

# INTRODUCTION

Walter Rädels should have chosen another table when he entered Hopfenstube restaurant on Berlin's Karl-Marx-Allee on the evening of July 5, 1972. At least one of the men at the table where he took a seat in the fully occupied dining area was already very drunk.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this customer felt that Rädels looked too young—he was twenty-eight years old—to be wearing a suit with a Party badge pinned to the lapel. At any rate he wouldn't stop badgering Rädels, calling him a "fish-head" (pejorative slang for a northern German) and saying he couldn't stand him. Finally he attacked him straight on, pointing to Rädels's Party badge and claiming that "this fellow earns his money in his sleep, that is to say for eavesdropping on others." Presumably he even had a tape recorder with him, the man continued. Rädels fired back—and overshot the mark. He whipped out his "ID card identifying him as an employee of the Central Committee of the SED," and explained that as a departmental head in the Central Committee he earned 2,500 marks a month. That was a lot of money, but "even this much was justified, since his work could never be compared, for example, with the work of the man he was talking to right now." As an employee of the Central Committee he had to "always be ready for action" and had a lot to do abroad, making clear to anyone listening that Rädels took his adversary for a production worker, whose job was less important. And as if that weren't enough, Rädels explained to the baffled group of men at the table that there were "surely many big earners [in the GDR] whose high incomes"—unlike in his case!—"weren't justified, e.g., physicians, artists, and others, who were in for a big surprise, because extensive measures would soon be taken to deal with them."<sup>2</sup>

It was Rädels's misfortune that after this altercation a friendly gentleman asked him where exactly he worked in the Central Committee apparatus. The man turned out to be from State Security, and so a report on Rädels's "behavior detrimental to the Party" (*parteischädigendes Verhalten*) and his "misunderstanding the Party's social policy" landed on the desk of Erich Mielke's first deputy, Bruno Beater, from which it was passed on to the Central Committee of the SED. It is easy to picture what happened next: self-criticism in the basic organization of his department<sup>3</sup> and "severe reprimand" as a disciplinary measure of the Party. And yet Rädels wasn't fired. He was able to bask in his knowledge of being part of the machinery of state power till the fall of 1989.

It is tempting to read this episode as yet another proof of the arrogance of the powerful in the GDR. Presumably this is precisely how a good many customers at Hopfenstube restaurant perceived the scene on that August evening of 1972. But another aspect is even more important. Rädcl, in this instance, did not conform to the roles ascribed by contemporaries and historians to the functionaries of a communist state party. He did not present himself as a “hard-bitten ideologue”<sup>4</sup>—none of the comments he reportedly made that evening made any reference to ideology. He did not turn out to be a “cold” and power-hungry “apparatchik,” nor “pig-faced” and “malicious” like the functionary portrayed in a key scene of Eugen Ruge’s successful novel *In Times of Fading Light*.<sup>5</sup> Rather, Rädcl allowed himself to be provoked and seemed almost helpless in his efforts to convince the other restaurant-goers of how important he was.

Rädcl—and this is the hypothesis of this study—revealed certain tendencies that many of his comrades must have shared. He was ambitious, defined himself by his salary, was even proud to have worked his way to the center of power. He also set great store in differentiating himself from those East Germans who in his opinion were beneath him. These attitudes evinced by Rädcl were something not only typical of SED functionaries, however. Many East Germans in Rädcl’s age group and with his level of education held views like his. A perspective of the Central Committee apparatus that primarily depicts it as a power structure, an “arcnum of power,” can easily blind us to the interfaces between Party headquarters and East German society as well as to the motives, expectations and mentalities of functionaries like Rädcl—all factors crucial to an understanding of how Party rule in the GDR worked. This study therefore adopts a different perspective. It offers a history of this organization tracing its embeddedness in East German society and making clear that its structure, inner workings and political power were impacted by developments in society and not just vice versa.

## The Myth of the “Power Machine”

A social history of the SED power apparatus has yet to be written. In previous research on the GDR, the SED as the state party has either been completely neglected or largely reduced to its role as a power structure. The SED was considered a “transmission belt” that conveyed the will of the Party leadership to the masses “down below.” Rarely did anyone bear in mind that it represented a social space, that it satisfied the need for a meaningful life and served as the employer of thousands of East Germans. In many areas of life, the SED was a part of East German society rather than a distant, higher authority.<sup>6</sup> GDR studies has long tended to take at face value the images propagated by the SED itself: its supposedly strict hierarchy, its proclaimed efficiency and the discipline of its organization were presented, sight unseen, as social reality.

