favourable for socialist alternatives. The consistent persecution of any leftism other than official Marxism rendered the regime closed to the left and open to the right – which was evident from the reform discussions of the 1980s as reformers increasingly saw 'more market' as panacea for the economic problems of the country. There is no evidence from the interviews that alternative concepts (such as self-management) were known to the majority of the workers. The failure of the party to respond to the political criticism of the working class after the economic reform of 1968 deprived people of further illusions: the improvement of enterprise democracy was limited to theoretical discussions, which could do little to challenge established power relations in the factory. In the light of the information reports, the party 'successfully' discredited the socialist ideology in the eyes of many people. At the time of the political crisis of the regime it was unrealistic to expect that after the decades of the welfare dictatorship, which replaced working-class consciousness with an orientation towards consumerism, they would have been responsive to a new, leftist political programme. As shopping tourism demonstrated, the appeal of the full supermarkets of neighbouring Austria was greater than any political ideology. In the era of the first economic reform there may have been a chance to renew the social settlement between the working class and the party; in the 1980s neither of the two parties demonstrated a willingness to restart the dialogue.

## The SED and the Workers

### *The IKPO of Zeiss in Numbers*

The available figures show that the party was much larger in the Zeiss factory than in the Hungarian Rába. While in the latter around 10 per cent of the workforce were members of the party, in the Zeiss factory in 1967 this proportion was 20.2 per cent, then 20.7 per cent in 1975,<sup>147</sup> and by 1982 every fourth employee was a member of the party, at least according to reports written by the leadership.<sup>148</sup> In 1967, the factory party organization consisted of 23 base organizations, 28 departmental organizations (APO)<sup>149</sup> and 289 party groups. In 1970 there were 13 base organizations, 56 departmental organizations (APO) and 397 party groups in the IKPO of Zeiss.<sup>150</sup> There was not much change in the figures throughout the 1980s: in 1982 the factory party organization was divided into 30 base organizations, 135 departmental organizations and 572 party groups,<sup>151</sup> while in 1988 the relevant figures were 32, 152 and 605 respectively.<sup>152</sup>

In contrast to the Hungarian situation, the party membership in the Zeiss factory shows a constant increase over the period: in 1967 there were 3,121 members of the party and 413 candidates, in 1975 there were 4,730 members,<sup>153</sup> in 1982 it had risen to 7,360 members and candidates,<sup>154</sup> in 1984 it was 7,600,<sup>155</sup> and in 1988 an information report gave a figure of 8,394 members.<sup>156</sup> The first secretary of the factory party organization spoke of ‘more than eight thousand communists’ in a speech of 1987 in front of the party leadership of the district.<sup>157</sup> Meanwhile the total workforce increased significantly, too, but the percentage of them who were party members also rose: in 1967, every fifth employee was a member of the party,<sup>158</sup> while throughout the 1980s every fourth member belonged to the organization.<sup>159</sup> We do not know about the generational composition of party membership in the 1980s but the comment that there were 193 youth brigades and youth collectives in the factory in 1982<sup>160</sup> suggests that the decline of the prestige of the party among young people was not as marked in the GDR as in Hungary, where reports throughout the 1980s increasingly complained of a problem of recruitment and of the declining appeal of the youth organization of the party, the KISZ. While in Hungary the decrease in party membership was characteristic of the last years prior to the collapse of the regime, in the GDR it seems that the loss of appeal of the party became manifest only with the change of regime. In fact, the first time when the statement ‘there are people who want to resign their party membership’ appeared in official reports was the summer of 1989,<sup>161</sup> and this step required courage even at that time.<sup>162</sup>

The surviving statistics of the factory party organization show that the affirmative action, in order to maintain the proportion of members who

were working-class, quotas were observed in the GDR the same way as in Hungary. In 1967 in the IKPO of Zeiss, the proportion of workers among the membership was 54.7 per cent, that of the intelligentsia 20.3 per cent, that of the white-collar workers 23.8 per cent and that of the students 1.2 per cent. The majority of the members (56 per cent) joined the party between 1959 and 1967; of these, 27.5 per cent were between 31 and 40 years old, 20.6 per cent were between 26 and 30 years old, 16.7 per cent between 41 and 50 years old, 16.3 per cent between 51 and 60 years old, and 13.2 per cent were below 25 (the remaining 5.7 per cent were older than 60). In terms of education, 13.7 per cent of party members had finished comprehensive school with a high-school leaving certificate, and 6.6 per cent were university or college graduates. In the light of these figures, the intelligentsia and those with technical-school training were overrepresented among the membership, a fact that shows education was often linked with the membership: 27.8 per cent of those with only technical training and 32.9 per cent of the *Fachschulkader* and graduates were members of the party (19.2 per cent of workers were members). Among the youth, 12 per cent of 18 to 25 year olds were members of the party. In 1970, of the total membership, 51.3 per cent were workers, while 29.1 per cent belonged to the intelligentsia and 18.7 per cent were other white-collar workers. The average age of the membership was 38.1 years. In 1975, records show that 20.7 percent of workers were party members, 29.5 percent members of the intelligentsia, and 8.7 per cent young people.<sup>163</sup> It seems that the party paid close attention to these percentages, as in 1977 similar figures were reported: 51 per cent of the membership were workers, and 20.7 per cent of the workers belonged to the organization. The proportion of the under-30s in the party was 29.4 per cent, which was much better than the district average (20.4 per cent). It was, however, noted that some plants contained higher proportions of members than others: in the research centre, for instance, only 13.3 per cent of employees were members of the party and their proportion was also low in the base organization of the electro-technology unit.<sup>164</sup> The fact that the percentage of members as a proportion of all employees was at its lowest in the 'elite' plants was not flattering to the party at any rate, even though it may well have changed throughout the 1980s.

There is not much data about recruitment during the period, but it can be assumed that if every fourth employee was a member of the party, the requirements could not have been very seriously enforced. Just like the Hungarian party secretary, who said that in MVG five out of ten members were unaware of their obligations to the party,<sup>165</sup> a report in 1968 complained of the mechanical way in which members were accepted into the party: *'There are cases when the economic functionaries and party sec-*

*retaries, contrary to the instructions of the leadership, instead of helping the candidates, fill out the enrolment forms themselves so that the candidates only need to sign them.*<sup>166</sup> In this way they exerted a moral pressure on the candidates, which had a negative effect on their future political development.

It was also a widespread practice to not inform, or at best, to only partially inform candidates for membership of the basic questions of party policy, and members' rights and obligations. The violation of the principles of the party during recruitment, and the harmful practice of 'candidates at any price' could also be explained by the fact that the base organizations, in their attempts to increase the proportion of workers in the party, forgot to consider each application on a case-by-case basis and to respect the rules. The result was a high proportion of workers among those excluded from the party or struck off.

The document also criticized the selection of candidates for full membership, arguing that there were workers enrolled who were neither professionally nor privately respected by their fellow workers and that the party admitted even candidates who 'disagreed with basic questions of the policy of our party'. In many cases there was no interview with candidates before acceptance, even though 'during the personal discussion one can check whether the candidate has faith in the party, or whether he really thinks that he is part of the collective'.<sup>167</sup> On the basis of this document, the policy of the SED towards working-class members shows much similarity with the practice of the MSZMP in Hungary. Both parties sought to win over 'respectable' working class to set an example to other workers. The East German officials encountered the same difficulties of party organization among the workers as did the Hungarians; most notably, the refusal of many workers to join the party. It is remarkable that the document mentioned and criticized the practice of 'forcing' candidates to join the party by handing out forms to them that had already been filled in. This and the information that the party admitted 'ideologically unreliable' candidates suggest that in the GDR, just as in Hungary, 'worker comrades' were frequently pressured to join the party simply in order to fulfil centrally stipulated targets.