The tendency of historians to make the self-representation of the SED the basis of their own analyses is particularly evident with regard to three aspects. First, with

respect to the “mono-organizational design” of the state-socialist institutional order.<sup>7</sup> In keeping with its claim to omnipotence and overriding authority, the Party and its apparatus seemed to overarch and permeate state and society; Party and state were virtually one.<sup>8</sup> Second, the image of Party apparatuses offered in the literature is marked by the assumption that their employees were largely homogeneous. Even in more recent studies, Party employees mostly appear as an amorphous, anonymous mass rather than as subjects with their own unique experiences, expectations and interests.<sup>9</sup> Third, much of the research to date has portrayed the communist Party apparatus as an organ of power that effectively and mechanically transmitted the resolutions of Party leaders, implementing them at the lower levels of society. Particularly in state socialism’s phase of stagnation, it suppressed “with crippling perfection any impulse . . . that opposes or could oppose the prevailing line.”<sup>10</sup>

Granted, this image of the Party apparatus as a homogeneous power machine was never undisputed in the literature. Anglo-American Sovietology, in particular, depicted a very different reality early on, the Soviet Union of the 1920s and 1930s being rampant with corruption and disorganization<sup>11</sup> and the Brezhnev era being marked by ideological depletion of the functionary corps and a kind of gray sector or “shadow politics” operating below the official political process.<sup>12</sup> Ever since its early stages, the socialist project was commonly accused of being stuck in bureaucratic routine.<sup>13</sup> The accusation was leveled by critics within the Party’s own ranks, sometimes even by Party leaders.<sup>14</sup> Trotsky’s allegation that the bureaucratization of the Bolshevik Party (under Stalin’s orders) had betrayed the revolution served as the reference point here for decades.<sup>15</sup>

Yet even such differentiated, revisionist perspectives are based on a binary interpretation of socialist societies, locating the apparatuses in the “arcanum of power” as opposed to “society.” These works tarnished the notion of the unity and uniformity of communist parties, aiming to expose the truth beneath the surface. They assumed, however, that in the end these apparatuses always succeeded in securing Party rule by repressive means—even if these means became less efficient over time. Thus, they left in the dark the inner workings of these organs of power as well as the everyday enforcement of power and Party rule. To get an understanding of these “basic operations” of apparatus rule and the mentalities of its employees, the abovementioned shift in perspective is required, examining more closely the entanglements of Party apparatus, state and society. This can also help explain how a communist dictatorship functioned beyond its self-representations.

### *Hypotheses and Key Questions*

This shift in perspective with a view to the central SED party apparatus will proceed here by way of three guiding questions, each of which begins with a hypothesis. The first hypothesis is that the SED central party apparatus should not be understood as an “arcanum of SED rule” distinct and separate from East German society.<sup>16</sup> The apparatus was part of East German society and was impacted by its transformation.

This hypothesis does not exclude the possibility that the organizational culture of Party headquarters had elements rooted in Stalinism. Nor does it deny that Central Committee employees such as Walter Rädels, the man who boasted about his salary, tended to be perceived as “bigwigs” rather than as part of “working-class” society. Conversely, however, it does not imply per se that an apparatus culture<sup>17</sup> rooted in the Soviet Union of the 1920s had a formative influence on the patterns of behavior in SED headquarters during the 1970s and 1980s. This aspect shall be explored in this study. Likewise, the tensions between “ordinary” East German citizens and employees of Party headquarters do not automatically make the latter members of a “New Class” or, as Stephen Kotkin puts it, an “uncivil society.”<sup>18</sup> The tensions might just as well be proof that, despite their belonging to a political elite or “political class,” Central Committee employees were socially embedded enough to be able to have run-ins at restaurants. In the words of one former Central Committee departmental head, “We lived, after all, in prefab housing”—that is to say, like ordinary East Germans.<sup>19</sup>

Proceeding from this hypothesis, the present study traces the organizational development of the SED’s central apparatus in its social relations. “Organizational development” is understood here in a twofold way. First, the development of the apparatus’s formal structures: its organization into departments, working groups and commissions, its staff numbers, work rules and decision-making processes. Second, the creation of informal social orders and patterns of behavior attendant to this increasing formalization—in other words, the “inner workings” of the Central Committee apparatus, which forms an important part of what is understood here under “organizational culture.”<sup>20</sup>

The second hypothesis proceeds on the assumption that Central Committee employees tended to reflect the diversity of East German society rather than building a homogeneous New Class.<sup>21</sup> This hypothesis too does not rule out that the sociobiographical profiles of Central Committee employees showed indications of “class formation.” It likewise does not contradict the finding that the group known as “Party workers”—people who forged their careers largely within the FDJ and the SED apparatus—had a formative influence on Party headquarters. And yet this is far from being a reason to take the self-image of the Party—the supposed unity and uniformity of its functionaries—at its word, even less so considering that the communist party apparatus followed a basic tendency of organizational behavior in its development: functional differentiation.<sup>22</sup> In this respect, the present study will investigate how deep this differentiation went and whether it enhanced or hindered the effectiveness of the Central Committee and its political power.