### *Women in the Party*

The proportion of women in the factory party organization was lower than that of men: in 1970, around 40 per cent of the employees were women<sup>168</sup> and they constituted only 20 per cent of the membership.<sup>169</sup> In Rába MVG the proportion of women was 25 per cent in the factory and 14 per cent among party members.<sup>170</sup> In 1977, the proportion female

party members stood at 26 per cent<sup>171</sup> in the Zeiss factory, but it was still lower than the district average (36.4 per cent); and 40 per cent of female members in the factory were blue-collar workers.<sup>172</sup>

Despite administrative measures that promoted women leaders, the 1977 figures show that the proportion of female members was still low, particularly among those in high-ranking positions. Around 20 per cent of district party secretaries were women, and they only made up 13 per cent of district secretariat members. Around one-quarter of employees of the party apparatuses and one-fifth of teachers in party schools were women. There had, however, been a marked increase in the percentage of women among leaders of the base organizations; from 21 per cent to 33.8 per cent between 1975 and 1977. It seems that the public role of women also increased: in the plenums of the party leadership of the district the proportion of women was 30 per cent, while in the plenums of the district their average was 38 per cent. In the Zeiss factory 26.1 per cent of the party leaders of the factory organization and 17 per cent of the party secretaries were women.<sup>173</sup>

Just as in Hungary, women were mainly active in the youth organization – the FDJ<sup>174</sup> – and the trade union committees, which had less power. In the Zeiss factory, women made up 54 per cent of FDJ members, against a district average of 51 per cent. In the districts' trade union committees the proportion of women varied at between 43 per cent and 55 per cent (among the chairpersons it varied between 27 and 45 per cent). The proportion of women was also high (42 per cent) among the members of the *Konfliktkommission* (even though among the chairpersons it was only 22 per cent). The highest proportions of women were found among the committees in charge of the social education of children (71.6 per cent), social insurance (61.9 per cent), social policy (54 per cent) and organized holidays (51.8 per cent).<sup>175</sup> This suggests a continued association of women with community work, which at the same time negatively affected their opportunities to get promoted to leading positions. An information report from the Zeiss factory commented in 1973 that even though 905 women finished comprehensive school with a high-school leaving certificate, or obtained a college or university degree, only 15 of them achieved a position commensurate with their education level.<sup>176</sup> As in 1977 it was stated that the majority of women leaders held low-ranking positions,<sup>177</sup> it seems that gender inequalities continued to structure the political careers of men and women.

### *Party Life*

Since none of the minute books of party meetings survived from the period, it is difficult to reconstruct grass-roots party life. Documents from an enquiry conducted in 1969 into party life in the instrument plant suggest that there were similar problems with the regular party meetings to those encountered in Hungary at that time. This holds for the base-cell meetings; according to a report of 1976 the attendance of the meetings of the party leadership of the factory was 84.9 per cent.<sup>178</sup> An East German report from 1968 lists further deficiencies with ideological training that underlines the similarities with Hungary: ‘With respect to most of the party commissions, the candidates don’t have to report on their fulfilment of tasks. In this way the candidate is not trained to actively participate in the execution of the decisions of the party, but he only learns that he does not need to take seriously responsibility and discipline in the party.’ Furthermore, the report stated that the large factories did not have a concrete picture of the Marxist–Leninist education of candidates, and they enrolled candidates who lacked basic training. In some places managers prevented candidates from attending courses, and they lacked support from the party organizations. According to a report, low attendance of local courses was at a ‘frightening’ level: out of the 207 invited candidates less than half turned up, 92 attended a course in Pößneck (only 20 out of the invited 160 came from Lobeda, and 8 out of the invited 40 from the town of Jena).<sup>179</sup> In 1977, the Zeiss factory reported that 31.2 per cent of the membership visited a party school for more than three months and the proportion was even higher (43.5 per cent) among the *Fachschul*kader, and the college or university graduates.<sup>180</sup> This, at any rate, shows that ideological training was taken more seriously in Honecker’s GDR than in Kádár’s Hungary at the time.

Even though there is little information on the forms and methods of political education in the surviving documents, a 1974 report showed that the distribution of Marxist–Leninist literature was also taken more seriously in the GDR than in Hungary. In the district there were 594 shop assistants who dealt with its distribution, and 146 of them (24 per cent) worked in the industrial plants themselves. This did not mean that political literature reached every factory evenly: booksellers could only supply 85 plants, out of a total of 250, with political literature, and the government, as the report critically commented, was reluctant to increase the number of booksellers. Out of the district’s 577 municipalities only 50 were served. The base organizations also contracted the shops to facilitate the distribution of political literature. There is no further information about the type of literature that was supported in this way, but

there is some evidence that the contracts mainly helped the distribution of propaganda materials<sup>181</sup> since the report mentioned that in the first half of 1974 there were 2,165 copies of the publication entitled *Methodik der politischen Bildung* (The Methodology of Political Education) sold in the factories.<sup>182</sup>

Although the ‘liberalism’ of the Zeiss party organization was criticized by the district leadership, in the light of the albeit fragmentary information about party life, not only was this liberalism very limited as compared to the situation in Hungary, but deviation from the party line was much more strictly punished in the GDR. There were people who objected to the formality of elections by refusing to vote. For this reason, there were campaigns organized before the elections to mobilize people: in 1971, for instance, turnout was 25–30 per cent in the elections, while it increased to 52 per cent in 1974.<sup>183</sup> Criticism of the elections was regarded as ‘ideological deviation’: in 1977, it was reported that ‘young comrades’ from Zeiss and the town of Gera complained that the candidates on the ballot paper had all been selected before the elections.<sup>184</sup> The party reports mention another case that shows that criticism in this respect had serious consequences: Comrade F, who was a designer in the research centre of VEB Carl Zeiss and a member of the party, was removed from his position as chairperson of the National Front<sup>185</sup> in the electoral district of Winzerla because in the working group that prepared the elections, he:

constantly objected to the resolutions and tasks of the group so that the city councillor of internal affairs, Comrade K, always had to warn him of the leading role of the party. When the working group was informed that the proposals for the electoral committees would be changed, he declared that he would not accept commands and that he would not assist in any show – ‘we want here democratic elections and not a circus’. *When he went as far as to protest against the top candidates who were selected in a public meeting of the nominations committee, he was relieved of his position because he declared that he would not work as a chairperson from 31 March 1979.*<sup>186</sup>

During the interview with Comrade F, he gave back his membership card, declaring that he would resign his membership. This was not accepted and he was informed that he would be disciplined. Comrade F declared that he ‘would no longer participate in any discussion and for him the matter is settled’.<sup>187</sup> The case confirms that the party preferred to exclude those who threatened to resign their membership. It is likewise remarkable that even in this case, when Comrade F publicly criticized the candidates of the party, it was emphasized that he was relieved of his post upon his request – not because he would have been, nor indeed was, removed

anyway. This shows that officials themselves did not want to recognize explicitly the degree to which repression was used to maintain the rule of the party. Comrade F undoubtedly showed considerable courage when he refused to play his part in this ‘show’; but this ideological climate also explains why there were so few openly discontented grass-roots members in the GDR, compared to Kádár’s Hungary.