This perspective leads to a third area of investigation which has always played a crucial role in communist and GDR studies: the question of how power and domination are exercised and stabilized under Party dictatorship. How important, in other words, was the Party apparatus in the SED system of rule? The initial hypothesis is that Party rule cannot be perceived as something static, not even after the completion of “building socialism” and/or the construction of the Wall. Rather, Party rule

is understood here as a dynamic set of relationships between individuals, groups and institutions. A further assumption is that the forms these relationships took continuously transformed depending on the political and social circumstances.<sup>23</sup>

This understanding of Party rule implies two premises with respect to the question of the Central Committee's practice of governing. The first is that the formal structures, hierarchies and means of "guidance" were, to begin with, merely the Party's self-descriptions, which need to be compared and contrasted with the concrete interactions between members of the Party and the state apparatus. Implicit to this question, moreover, is the fact that the "apparatus" metaphor is conceptually analogous to the terms organization (or administration) and machine,<sup>24</sup> expressing in official communist discourse a "pronounced technocratic optimism" that cannot be taken at face value.<sup>25</sup> In its singular usage the metaphor suggests the image of unity and uniformity, which says a lot about the communist "world of meaning,"<sup>26</sup> but little or nothing about the organization it referred to and nothing at all about the self-image of Central Committee employees. The latter, according to Wolfgang Herger, head of the Department of Security Issues in the Central Committee of the SED during the 1980s, had a "downright aversion against the word 'apparatchik.'" <sup>27</sup> That being said, the question arises as to what extent the thirty to forty Central Committee departments and working groups, as of 1953, revealed any uniform patterns at all with regard to their practice of governing.

Instead of universally speaking of *the* apparatus (which will often be the case in this study, following the linguistic habits of the sources), I will distinguish between five different groups of departments in an effort to reflect its multiplicity. These groups include: first, the "ideological departments" (Agitation and Propaganda, Culture, Education, and to a certain extent Science); second, the specialist departments (Agriculture, Health, Economic Policy); and, third, the functional departments (responsible for the overall work of the Party apparatus and for infrastructure: Party Organs, Cadre Issues, Administration of Economic Enterprises, Financial Administration, etc.). The fourth group includes the two international departments (International Relations and Foreign Information), whereas the fifth comprises the departments of the Western apparatus (Western Department, Transportation, Labor Office).<sup>28</sup>

One disadvantage of this conceptual differentiation is that it suggests a division between technical competence and ideology, whereas in reality, for example, the Central Committee's economic departments were consistently implicated in "ideological struggle" and the work of the Central Committee's cultural department could sometimes demand a good deal of expertise. The reasoning behind this differentiation is not, however, a simple juxtaposition of "ideologues" and "pragmatists." Rather, it is rooted in the assumption that complex social systems (and communist party apparatuses were precisely that) develop in the course of their internal differentiation something referred to in organizational research as "local rationality."<sup>29</sup> The everyday, practical involvement of Central Committee employees in the production of ideology or, say, in foreign trade had a formative influence on their interpretations of

reality and patterns of behavior. In the medium term, it could very well lead to varied mental profiles and habits within individual departments or working groups (largely independent of the extent to which their members could be defined as hardliners or pragmatists). Such differences, however, are the prerequisite to understanding the “deeper layers of rule” underneath the monochrome surface of Party headquarters.<sup>30</sup>

## The Current State of Research

An investigation of the organizational structure, staff and governing practices of the Central Committee apparatus builds on heterogeneous scholarship. The history of the SED state party is still an overlooked topic in the history of the GDR.<sup>31</sup> The verdict pronounced nearly two decades ago that the fulltime SED apparatus, in particular, was essentially a “black box”<sup>32</sup> still holds today. This is largely due to the fact that existing studies of the Party apparatus focus on the years of its founding and consolidation and especially on its structures. Insights into the inner life and “underbelly” of the apparatus are the rare exception. Studies on the social background and qualifications of its employees are lacking entirely.

It is telling in this regard that the history of the Nazi Party had for decades been investigated only as the history of its organizational *structures*.<sup>33</sup> It is also worth noting that the literature on the apparatuses of the other East-Central European communist state parties is no better in this regard than the literature on the SED.<sup>34</sup> In many instances it is even worse. These analogous gaps in research show that dictatorial or state parties generally suffer from a lack of scholarly attention. Overarching or seemingly penetrating the state and society they inhabit, they themselves are often hard to pin down. This is especially true when it comes to their role as mass-membership and functionary parties.