Another field where the members of the party in the Zeiss factory were too lenient with the ‘class enemy’ was in work with the *Antragsteller*.<sup>188</sup> In 1984 an inquiry was conducted in the instrument plant (which at the time had five thousand employees) because twenty-five of them applied for permission to leave the GDR. The purpose of the inquiry was to supervise targeted political work to convince these people to withdraw their applications to leave the GDR. The inquiry concluded that political work in this respect was ‘totally inadequate’ and that many employees were reluctant to contradict the *Antragsteller* because they supported the view that the state should let them leave if they wished. Others even argued that there would be fewer *Antragsteller* if the supply of consumer goods were better. In many places the colleagues refused to enter into political debate with the *Antragsteller*, because they were good workers:

The colleagues direct the discussions to the liberal position that ‘we would not have expected this from this person’ instead of evaluating their actions as a betrayal of our state and siding with the class enemy ... It is not easy to contradict the *Antragsteller*, because the majority of them do not have a provocative attitude. Among many, there is almost human sympathy for them, because as Comrade E said, our people are too liberal in small communities. A section of the comrades believe that the existing problems of the supply of consumer goods hinder our policy.<sup>189</sup>

There were concrete examples mentioned of how far political work was neglected in this respect: one *Antragsteller*, for instance, argued that even were he to withdraw his application, he would always be discriminated against in the GDR – his colleagues should have explained to him that this was not true – while another *Antragsteller* was asked to undertake extra shifts, even though she wanted to participate in the movement ‘*Mach mit!*’ during that time. Her colleagues failed to argue that she was interested in the social life of the GDR.<sup>190</sup> An inquiry in the milling shop found that the channels for exchanging information worked unevenly: it took four days for the manager to be told that an employee who was transferred to his plant ‘because of security reasons’ was actually an *Antragsteller*. When asked, the manager and the party secretary did not know in which brigade he worked. There was an ‘offensive’ discussion



with the party group of the mill shop but the report suggests that the attitude to the *Antragsteller* was rather liberal, because one comrade declared during the interview that there would be less *Antragsteller* if there was a better supply of goods, and he himself had to walk his legs off until he could buy the parts for his car.<sup>191</sup>

The political attitudes of many grass-roots members did not differ much from those who were outside the party, and if they had been allowed, they would have criticized economic policy in similar terms to the Hungarian grass-roots membership. Many East German workers who were members of the party also expressed their discontent with the supply of consumer goods and their human sympathy for the stigmatized ‘class enemy’, if only in a very restrained manner. Conflict between the managers and workers frequently manifested itself as one between the party leaders and the grass-roots members. On the basis of the minute books of the 1969 inquiry in the instrument plant, many grass-roots members thought that workers’ opinions did not matter much in party meetings and that leaders enforced their will anyway. A similar conflict can be documented in the model building workshop in 1971, which was examined by the IKPKK. According to one member of the leadership of the base organization to which the party group of the workshop belonged, the main problem was that there were two camps within the party group: ‘the two direct production managers have a common opinion and the comrades who work on the machines have a different view. The main reason is that the organizer of the party group and the manager of the workshop is the same person.’ According to this information, base-cell meetings were irregular, grass-roots members did not know the topics of discussion beforehand, and nobody did anything on their own initiative. In the meetings the leaders presented the lists of annual premiums and their evaluation of socialist labour competition, which could be discussed, but could not be changed. On the concrete question of whether the tasks given by the party leadership of the base organization represented the party line, the speaker – not surprisingly – gave a positive answer, but he added that ‘*the colleagues and the comrades do not agree with the way these tasks are communicated or the methods used to implement the party line*’.<sup>192</sup> An interview with a young worker confirmed this view. He commented that even though the workers often contradicted the direct production managers, their opinions did not count. He also had a conflict with one of the direct production managers over a proposal of improvement that he made to the manager of the plant, but since his wage depended on the direct production manager, he would be afraid to criticize him in the future.<sup>193</sup>

Even these fragmentary sources show that grass-roots party life was often highly formalized, just as in Hungary, and that it is at best doubtful

how far the party could train committed communists, let alone politically educate the masses. Taking into account the frequently voiced criticism that there would be fewer people who would want to leave the GDR if the supply of goods were better, it seems that the propaganda of the party was less effective in the 1980s like in Hungary even if people in the GDR were more careful not to criticize the policy of the party openly. On the basis of the documents it would be difficult to reconstruct the atmosphere of party meetings; it can be assumed, however, that people also formulated criticism at least in the base-cell meetings, but in the light of likely retaliation it is unlikely that they would have openly discussed their discontent with the socialist state.

### *Losing Members*

There are no overall figures for the Zeiss factory for the numbers excluded from the party, or who were struck off. The discussion, however, of disciplinary procedures suggests that the party sought to keep its loss of members to a minimum. One exception was conflict over the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, when disciplinary action was taken against 139 members district-wide who opposed the official line; this figure included 32 managers.<sup>194</sup> The report introduced two cases that show that the party did indeed ‘fight’ for members, where the individuals concerned were good workers, yet, on the other hand, many grass-roots members lacked ideological commitment to the party, just like in Hungary. One worker in VEB Carl Zeiss Jena, Comrade Z,

despite his 20-year-long membership, does not have close contacts with our party. He wanted to resign his membership because he could not reconcile his religious faith with Marxism. Since he is a very good worker – he is one of the best innovators in his workshop – he was persuaded to withdraw his resignation. Only after he made unclear statements concerning the events in Czechoslovakia was he eventually struck off.

Another case was that of an electrical engineer who claimed that

he was forced to join the party in the army. He has totally fake ideas about the party and he makes ideologically unclear statements, for instance, that ‘our media has not informed people truthfully’ and therefore he listened to the Western media. Concerning the Czechoslovakian events he therefore did not accept our measures.<sup>195</sup>

The year 1968 was clearly important politically, for the Zeiss factory party organization compiled a report on the political education of its mem-

bership, and the 'deviations from the official line' that emerged in relation to events in Czechoslovakia. The report did not give statistics, but it introduced individual cases. A foundry worker was expelled from the party because he compared the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia to Hitler's occupation of the country, and he said that the Czechoslovak comrades at the Moscow conference only obeyed commands. The following case sheds some light on the 'everyday' methods of repression and the degree of political control over society: it was reported that a 55-year-old woman worker protested against the military support that the socialist countries gave to the Soviet Union in a workers' bus, and her comrades that were riding the bus informed her base organization. In another case a brigadier and another comrade visited a Czech family before the intervention, where the husband, who had just been released from prison, told them that 'at last we have socialism and real freedom', and therefore they refused to sign a form indicating their agreement with the Soviet Union's 'friendly help'. These workers were, however, eventually persuaded of their mistake. One candidate-member who worked in the tool factory and was promoted to study engineering had, however, to be expelled because he declared that he would like to keep his personal freedom and he could not subordinate himself to party discipline. This candidate-member had already made critical comments concerning the Exquisit shops.<sup>196</sup>

The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia opened conditions in the GDR to criticism, too. According to an analysis of the 'hostile manifestations' concerning the Czechoslovak events, people made formal comparisons of prices and wages between East and West Germany; they argued that the East German media was either not objective, or lied utterly; and, from this, they concluded that there was limited freedom of speech and of the press in the GDR, and that those who made 'hostile' statements in public or tried to 'heckle' the others usually watched or listened to Western television or radio.<sup>197</sup> Attacks on the state order were criminally punishable; but these cases show that even members of the party, who were excluded in 1968, criticized the limited freedom of the press and the lack of democracy within the party.

An analysis of the 'hostile manifestations' among district party members between 1973 and 1976 likewise shows that the relationship to West Germany was at the centre of political education. One party member was, for instance, excluded because he argued that the 'borders are not necessary because there are also Germans living there, they speak the same language and we are the same nation. The wall in Berlin should be removed.' The report regretfully commented that the comrade concerned was a likeable man. Another member was relieved of his post as party

secretary because he was a philatelist and he refused to break his contacts with Western people who had the same hobby.<sup>198</sup> The report commented that because of this refusal his request to study in the Soviet Union could be reconsidered. A woman worker who was a party member continued a ‘hostile discussion’ in public with a candidate because her husband had been sentenced for *Republikflucht*,<sup>199</sup> and she compared the penal authorities of the GDR to the fascist concentration camps. An old comrade who joined the party in 1930 was excluded because he ‘praised above all the conditions in West Germany, he defended the social democratic position and he said that he always felt like a “little follower”. His organization formerly tolerated these comments because he was an old comrade.’<sup>200</sup>

A report from the Zeiss factory likewise shows that the party tolerated much less open criticism in the GDR than in Hungary. In 1977, six people wanted to resign their membership in the micro plant after only a short period in the party. The investigation revealed that the people concerned spoke out against party policy in party meetings, but the party leadership was too liberal and demanded no explanation. The report also mentioned the case of a skilled worker who had commented that

the theory of Marxism–Leninism is good but the practice of the party and the government is not in line with the theory. The high functionaries have been detached from the people and in the GDR there are differences between the classes – look at the Intershop, Exquisit and Delikat shops. People are not correctly informed about the economic situation, and those who tell the truth are silenced. Even Marx and Engels would turn in their graves if they had seen our policy.