### *Narrative Patterns in GDR Studies*

West German GDR studies initially operated under the paradigm of two opposing ideological systems. Its primary aim was to distance itself from developments in the Soviet Occupation Zone with the help of the theory of totalitarianism. Of course there were some attempts as early as the 1950s to investigate the relationship between Party rule and daily life<sup>35</sup> and hence the question of how, at the level of practical politics, the SED implemented and consolidated its power. Carola Stern, Joachim Schultz, Hermann Weber and others explained the relative stability of the newly established party dictatorship by asserting, among other things, that the Party’s monopoly on competence was more than rhetorical pretense. This omnicompetence, in their view, had been implemented through organizational measures and cadre politics.

And yet this generation of scholars was well aware that the ideological unity of SED functionaries had its limits. Reports in the 1950s from former functionaries such as Hermann Weber, Wolfgang Leonhard and Fritz Schenk, who had fled to the West with inside knowledge about the workings of Soviet-style communism, offered

a welcome corrective (admittedly subjectively distorted) on the sources produced and published by the SED itself.<sup>36</sup> With the erection of the Wall, these windows into the SED largely disappeared. The Party periodicals *Einheit* (Unity) and *Neuer Weg* (New Path) were now often the only access Western scholars had to what was happening at Party headquarters.

Thus, Peter Christian Ludz's 1968 study on the transformation of SED elites was largely based on the self-image of certain Party and functional elites in the GDR of the 1960s.<sup>37</sup> With a view to Walter Ulbricht's proclaimed "scientific-technical revolution," Ludz postulated that a formally well qualified and technocratically minded cohort of Party and state functionaries would be promoted to high leadership positions, helping in the medium term to bring about a convergence of political systems. A new, technocratic, and pragmatically oriented cohort of functionaries did in fact occupy a range of leadership positions, but these individuals never questioned the primacy of Party rule in the GDR or even the primacy of Old Communists in the Politbüro.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, GDR studies in the 1970s and 1980s came to a conclusion that will also be discussed in this study: that the conflict between "ideologues" and "technocrats" was not as clearly pronounced among "second-tier" functionaries.<sup>39</sup> With the Peaceful Revolution in the fall of 1989, public and scholarly interest was less focused on these lower-ranking SED functionaries. The spotlight was on the decision-makers and the "perpetrators," on the Politbüro's practice of rule<sup>40</sup> as well as on the practice of repression and surveillance.<sup>41</sup> It was also the first time that the practices of establishing and consolidating power, that the working methods of the Politbüro and the General Secretary could be reconstructed with the help of files. Monika Kaiser, Thomas Ammer and others offered detailed depictions of the organizational history and operating mechanisms of the SED at various levels. It was from this perspective that the Party apparatus was described for the first time in a systematic way.<sup>42</sup>

In these first attempts at a critical reappraisal of the GDR, interviews with contemporary witnesses were mostly conducted by journalists. The interviews were heavily influenced by the black-and-white perspectives of the early 1990s and generally limited to former members of the Politbüro and/or the Council of Ministers.<sup>43</sup> Historians, on the other hand, focused heavily on the written records of the SED and state authorities. This promoted a tendency still evident today: the *claims* to power of the Party and the state are equated with political reality and the history of the SED with the political system of the GDR. Thus, the ideology of the ruling party forms the narrative core of Klaus Schroeder's study of the SED state.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Sigrid Meuschel explicitly derives her hypothesis of the "withering away of society" in the GDR from the ideological policies of the SED (though, admittedly, she doesn't lose sight of the limits of this *Entdifferenzierung*, or "homogenization" process<sup>45</sup>). The overview of the SED authored by Andreas Malycha and Peter Jochen Winters is largely just a political history of the GDR. Members and functionaries only make sporadic appearances.<sup>46</sup> Malycha's most recent monograph on the SED in the Honecker era likewise focuses on decision-making processes in the Politbüro. His conclusions with regard to the

power center of the Party are highly instructive, but they seldom shed much light on the monolithic SED in the title of his book—at least if you understand it to mean more than a “state party with totalitarian claims to power.”<sup>47</sup>

### *History of the SED*

One narrative pattern of historiography of the 1990s was thus to conflate SED and GDR history. A second pattern was the relatively strong focus on the late 1940s and the 1950s. Compared with the latter decades of the GDR, these were considered the more eventful and exciting moments of its history.