The skilled worker made these comments in a party meeting and ‘some comrades nodded because he referred to existing holes in the supply of goods. He had authority in his party group, because he had been a member of the party since 1945, and he had held leading party functions until 1960.’ Despite his merits, the skilled worker was expelled from the party.<sup>201</sup>

Criticism of the party was frequently linked to resignations from the party. One member of the IKPO of the Zeiss factory, who was, allegedly, the first to be ‘openly opportunist’, resigned his membership arguing that the party disappointed the masses. During the interview it turned out that ‘in his view the party should be separated from the economy and that it should be more open and democratic like the Western parties’. The ‘opportunist’ member was not given the opportunity to resign, but was simply expelled.<sup>202</sup> In 1980 in the Göschwitz plant, two people submitted resignation letters: a direct production manager declared that he was not happy to represent party policy, and a worker in the tool fac-

tory announced that he was ashamed to be a party member and could not support the party line.<sup>203</sup>

This shows that the party took political criticism much more seriously in the GDR than in Hungary, and that criticism of the party among the grass-roots membership was punished more severely. One party member was disciplined because his son was brought to trial because of truculence. This suggests that the organization was also expected to control the lives of the individuals to a higher degree than in Hungary. In court it was revealed that Comrade S had allowed his son to watch Western television programmes, and

as father he started to explain this position with the words: ‘Comrade Honecker explained his attitude to watching Western TV in detail at the Ninth Party Congress ...’ The public prosecutor interrupted him because he could not let anybody distort the party line in this way. Comrade S and his party group did not recognize that there is no coexistence in the ideological field. Instead of confronting Comrade S with his mistake, his party group felt sorry for him because of the troubles that he has with his son and they wanted to see the ‘human’ side of the problem only. This means that in their view, when it comes to a fight against the bourgeois ideology and its manifestations in our country, ‘humanity’ precedes party discipline and the political education of members. The party group took this approach because they didn’t understand the role of criticism and self-criticism in our development, and they lack confidence in our party and state organs. Therefore they refused to take disciplinary action against Comrade S. As they did not understand the information that they received and they doubted the facts, they let Comrade S influence them negatively against the public prosecutor. The views and attitude of the members of the group display the influence of social democracy ... We see the main reasons of this liberal attitude of the party group in the following. There was no strong political leadership in the group, therefore they could not correctly evaluate the political–ideological conditions. Community life was mixed with companionship, and therefore political education was neglected in the group.

After the discussion with the members of the IKPKK, the party group ‘recognized’ its mistake: the organizer of the group received a reprimand and Comrade S a strong reprimand.<sup>204</sup>

The role of the IKPKK was, however, not only to punish people, but also to demonstrate that members could expect due process from the party. In one case, for instance, the IKPKK conducted an inquiry concerning the case of a trainee who was an FDJ secretary and a candidate-member. After he had problems in his dormitory, he gave notice in the factory and his candidacy was terminated. The inquiry found that the case had the following antecedents: there was a meeting in the dormitory

where the FDJ secretary criticized the relationship between the trainees and the teachers, and demanded that trainees should be treated differently. This created a difficult situation for the candidate-member in the dormitory, which finally led him to give notice in his workplace; but as the inquiry stated ‘his exclusion from the party was wrong because only the facts and not the reasons for his behaviour were taken into consideration. He tried to solve his problems alone because he lost his trust in the collective.’ It was therefore decided that the trainee should be readmitted as a candidate-member.<sup>205</sup> There was also an investigation of the living conditions of trainees, which concluded that many of them, mainly those who came from the northern territories, were disappointed, because they thought that the factory consciously deceived the trainees with their advertisements:

Many trainees see that young skilled workers who lived in dormitories come to the AWU where the discipline is too strict; for example, a colleague who lives in the AWU cannot have his own radio, neither can he hang a picture on the wall of his room,<sup>206</sup> that is to say that young people feel like they are in prison and they want to have their own home, or at least a small room that they can call their own. Therefore we should examine whether the regulations in the AWU are right in the long run, and perhaps it would be better to build more apartments.<sup>207</sup>

It seems that the case of the FDJ secretary shed light on more general problems concerning the training and future perspectives of young skilled workers.<sup>208</sup>

The IKPKK could mitigate punishment, but on the other hand it also reveals that offences against party discipline could very easily end the political careers of party members. In 1978 a political ‘case’ was created after a satirical carnival newspaper was published by a department of the research centre that received the title of the ‘collective of socialist work’. The publication included ‘provocative’ articles like one bearing the title ‘Conversation in the Pub’, which ‘highly distorts the work of the academic-technical personnel of the VEB Carl Zeiss Jena and practically describes them as idlers’, while from the Zeiss-Alphabet one could learn that ‘B = brothel, the last institution that Zeiss still misses; C = chattering, the main content of the meetings of the leadership; S = stupidity, the precondition of employment in our enterprise; S as *Scheinwerfer*<sup>209</sup> = too thin for reading, too thick for toilet paper.’ The leader of the research centre immediately recommended that the main editor of the publication, Comrade J, who was a physicist, should be expelled from the party and dismissed from his job. The IKPKK chairperson, however, took the

side of the physicist: he ‘got off’ with a strong reprimand and was transferred to model building where ‘he should prove himself worthy of the confidence of the party because he violated political watchfulness at a time when the class enemy increased its activity in the field of ideology’. The report stressed that it was the IKPKK chairperson who intervened on behalf of the physicist and apart from him two colleagues who were graduates, one of them was a group leader, were also transferred because of their involvement in the case of the carnival publication.<sup>210</sup> This gives one example of how the system created ‘enemies’ and it also reveals why it would have been naive to expect that discontent at the grass roots would be expressed in public forums.

### *The End of Silence*

The rigid ideological discipline of the party was maintained until the very end. Thus, in sharp contrast to the Hungarian case where it was possible to trace the mounting discontent of the population in the information reports, in the GDR the party succeeded in suppressing criticism with repression. This, however, also meant that the party itself had no adequate information on the political mood of the grass-roots membership.<sup>211</sup> Even party reports from 1989 are silent on the evident discontent of the population – in the beginning of 1989 the factory party organization proved its political watchfulness by informing the responsible comrades that on the day of Soviet cinema, five films were presented that, according to the audience, did not depict the Soviet Union in a positive light; ‘on the contrary, it seems that the state has violated the law, and anti-Semitism and alcoholism have become predominant in society. Therefore we ask the responsible comrades not to present films like these in the future.’<sup>212</sup> Political vigilance worked efficiently until the last months of the regime: in October 1989 the chief manager of Zeiss reported of a handwritten leaflet to Minister Meier that was found on the staircase of one of the plants: ‘The day before yesterday Poland, today Czechoslovakia, tomorrow Hungary? How far does the opportunism of East German citizens extend?’<sup>213</sup> The brigade named after Salvador Allende held out – at least according to the testimony of the diary of the brigade:

In spite of the ‘mass flight’ experienced in the last days and the massive increase in the number of those who want to leave the GDR, we cannot let our country be defamed. We are whole-heartedly determined to protest against such attempts. Everybody needs to recognize that without the GDR there would have been no peace or peaceful coexistence of nations in Europe for forty-five years. We, the citizens of the GDR, can only be proud of it.<sup>214</sup>

Some signs of crisis could, however, be detected in the information reports in summer 1989. In July, 'events such as the elections in Poland and Hungary, and the strikes and violent conflicts in the Soviet Union, are evaluated as the weakening of the socialist system.' Further, many party groups represented the opinion that the results of the GDR were too optimistically evaluated by the leadership, and the daily selection of the shops contradicted this evaluation. The report added – for the first time – that party members wanted to resign.<sup>215</sup> According to an autumn report, 20 members of the IKPO of Zeiss resigned their membership in September, and 18 in October. A further 321 people announced their intention to leave the party in November. These figures are still very low compared to the Hungarian 'mass flight' from the party, but they did indicate a weakening of the regime. The October report also admitted that 'there are often not enough arguments to satisfy the employees or to show them the right solutions to the problems that they describe – for instance, the increases in prices (technical articles), long waiting times for repairs and services, missing spare parts for cars, long waiting times in health care.'<sup>216</sup> A report of 23 October 1989 informed of a 'public letter' that hung on the noticeboard of various departments in the Zeiss factory that attacked the leading role of the SED, called for the dissolution of party cells in the factory, and the separation of the party from the economy. It also demanded 'bourgeois democracy, a socialist market economy, free elections, and the right to strike and to demonstrate'. According to the report, the factory party leadership immediately took the initiative to 'clarify the letter in discussions with the involved collectives'.<sup>217</sup> It seemed that such an approach survived until the last days of the regime.

The 'transition' was so quick that a few months later an official letter informed employees that a warrant had been issued for the arrest of the feared chief manager, who was charged with fraud. According to the letter, the whereabouts of the manager were unknown; he allegedly escaped to Munich.<sup>218</sup> It is worth recalling his last speech in front of the district party leadership on 2 November 1989:

As I see it in Jena, finally a 'hard core' was left from the fifteen thousand demonstrators, who were drunk and shouted slogans like 'Every communist pig to the wall!' and the usual insults concerning our state, and security organs and many other things, after which I cannot believe that they would demonstrate for this country, for socialism and for the republic. And personally, I would like to add that we should try to win over the positive forces who, as Comrade Krenz said, accept the constitution of the GDR, socialist state power and who are ready to make socialism better. But we cannot allow irresponsible elements to question everything that has happened here, that we have done for this country in the past forty years, without any consequences.<sup>219</sup>



The speech of the chief manager well illustrated how deeply the East German party functionaries were indoctrinated by their own propaganda and how far they distanced themselves from the ‘masses’. Many East German workers claimed that they had participated at the demonstrations and they were proud of it, without making any reference to insulting slogans such as ‘Every communist pig to the wall!’ Some said that they demonstrated for a better socialism, and they thought that West Germany would take over some of the socialist achievements which they were proud of (working women, state institutions of childcare, education and polyclinics). However, none of them said that they regretted that the *Wende* came, and the overwhelming majority declared themselves to be happy with the German unification.

The surviving East German sources of grass-roots party life essentially demonstrate a lack of any dialogue between the workers and the party. Even though the party did indeed attempt to provide material and social security for the workers, not only were they effectively excluded from control over the means of production, but they could not even express their opinions of party policy towards the working class. While Hungarian sources rendered visible the mounting social and political discontent among the population in the 1980s, silence in the GDR was essentially broken by the mass flight of the population that revealed a regime that was not popular even among those in whose name it exercised power. It remains a question of how far the East German economic reform – had it continued – could have triggered a process of liberalization, but it is certain that under Honecker this process was effectively blocked. The result of the long process of the workers’ alienation from the system was that in 1989 the regime could no longer address the working class because the workers themselves did not accept the party as a conversation partner.

## Notes

1. For a study of the party control over the factories see: T. Reichel. 2001. ‘Die “durchherrschte Arbeitsgesellschaft”: Zu den Herrschaftsstrukturen und Machtverhältnissen in DDR-Betrieben’, in: Hürtgen, *Der Schein der Stabilität*.
2. Information from the colleagues of the Rudolstadt archive.
3. On East German society, see in particular Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*; Maier, *Dissolution*; Lindenberger, *Herrschaft und Eigensinn*; Hürtgen, *Der Schein der Stabilität*.
4. Industriekreis-Parteikontrollkommission (control committee of the party organization of the factory).
5. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV D-4/13/85, IKPKK Informationsberichte, 17.2.1978.
6. Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany – the ruling party of the GDR).
7. GYML, X. 415/186/4, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. Tájékoztató az 1986. évi tagfelvételekről és a pártból való kikerülésekről.

8. GYML, X. 415/32/10, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A párt tömegbefolyása, szervezetsége, a pártépítő munka tapasztalatai a munkások körében, 1982. február 9.
9. GYML, X. 415/36/1, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A pártonkívüliekkel folytatott beszélgetések tapasztalatai, javaslat a további feladatokra, 1983. április 5.
10. László Tóth, op. cit., 70.
11. A párt tömegbefolyása, szervezetsége, a pártépítő munka tapasztalatai a munkások körében, op. cit.
12. GYML, X. 415/48/2, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. Jelentés a tagkönyvcseré munkálataival kapcsolatos számszerű adatokról, 1976, július 6. Of those whose membership terminated, 70 per cent were blue-collar workers, 28 per cent referred to family reasons (religion), 20 per cent could not participate in party life and 22 per cent referred to old age and sickness. In 1985, of those whose membership terminated, 70 per cent were blue-collar workers. The main reason for the withdrawal was their refusal to fulfil their party duties (GYML, X. 415/194/5, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. Szóbeli tájékoztató az 1985. évi tagfelvételek alakulásáról, 1986. március 4).
13. The Tenth Congress of MSZMP was held on 23–28 November 1970.
14. Feljegyzés 'A párt tömegkapcsolata, a pártszervezetek és tömegszervezetek, tömegmozgalmak politikai vitája' című vita anyagáról, op. cit., 2.
15. GYML, X. 415/117/8, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Jelentés a 10. kongresszus óta felvett párttagok szociális összetételéről, valamint a pártból kikerültek összetételéről és okairól, 9, 1971. október 13.
16. GYML, X. 415/124/14, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Jelentés a Vagongyári Pártbizottság párttaggá nevelési munkájáról. 1972. március 30.
17. GYML, X. 415/4/31, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A Győr városi VB jelentése az üzemi pártbizottságok alapszervezeteket irányító tevékenységéről. 1975. november 26.
18. GYML, X. 415/132/54, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. Havi összefoglaló jelentések a kül- és belpolitikai eseményekről, a lakosság hangulatáról, 3. 1973. február.
19. GYML, X. 415/156/2/4, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Tájékoztató az 1984. I. félévi tagfelvételek összetételének alakulásáról. 1984. szeptember 4.
20. GYML, X. 415/37, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Jelentés az MSZMP Politikai Bizottsága 1983. jún. 21-i határozata alapján a tagfelvételi munkáról, a párt összetételének alakulásáról, a további feladatokról a megyében. 1983. október 4.
21. GYML, X. 415/37, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Jelentés a tagfelvételi munkáról. 1983. december 13. Stress is mine.
22. On the role of enterprise party organizations see e.g. J. Balogh. 1977. 'A vállalat gazdasági és politikai funkcióinak kapcsolata', *Társadalmi Szemle* 32(12); S. Borbély. 1976. 'A pártszervezetek gazdaságirányító és -ellenőrző munkájáról', *Társadalmi Szemle* 31(6).
23. A Győr városi VB jelentése az üzemi pártbizottságok alapszervezeteket irányító tevékenységéről, op. cit.
24. Ibid., melléklet.
25. GYML, X. 415/25/13, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Kimutatás a megye területén lévő nagyvállalatok párttagfelvételének alakulásáról 1975–1979 között. MVG győri telephelyén be- és kilépők száma. 1980. március 14.