The political conditions of SED consolidation have therefore been researched rather well for the early postwar years. The aims of the Soviet occupiers are also for the most part well-established. The same goes for the political and economic development of the Soviet Occupation Zone, the social history of East Germany’s “quicksand society,” and not least of all for the process of restructuring state and society that began in 1948.<sup>48</sup> Much more hard to grasp are the interactions between what Jan Foitzik has dubbed the “Bermuda Triangle of SED, administration and occupation forces,”<sup>49</sup> notwithstanding a range of source editions having considerably improved our knowledge in this area.<sup>50</sup> The asymmetric relationship between SED leaders and the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD) has also been well described in the scholarship of the past quarter century.<sup>51</sup> The role of the central party apparatus of the SED, the apparatus of the Central Secretariat, still remains obscure, however, in this web of relationships.

Comparatively well-researched is the organizational history of the central KPD/SED apparatus. A project of the Forschungsverbund SED-Staat (Research Association on the SED State) investigating the “structures, function and development of the central party apparatus of the KPD/SED” laid the foundations here.<sup>52</sup> The work of Michael Kubina, in particular, on the one hand provides a framework from the perspective of organizational history for the apparatus in the years 1945 to 1946.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, it is an informative account of the secret and security apparatus of KPD/SED headquarters. Thomas Klein, too, looks at Party-internal “counterintelligence” between 1946 and 1948 in his monograph on the history of Party regulatory bodies. This refers to the collecting of compromising information about SED and (Western) KPD functionaries organized by the staffing-policy department of the Central Secretariat.<sup>54</sup> This so-called counterintelligence was antecedent to and part of the recasting of the SED into a “party of a new type.” Andreas Malycha offers a comprehensive depiction of this reorganization in his seminal study on the “Stalinization” of the SED, with a focus on the regional and local levels.<sup>55</sup>

The inside reports of “renegades” Wolfgang Leonhard, Erich Gniffke, Hermann Weber and others shed light on how things worked *within* Party headquarters during the course of its Stalinization.<sup>56</sup> An additional perspective is offered, in particular, by Michael F. Scholz’s study on the fate of former KPD émigrés to Scandinavia after their return to the Soviet Occupation Zone and/or the GDR. A whole range of these



“Scandinavians” was employed in the Central Secretariat, some of them—Richard Gyptner, Paul Verner and Richard Stahlmann—in leadership positions.<sup>57</sup> Scholz depicts the lives and experiences of these returning émigrés and, like Thomas Klein and Ulrich Mählert, also takes a closer look at the Party purges of 1950–51. As Western émigrés these “Scandinavians” were hit especially hard.

An important foundation of the present study is Heike Amos’s examination of the politics and organization of SED headquarters. Amos focuses on the organizational history of the Politbüro, the Central Committee Secretariat, and the Central Committee apparatus between the years 1949 and 1963, and hence on the succession of newly founded, disbanded and consolidated departments.<sup>58</sup> Her study is the first detailed reconstruction of this ostensibly chaotic phase of its history, rendering the “apparatus” more tangible as an organization and power structure. Though actors below the level of the Politbüro—i.e., Central Committee employees—hardly figure into her study and the political practice of Central Committee departments is only briefly discussed, it remains a valuable scholarly contribution.

The present book likewise addresses a fundamental account of the 1960s: Monika Kaiser’s analysis of the power transition from Ulbricht to Honecker.<sup>59</sup> Kaiser’s explicit aim was to offer a reassessment of the “old Ulbricht.” To this end she consistently interprets him as the pioneer and originator of the cultural, economic and foreign-policy reforms and/or realignments that lent the GDR a semblance of optimism in the years immediately following the erection of the Wall. Following the investigation of Peter Christian Ludz,<sup>60</sup> she distinguishes various groups within the Party leadership and defines them according to their position on Ulbricht’s policy of reform. She sees Erich Honecker at the forefront of the “counterreformers” and largely centers her account around the conflict between Ulbricht and Honecker.

Kaiser’s study is notable for its strong hypothesis and clear narrative style. And yet both of these are achieved at the cost of simplifying a complex configuration, sometimes turning the Central Committee apparatus into what appears to be a uniformly operating collective actor that decisively backed Erich Honecker. She seems to agree with the contemporary witnesses she quotes who considered the apparatus—whose almost forty Central Committee departments she usually refers in the singular<sup>61</sup>—“incapable of thinking strategically or at least beyond its own purview.”<sup>62</sup> From this perspective “it” carefully planned the removal of Ulbricht in order to continue governing “in dreary complacency.”<sup>63</sup> It is probably asking too much of Kaiser to expect a differentiated analysis of different currents within the apparatus; the Central Committee departments, after all, only play a secondary role in her narrative, as Honecker’s power base. And yet this image of the apparatus as the main obstacle to reform has been readily adopted by a host of other historians.<sup>64</sup> The fact that positions within the Central Committee apparatus were in fact vastly more complex is shown by André Steiner in his analysis of East German economic reforms of the 1960s. He contradicts the dictum of Party headquarters being anti-reformist per se, at least with a view to the Central Committee departments steering the economy.<sup>65</sup>