26. A párt tömegbefolyása, szervezetsége, a pártépítő munka tapasztalatai a munkások körében, op. cit.
27. GYML, X. 415/532/2/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai, Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve. Tájékoztató az 1983. évi párttaggá nevelés, a párttag felvételek tapasztalatairól, 1984. február 2.
28. Tájékoztató az 1986. évi tagfelvételekről és a pártból való kikerülésekről, op. cit.
29. Stress is mine.
30. GYML, X. 415/224/4, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Szóbeli tájékoztató az 1987. évi tagfelvételek alakulásáról a Megyei Párt-végrehajtó Bizottság 1983. december 13-i határozata alapján, 1988. február 23.
31. Tájékoztató az 1986. évi tagfelvételekről és a pártból való kikerülésekről, op. cit.
32. Full female employment was strongly supported by the party as a means of female emancipation. Since the equal division of labour proved to be more difficult to realize within the family, in practice this often meant double work for the women in the workplace and in the 'second shift' of the household. From the contemporary literature see: Zs. Ferge. 1976. 'A nők a munkában és a családban', *Társadalmi Szemle* 31(6). For a study of working women in Hungary see: Fodor, *Working Difference*; Tóth, 'Puszi Kádár Jánosnak'.
33. A Győr városi VB jelentése az üzemi pártbizottságok alapszervezeteket irányító tevékenységéről, op. cit.
34. Tájékoztató a KB 1970. február 18-19-i, a nők politikai, gazdasági és szociális helyzete megjavítására hozott határozata végrehajtásának tapasztalatairól, op. cit., 2.
35. Ibid., 4–5.
36. Ibid., 7.
37. Comprehensive schools also gave a high school certificate.
38. Tájékoztató a KB 1970. február 18-19-i, a nők politikai, gazdasági és szociális helyzete megjavítására hozott határozata végrehajtásának tapasztalatairól, op. cit., 18.
39. Tájékoztató az 1983. évi párttaggá nevelés, a párttag felvételek tapasztalatairól, op. cit.
40. Szóbeli tájékoztató az 1987. évi tag alakulásáról a Megyei Párt-végrehajtó Bizottság 1983. december 13-i határozata alapján, op. cit.
41. Jegyzőkönyv a Motor Pártalapszervezet 1977. január 26.-i taggyűléséről, op. cit., 5–6.
42. The report states that the passive party members constitute 4–5 per cent of the total membership that belongs under the party committee of Győr town (104 base cells with a membership of 9,804 people).
43. A Győr városi Párt-végrehajtó Bizottság jelentése a pártszervezeti fegyelem, a kommunista munkamorál, magatartás, életmód helyzetéről, op. cit., 18–19.
44. Jelentés a 10. kongresszus óta felvett párttagok szociális összetételéről, valamint a pártból kikerültek összetételéről és okairól, op. cit.
45. A Győr városi Párt-végrehajtó Bizottság jelentése a pártszervezeti fegyelem, a kommunista munkamorál, magatartás, életmód helyzetéről, op. cit., 14–15.
46. A vidékről bejáró dolgozóink helyzete, op. cit., 5.
47. Jelentés a KISZ munkájáról, op. cit., 1.
48. A szocialista munkaverseny és a brigádmunka fejlesztésének feladatai vállalatunknál, op. cit., 5.
49. A Győr városi VB jelentése az üzemi pártbizottságok alapszervezeteket irányító tevékenységéről, op. cit.
50. Ibid.
51. Information from the interviews with the workers of the factory.
52. GYML, X. 415/195/1, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Jelentés a tömegszervezetek pártirányításáról a Vagon gyáregység és az Irodák III pártalapszervezeteknél, 1977. május.

53. GYML, X. 415/187/2, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák, 1986. április.
54. GYML, X. 415/161/2/4, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A pártból kikerülés elemzése és az abból adódó feladatok. 1985. június 28.
55. Szóbeli tájékoztató az 1987. évi tagfelvételek alakulásáról a Megyei Párt-végrehajtó Bizottság 1983. december 13-i határozata alapján, op. cit.
56. A pártból kikerülés elemzése és az abból adódó feladatok, op. cit., 5.
57. GYML, X. 415/203/2/7, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve. A párttagok körében végzett politikai nevelőmunka és a párttagokkal való foglalkozás tapasztalatai, 5. 1980. november 28.
58. *Ibid.*, 6.
59. GYML, X. 415/203/2/5, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve. Az emberi kapcsolatok alakulásának tapasztalatai. Politikai feladatok a zavartalan munkahelyi légkör elősegítésére, 4. 1980. május 22.
60. Szóbeli tájékoztató az 1987. évi tagfelvételek alakulásáról a Megyei Párt-végrehajtó Bizottság 1983. december 13-i határozata alapján, op. cit.
61. The immigration of the leaders caused an even greater loss of prestige to the party. In Mosonmagyaróvár, for instance, the immigration of the party secretary of the base organization of the Water Works and his wife, who was also a member of the party, was discussed also in the party organization of Rába MMG. GYML, X. 415/529/1/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. A Mosonmagyaróvári Mezőgazdasági Gépgyár (MMG) pártbizottsági ülésének jegyzőkönyve. A párttaggá nevelés és a pártépítő munka tapasztalatai a Rába MMG-ben. 1984. május 3.
62. A Győr városi Párt-végrehajtó Bizottság jelentése a pártszervezeti fegyelem, a kommunista munkamorál, magatartás, életmód helyzetéről, op. cit.
63. A párttagok körében végzett politikai nevelőmunka és a párttagokkal való foglalkozás tapasztalatai, op. cit.
64. Szóbeli tájékoztató az 1985. évi tagfelvételek alakulásáról, op. cit.
65. GYML, X. 415/237, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Tájékoztató az 1983-as pártfegyelmi eljárásokról. 1984. március 5.
66. Szóbeli tájékoztató az 1985. évi tagfelvételek alakulásáról, op. cit.
67. GYML, X. 415/195/1, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A tagkönyvcserevel kapcsolatos elbeszélések és taggyűlések tapasztalatai. 1977. január 26.
68. A párttaggá nevelés és a pártépítő munka tapasztalatai a Rába MMG-ben, op. cit.
69. GYML, X. 415/47/36, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. Dolgozók által tett bejelentések, panaszok, 1975.
70. *Ibid.* A woman, for instance, denounced her divorced husband (a party member) for making anti-party comments; the investigation, however, stated that she denounced him out of revenge.
71. A pártból kikerülés elemzése és az abból adódó feladatok, op. cit.
72. A párttagok körében végzett politikai nevelőmunka és a párttagokkal való foglalkozás tapasztalatai, op. cit.; GYML, X. 415/161/2/5, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A párttaggá nevelő munka tapasztalatai a munkások és az ifjúság körében a Politikai Bizottság 1983. június 21-i és a Megyei Párt-végrehajtó Bizottság 1983. december 13-i határozata alapján. 1985. október 16.
73. GYML, X. 415/122/6, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. Jelentés a párttagság körében végzett ideológiai nevelőmunkáról, 1-5. melléklet. 1972. augusztus 15.