The recent, aforementioned study of Andreas Malycha on the SED in the Honecker era is likewise commendable for offering a more nuanced picture of the 1970s and 1980s as opposed to the generally more monolithic image of Party headquarters during the reform decade of the 1960s. Malycha argues that Party leaders openly debated the economic policies of Honecker rather than blindly accepting them. In his view these policies were highly contentious from the 1970s on. In this light he points out the skepticism, critiques and—in the 1980s—out-and-out resignation in the Central Committee’s economic apparatus, singling out in particular the director of the Planning and Finance Department, Günter Ehrensperger. Malycha’s analysis makes plain that economic functionaries in the Central Committee were anything but the hidebound underlings of “economic dictator” Günter Mittag.<sup>66</sup>

### ***Central Committee Departments as Political Actors***

One thing is certain: the Central Committee apparatus plays only a minor role in the most authoritative studies on SED history to date. Individual Central Committee departments, on the other hand, have indeed attracted the attention of scholars. The Department of Security Issues, for example, seemed to offer indications of how Party leaders leveraged their influence over the armed forces and the three ministries of security.<sup>67</sup> The results were disappointing, however, since it turned out that this department in particular, subordinate as it was to influential Central Committee secretaries or the General Secretary himself, was an exceptionally weak actor, unable to politically steer (by way of the respective Party organizations) the ministries underneath it. This was true of its relationship to the Ministry of National Defense and especially its relationship to the Ministry for State Security (MfS).<sup>68</sup>

Even in the early 1960s, Minister of State Security Erich Mielke was able to get his way on important cadre issues when conflicts emerged with the Central Committee.<sup>69</sup> In the Honecker era, when Mielke was not just a Politbüro member but also had a “hotline” to the General Secretary himself, the Ministry for State Security seemed wholly autonomous from the central Party apparatus. What’s more, there are indications that the Stasi even “skimmed off” the Party’s central apparatus. Andreas Malycha, at any rate, offers evidence that State Security even placed unofficial collaborators (IMs) in SED party headquarters,<sup>70</sup> despite the fact that this actually contravened a strict “separation rule” decreed by the Politbüro Security Commission in 1954. But even if the Stasi was in a position to siphon off information from the Central Committee apparatus, it still remains an open question—one that this book will address in more detail—whether this gave it any real leverage. A complex picture of the relationship between State Security and the central Party apparatus is offered by Wilhelm Mensing in his study on the Central Committee’s Department of Transportation.<sup>71</sup> The latter was responsible, among other things, for maintaining relations with West German comrades in the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and the German Communist Party (DKP). To this end it worked in close collaboration with the MfS—to be more precise, with Department II/19 of the MfS. Yet even

though employees of Main Department II/19 had many serious reservations about leading functionaries in the Department of Transportation and their vulnerability to corruption, the Stasi was powerless against it. This finding is supported by the recent work of Heike Amos on the SED's German policy.<sup>72</sup> Like Jochen Staadt before her in his work on the "SED's secret policy towards the West,"<sup>73</sup> Amos elaborates on the overall "Western apparatus" of SED party headquarters. In addition to the Central Committee Department of Transportation, this included the Western Department, the Western Commission and the KPD Working Office, all organs concerned with influencing the politics and society of West Germany.

The overall picture of the Western apparatus offered by Mensing, Staadt and Amos is a contradictory one. In some cases the departments acted as professional political consultants to Party leaders. Herbert Häber, director of the Western Department from 1973 to 1985, is a salient example. But the dominant trend for many years was for department members to view developments in West Germany from a strictly anti-imperialist angle. At any rate, the Western Commission and Western Department succeeded in pushing through the relevant Party line in East German media. This was no mean feat if control of the media in the GDR is seen not so much as centrally enforced propaganda but as "political public relations work," as described by Anke Fiedler.<sup>74</sup>

Fiedler comes to the conclusion that the Western Commission and Western Department as well as the Agitation Commission and Agitation Department were quite flexible in carrying out "political PR." They relied more heavily on indirect influence than the image of the doctrinaire "Thursday Argus" from the late phase of the GDR—the respective Central Committee secretary Joachim Herrmann gathering the editors-in-chief of East German media to ensure they follow the latest policy line—would suggest.<sup>75</sup> Fiedler's term "political PR" is debatable, implying as it does that the practice of ideology transfer was comparable to political public relations in liberal democracies. But her study does offer a starting point for a nuanced analysis of political processes in general under state socialism.