74. GYML, X. 415/36, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve, napirendi anyagai. A pártönkívüliekkel folytatott beszélgetések tapasztalatai, javaslat a további feladatokra. 1983. április 5.
75. Stress is mine.
76. GYML, X. 415/537/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerszámgépgyár Pártalapszervezetétől, 1986. május.
77. GYML, X. 415/235, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák, Sopron, 1987. december.
78. There were also national surveys conducted on the subjective evaluation of the standard of living. See: Angelusz, *Munkásvélemények az életszínvonalról*; Angelusz, *A megfelelőnek tartott jövedelem*.
79. Információs jelentés a Vagon Fémipari Alapszervezettől, 1979. május, op. cit.
80. GYML, X. 415/199/28, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Kovács Pártalapszervezettől. 1979. szeptember.
81. GYML, X. 415/202/32, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés az Új Acélöntödéből, 1979. május.
82. GYML, X. 415/199/28, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Jegyzőkönyv a Kovács II. üzem MSZMP alapszervezetének taggyűléséről. 1978. február 22.
83. GYML, X. 415/199/12, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerszámgépgyár Pártalapszervezetétől, 1979. február.
84. This statement is supported by the findings of the oral history project of Szalai: *Beszélgetések a gazdasági reformról*.
85. GYML, X. 415/206/12, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerelde Pártalapszervezetétől, 1980. február.
86. Stress is in the original.
87. Információs jelentés a T. M. K. Pártalapszervezettől, 1979. május, op. cit.
88. GYML, X. 415/206/28, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés az Új Acélöntödéből, 1980. július.
89. GYML, X. 415/206/28, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés az Új Acélöntödéből, 1980. március.
90. GYML, X. 415/211/38, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés az Új Acélöntödéből, 1982. február.
91. GYML, X. 415/211/38, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés az Új Acélöntödéből, 1982. április.
92. GYML, X. 415/211/4, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Technológia Pártalapszervezetétől, 1982. február.
93. Ibid.
94. Jegyzőkönyv a Szerszámgépgyár Egység Pártalapszervezetének 1983. februári taggyűléséről, op. cit.
95. GYML, X. 415/212/15, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Kovács Pártalapszervezettől. 1982. november-december.
96. GYML, X. 415/528/2, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerszámgépgyár Pártalapszervezetétől, 1982. március.
97. GYML, X. 415/210/3, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve. Jelentés a párttagok körében végzett politikai nevelőmunkáról, 2. 1982. október 14.
98. GYML, X. 415/211/33, Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt (MSZMP) Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Végrehajtó Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Jármű II. Pártalapszervezettől, 1982. november.
99. Stress is in the original.
100. GYML, X. 415/212/5, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Motor Pártalapszervezettől. 1982. február.

101. Ibid.
102. GYML, X. 415/528/1, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Hátsóhid Alapszervezetétől, 1983. január.
103. Információs jelentés a Jármű II. Pártalapszervezetétől, 1982. november, op. cit.
104. A Vagongyár Pártbizottságának információs jelentése, 1985. október, op. cit.
105. GYML, X. 415/211/28, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Rendkívüli információs jelentés a Kovács Pártalapszervezettől, 1982. december.
106. GYML, X. 415/528/13, Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt (MSZMP) Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Végrehajtó Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerszámgépgyár Pártalapszervezetétől. 1983. április.
107. GYML, X. 415/528/1, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Hátsóhid Alapszervezetétől, 1983. augusztus.
108. GYML, X. 415/537/1, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Jármű Pártalapszervezetétől, 1985. november-december.
109. GYML, X. 415/211/39, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés az Energetikától. 1982. október.
110. GYML, X. 415/537/16, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Motor Pártalapszervezettől. 1986. október.
111. GYML, X. 415/536/11, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. A párttagok körében végzett politikai nevelőmunka feladatai. 1985. október.
112. GYML, X. 415/208/35, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Motor Pártalapszervezettől. 1981. november.
113. GYML, X. 415/211/33, Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt (MSZMP) Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Végrehajtó Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Jármű II. Pártalapszervezettől, 1982. szeptember.
114. GYML, X. 415/236/8, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a MVG KISZ szervezetétől. 1986. december.
115. GYML, X. 415/231/5, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák. 1987. január.
116. A párttagok körében végzett politikai nevelőmunka és a párttagokkal való foglalkozás tapasztalatai, op. cit., 5.
117. Ibid., 6.
118. A párttaggá nevelés és a pártépítő munka tapasztalatai a Rába MMG-ben, op. cit., 5.
119. Ibid., 5
120. Ibid., 6.
121. Jelentés a KISZ munkájáról, op. cit. In 1984, the workers said that a flat cost 10–15 times more than their annual income. GYML, X. 415/533/30, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Futómű Pártvezetőségétől, 1984. szeptember.
122. GYML, X. 415/529/14/3, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve. Jelentés a gyár ifjúsága társadalmi helyzetének javítására tett intézkedésekről. 1987. november 19.
123. Jelentés a KISZ munkájáról, op. cit.
124. Jelentés a gyár ifjúsága társadalmi helyzetének javítására tett intézkedésekről, op. cit.
125. A párttaggá nevelés és a pártépítő munka tapasztalatai a Rába MMG-ben, op. cit.
126. GYML, X. 415/234, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák. 1986. december.
127. GYML, X. 415/529/2/3, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. A Mosonmagyaróvári Mezőgazdasági Gépgyár (MMG) pártbizottsági ülésének jegyzőkönyve. Az ideológiai munka és az agit. prop. feladatai, 2. 1985. július 16.
128. GYML, X. 415/232/4, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák. 1986. november.

129. GYML, X. 415/538/1, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Motor Pártalapszervezettől. 1987. április.
130. GYML, X. 415/538/3, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Szerszámgépgyár Pártalapszervezettől. 1987. szeptember.
131. GYML, X. 415/538/6, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. Információs jelentés a Futómű Pártvezetőségétől. 1987. május.
132. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák, Sopron, 1987. december, op. cit.
133. Szóbeli tájékoztató az 1987. évi tagfelvételek alakulásáról a Megyei Párt-végrehajtó Bizottság 1983. december 13-i határozata alapján, op. cit.
134. Ibid.
135. GYML, X. 415/220/4, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A párttagkönyvcserevel kapcsolatos elbeszélgetések tapasztalatai. 1988. március 28.
136. GYML, X. 415/238, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. Párttagság összetétele 1988. decemberi állapot szerint.
137. GYML, X. 415/238, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. Háromnegyedévi összesítők 1989.
138. GYML, X. 415/234/3, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága. Apparátus iratai. A lakossági közhangulatot jellemző főbb tendenciák. 1988. szeptember.
139. Ibid.
140. GYML, X. 415/526/3/1, MSZMP Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyári Bizottságának anyagai. A politikai nevelőmunka tapasztalatai, az agitáció, propaganda és tájékoztatás fejlesztésének feladatai. 1988. február 2.
141. GyML, X. 415/526/4/3, AZ MVG Pártbizottságának iratai. Pártbizottsági ülés jegyzőkönyve. Állásfoglalás az MSZMP KB 1989. február 10-11-i, 'A politikai rendszer reformjának néhány időszerű kérdéséről szóló állásfoglalás' tervezetéről, 3. 1988. március 2.
142. Ibid., 13.
143. Ibid., 3.
144. GyML, X. 415/226/1, MSZMP Győr-Sopron Megyei Bizottsága iratai. Megyei Pártértekezlet anyaga, 6-7. 1989. június 10. Rába MVG Kongresszusi terem. The conference was held in the Congress Hall of the factory.
145. 'Beszélgetés Horváth Edével, a Rába MVG vezérigazgatójával', op. cit.
146. 'Visszahívna a kapitalistákat?', *Tér-kép*, 1989. június 1.
147. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV B-4/13/96, Statistik.
148. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV E-2/3/49, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, Wie ist es der IKL des Veb Carl Zeiss Jena gelungen, in den Arbeitskollektiven und besonders in den Jugendbrigaden der Produktionsbetriebe und der produktionsvorbereitenden Bereiche einen aktiven Kern von Kommunisten herauszubilden, den Parteinfluß auf die Entwicklung vom Wissenschaft und Technik zu stärken und erfolgreich den Kampf um Spitzenleistungen zu führen? 23 September 1982.
149. Abteilungsparteiorganisation.
150. IKPO: Industriekreisparteiorganisation (the party organization of the factory). The source of data is Statistik, op. cit.
151. Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, 23 September 1982, op. cit.
152. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. A. 9258, Informationsbericht, Jena, 8 Juli 1988.
153. Statistik, op. cit.
154. Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, 23 September 1982, op. cit.
155. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-E/2/3/97, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, Standpunkt der IKL der SED des VEB Carl Zeiss Jena zu den Ergebnissen und Erfahrungen der Parteiarbeit bei der Befähigung und Erziehung der Kommunisten zur Meisterung der Aufgaben in ihrer Einheit vom Wort um Tat, 13 September 1984.