GDR studies, with its focus on political and cultural history, has likewise examined Central Committee departments from the perspective of cultural politics, a special case of ideological policy. East German cultural policy was by no means a foregone conclusion. Rather, as Siegfried Lokatis has shown in his study on the politics of publishing and literature during the 1950s and 1960s,<sup>76</sup> it was the result of often conflict-ridden negotiation processes between the Central Committee departments for agitation and propaganda, central Party institutes, and state "censorship authorities." Joachim Ackermann, in his study on the influence of the Party apparatus on the fine arts, comes to a similar conclusion for the Honecker era.<sup>77</sup> Particularly insightful is American cultural historian Robert Darnton's investigation of the impact of state censors on literature and society, in which the GDR figures as one of three case studies.<sup>78</sup> Though Darnton might be overly general in his description of the Central Committee's Department of Culture as an "ideological watchdog," his analysis of the

interaction between censorship and literary production establishes a range of factors that led to a controversial or “hot” book being printed in some cases and banned in others. This goes to show that political processes in the GDR were marked by a certain openness, at least below the strategic decision-making level of the Politbüro. Darnton’s thought-provoking work invites us to address the role of Central Committee departments as political actors in the political system of the GDR, just as the present volume intends to do.

### *The CPSU as a Comparative Case*

The abovementioned studies shed light on the activities of various departments—Security Issues, Transportation, Culture—in an isolated manner and in specific political contexts. They are therefore hardly in a position to come to any general conclusions about the thirty or forty some departments, commissions and working groups within the Central Committee. But what about the SED’s “brother parties” in Eastern and East-Central Europe? Has the literature on these parties come to any conclusions that might be applicable to the SED apparatus? Were developments there comparable?

Only to a limited degree, unfortunately. The literature on the communist state parties of the other members of the Soviet bloc is generally lagging far behind comparable literature on the SED.<sup>79</sup> An interview-based investigation of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) with a special focus on networks, patronage and corruption is one notable exception.<sup>80</sup> Likewise informative is the work of Michel Christian, who undertakes a comparison of the membership policies and “Party life” in the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSCĚ) respectively, likewise discussing the activities of their Central Committee departments for “Party organs.”<sup>81</sup> But there are no significant studies on the Party apparatuses of the remaining Soviet satellite states.

Only the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) has been the subject of enough research to provide any insights for the present volume. Following the boom in Stalinist studies during the 1990s, interest has grown considerably in the two general secretaries Khrushchev and Brezhnev,<sup>82</sup> with a focus on their respective political styles, including the mechanisms of exercising power through the central CPSU apparatus.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the Central Committee apparatus of the CPSU was constantly being reorganized in the 1950s, a process every bit as radical as the “organizational chaos” in SED party headquarters. This was due to an internal Party conflict dating back to the 1930s in the case of the CPSU. Some senior cadre in the CPSU saw the Party apparatus as a steering organization above the state and economy. Others wanted an apparatus that would act as a mobilizing organization and not get bogged down in administrative tasks.<sup>84</sup> The same conflict was evident in the SED Party leadership.

More recent work on the policies of Brezhnev have underscored his role as a “patron”<sup>85</sup> who governed the Party apparatus mainly through personal ties and less through decision-making bodies and official channels of communication.<sup>86</sup> This begs

the question in the present study of whether and to what extent the political style of Erich Honecker was comparable to Brezhnev's. To what degree were SED Party headquarters marked by informal ties and networks? Or is the research to date correct that the political culture of the GDR in this regard was fundamentally different from that of the late Soviet Union?<sup>87</sup>

Chapter 7 of the present study on the salary development of SED functionaries was largely inspired by the investigations of Eugenia Belova and Valery Lazarev on CPSU finances.<sup>88</sup> The authors came to the conclusion that the postwar CPSU was, if nothing else, an economic empire. As such the CPSU was geared to generating funds that could be funneled to its own functionaries in the framework of a material incentive system. An even more important point of reference for the present study, however, is the work of Nikolay Mitrokhin. Mitrokhin is currently conducting an unusually comprehensive project on the Central Committee apparatus of the CPSU in the 1970s and 1980s based on extensive interviews with contemporary witnesses and archival research.<sup>89</sup> The present study shares many aspects of his research approach, in particular the focus on personal biographies, career trajectories, and the experiences of apparatus employees. Only the source materials used are considerably different. Mitrokhin, for example, relies more heavily on interviews than the author of the present book. Whereas Mitrokhin managed to interview eighty former employees from all areas of the central CPSU apparatus, my work uses "only" twenty-six such individuals from the corresponding SED apparatus. Mitrokhin, on the other hand, does not have at his disposal any comparable written records like those of the former Stasi in the GDR. It seems that this different source material has led to different assessments of the two apparatuses, with more weight being attached in the present study to corruption and the apparatus's political influence beyond its purely formal tasks than in Mitrokhin's case.