156. Informationsbericht, Jena, 8 Juli 1988, op. cit.
157. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. A. 9970, Sitzung der Bezirksleitung, 11 Februar 1987.
158. Statistik, op. cit.
159. Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, 23 September 1982, op. cit.; Sitzung der Bezirksleitung, 11 Februar 1987, op. cit.
160. Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, 23 September 1982.
161. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. A. 9938/2, Informationsberichte, Carl Zeiss Jena, 26 Juli 1989.
162. According to some interview partners, those who announced this intention were either agitated to stay in the party or they were excluded from the organization.
163. Statistik, op. cit.
164. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-D/2/5/300, Information über die Entwicklung der Mitgliederbewegung, 10 Mai 1977.
165. Jelentés a 10. kongresszus óta felvett párttagok szociális összetételéről, valamint a pártból kikérültek összetételéről és okairól, op. cit.
166. Stress is mine.
167. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-B/2/4/290, Bezirksparteikontrollkommission, Gewinnung von Kandidaten, 12 November 1968.
168. *Gleichberechtigt. Die Entwicklung der Frauen und Mädchen im VEB Carl Zeiss Jena*, op. cit. 4.
169. Statistik, op. cit.
170. *A Győr városi VB jelentése az üzemi pártbizottságok alapszervezeteket irányító tevékenységéről.*
171. The proportion of women among the party members also varied among the individual plants. According to a report of 1977, even though the optical plant had a high proportion of female workforce, only 11.3 per cent of the women were members of the party. Information über die Entwicklung der Mitgliederbewegung, op. cit.
172. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-D/2/17/508, Analyse der gegenwärtigen Ergebnisse bei der Entwicklung und den Einsatz von Genossinnen in Parteifunktionen.
173. Ibid.
174. Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth).
175. Analyse der gegenwärtigen Ergebnisse bei der Entwicklung und den Einsatz von Genossinnen in Parteifunktionen, op. cit.
176. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-C/2/3/720, Informationsberichte, Carl Zeiss Jena, 10 August 1973.
177. Analyse der gegenwärtigen Ergebnisse bei der Entwicklung und den Einsatz von Genossinnen in Parteifunktionen, op. cit.
178. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-C/2/5/337, Information über einige Probleme der Parteiarbeit, 24 März 1976.
179. Gewinnung von Kandidaten, 12 November 1968, op. cit.
180. Information über die Entwicklung der Mitgliederbewegung, 10 Mai 1977, op. cit.
181. On the basis of party literature that some interview partners gave me as a present, it is, however, unlikely that these publications were widely read in the factories.
182. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-C/2/3/162, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, Ergebnisse bei der Propagierung und den Vertrieb marxistisch-leninistischer Literatur und der Entwicklung des gesellschaftlichen Literaturvertriebes in Bezirk Gera, 29 August 1974.
183. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-C/2/3/152, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, Einschätzung der Ergebnisse der Wahlbewegung, 30 Mai 1974.
184. Zur inhaltlichen Fragen der politisch-ideologischen Arbeit die gegenwärtig besonders im Mittelpunkt der Diskussion der Bevölkerung stehen, op. cit.



185. *Nationale Front* was the popular front of the political parties and mass organizations in the GDR. Formally, the GDR was a multi-party system, but in practice the elections and the selection of the candidates were controlled by the SED.
186. Stress is mine.
187. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-D/4/13/85, IKPKK, Informationsberichte, 16 April 1979.
188. People who officially asked for a permanent permit to leave the GDR (this involved the loss of GDR citizenship).
189. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-E/2/4/255, Bericht über die Untersuchung der BPKK (Bezirksparteikontrollkommission) und der IKPKK Carl Zeiss Jena in den GO (Grundorganisation) des Betriebes Wissenschaftlichen Gerätebau des VEB Carl Zeiss Jena (G-Betrieb) zur Wirksamkeit der politisch-ideologischen Arbeit bei der Zurückdrängung der rechtswidrigen Anträge auf Übersiedlung in das nichtsozialistische Ausland, 24 April 1984.
190. According to the given statistics, 35 Zeiss employees applied for the permission to leave the GDR in 1980, 31 in 1981, 37 in 1982 and 120 in 1983. In 1980, 63 per cent of the *Antragsteller* were workers. Bericht über die Untersuchung der BPKK, op. cit.
191. Ibid, Niederschrift über die Aussprache mit Genossen J, Parteigruppenorganisator in der Fräselei im Beisein des APO-Sekretärs Genossen H am 04.04.1984.
192. Stress is mine.
193. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-B/4/13/83, Untersuchung in der APO/ZGss – Parteigruppe Modelltischlerei, 27 September 1971.
194. According to the report there were very few comrades among these 139 who had already made critical comments concerning the Hungarian ‘events’ of 1956 and the building of the ‘anti-fascist wall of defence’ of 1961.
195. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-B/2/4/290, Bezirksparteikontrollkommission, Einschätzung über die im Bezirk aufgetretene Erscheinungen und Auseinandersetzungen mit Genossen im Zusammenhang mit den Ereignissen in der CSSR, 12 November 1968.
196. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-B/2/4/297, Einschätzung zur parteierzieherischen Maßnahmen in den Grundorganisationen der IKPO des VEB Carl Zeiss Jena im Zusammenhang mit der Entwicklung in der CSSR und der sozialistischen Waffenhilfe am 21.8.1968. 8. Oktober 1968.
197. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-B/2/3/72, Protokoll der Sekretariatssitzung, Bericht zum Stand der Durchsetzung und Wirksamkeit der Rechtsprechung im Bezirk auf der Grundlage der neuen Gesetzeswerke zur sozialistischen Strafrecht insbesondere die sich daraus ergebenden politisch-ideologische Probleme, 5 Dezember 1968.
198. One interview partner told a similar story; he had the hobby of rearing carrier pigeons.
199. Attempt to leave the GDR illegally.
200. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-C/2/4/303, Feindliche Handlungen von Mitgliedern und Kandidaten der Partei (1973–1976).
201. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-D/2/4/242, Bezirksparteikontrollkommission, 4 Januar 1978.
202. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-D/4/13/85, IKPKK, Informationsberichte, 8 März 1979.
203. Ibid., 19 November 1980.
204. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-B/4/13/83, Bericht der IKPKK, 1 Oktober 1973.
205. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-B/4/13/80, Bericht der IKPKK, 19 September 1969.
206. See the complaints of young skilled workers concerning this type of accommodation in the section *From Hostels to Flats*.

207. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-B/4/13/80, Bericht der IKPKK, Argumente der Lehrlinge im Bereich des FB, 25 Januar 1970.
208. It seems that impertinence was also frequently counted among the 'hostile' manifestations because one teacher spoke of the 'negative political attitude' of a trainee who was rebuked for the bad quality of his work to which he replied 'now what are the other 20–30 per cent of the employees doing here?' ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. IV-C/2/1/5, Protokoll der Sitzung der Bezirksleitung der SED Gera, 4 Januar 1972.
209. The title of the newspaper of the factory.
210. IKPKK Informationsberichte, 17.2.1978, op. cit.
211. I base this statement on the party reports of the factory and the district; I have not studied Stasi files.
212. UACZ, VA Nr. 4447, Information über die Bearbeitung der Eingabe der Gewerkschaftsgruppe 'Dr. Richard Sorge' aus dem Betrieb Entwicklung wissenschaftlich-technischer Ausrüstungen, 5.1.1989.
213. UACZ, VA Nr. 4722, Fallmeldung, 4.10.1989.
214. UACZ, GB Nr. 1209, Brigadebuch, op. cit. 7 Oktober, 40. Jahrestag der Gründung unserer DDR.
215. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. A 9938/2, Informationsberichte, Carl Zeiss Jena, 26 Juli 1989.
216. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. A 9635, Informationsberichte, 19 Oktober 1989.
217. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. A 9807, Informationsberichte, 23 Oktober 1989.
218. UACZ, VA Nr. 4743, 13.2.1990.
219. ThStA, Rudolstadt, Bezirksparteiarchiv der SED Gera. Nr. A 9981, Sitzung der Bezirksleitung Gera von 02.11.1989.