The former employees of the Central Committee of the SED interviewed in this study belong to a group that has hitherto been sidestepped in much of the research on the GDR to date. With the exception of the secretaries in SED regional and district leaderships, the "irrefutable fact that communist rule was rule by Party elites"<sup>90</sup> is not reflected in the research on "socialist elites."<sup>91</sup> Studies on army<sup>92</sup> and secret-police<sup>93</sup> officers, socialist "management," university instructors,<sup>94</sup> doctors<sup>95</sup> and engineers<sup>96</sup> have resulted in an eclectic picture of the "socialist service class" including its recruiting mechanisms, its system of perks and, in the words of Peter Hübner, the "peculiar mixture of ideology and pragmatism" in political practice.<sup>97</sup> Yet fulltime SED functionaries have scarcely been represented in this picture.

The reasons for this blank spot in the research on elites under socialism can only be hinted at here. One factor was probably that fulltime SED employees (unlike, say, MfS employees) were not so easy to pigeonhole as "perpetrators."<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, their seemingly clear-cut role—enforcing the will of the Party in every situation—offered few indications of ambivalence or contradictions and hence little reason for scholars to investigate them. Finally, former senior employees of the SED Party apparatus showed little inclination to publish their memoirs after 1990—unlike those

above them in the inner circle of power, the Politbüro, and very much in contrast to their counterparts in the CPSU, who published a wealth of autobiographical accounts after the downfall of the Soviet Union.<sup>99</sup>

Excluding the contributions in the two collections edited by Hans Modrow, *Das grosse Haus* (The Big House) and *Das grosse Haus von aussen* (The Big House from Outside)—cautiously self-critical accounts which generally attributed goodwill to the apparatus and its employees while denying that they had any real political influence—there are only three published memoirs by contemporary witnesses covering the decades after the Wall that mainly deal with the Central Committee apparatus. Carl-Heinz Janson, the former director of the Central Committee's Department of Socialist Economic Management, settled scores with Günter Mittag, the “economic dictator” of the late GDR.<sup>100</sup> Erich Fischer, former division head at the Central Committee's Health Policy Department, took a critical look at corruption, arbitrariness and cronyism in the apparatus overall.<sup>101</sup> And, finally, Manfred Uschner offers an unsparing account of the Honecker system in *Zweite Etage* (Level Two), probably the most well-known publication by a former Central Committee employee.<sup>102</sup> Uschner, a former personal aid of Politbüro member Hermann Axen, describes the daily routines and “inner workings” of the Politbüro. All of these memoirs are highly revealing and, with the exception of Fischer's rather cryptic “confessions,”<sup>103</sup> are often cited in the literature. Of course two of these memoirs were written by Central Committee employees who were dismissed prior to 1989 (Uschner and Fischer), and the other by a Central Committee member who considered himself a failure (Janson). The result is a certain lopsidedness which scholars have not always sufficiently acknowledged.

The approach of the present volume, creating a picture of Central Committee employees as a social group and a Party elite, can at any rate rely on several studies investigating Party functionaries in the provinces. Heinrich Best and Heinz Mestrup have reconstructed the social profiles and career paths of the first and second regional and district secretaries in the three administrative units of Thuringia. With a view to housing policy in the Leipzig region, Jay Rowell has investigated the significance of horizontal structures surrounding Party and state functionaries.<sup>104</sup> Andrea Bahr has recently adopted this approach for her analysis of the practice of governing by the SED district leadership in Brandenburg an der Havel. According to Bahr, first district secretaries had to represent Party rule as well as being a “paternalistic troubleshooter.”<sup>105</sup> Our current knowledge of employees in the SED Party apparatus is primarily based on the latter investigations of these regional and district “princes.” And yet these works do not address the “ordinary” political employees, not to mention the technical ones. For this reason, and because of their local- or regional-history perspectives, they offer only limited answers to the question of what to make of the fulltime employees of the SED as a whole. Did they form a collective whose members evinced a certain esprit de corps by dint of having gone through similar processes of socialization and identical educational institutions? Or should “Party workers” be thought of as a conglomerate of disparate subgroups having different influences

and motivations?<sup>106</sup> The assumption of a pronounced esprit de corps among “Party workers” seems to be supported by their homogeneous habitus often described in reminiscences,<sup>107</sup> whereas the rapid dissolution of the fulltime SED apparatus in the fall of 1989 would seem to speak against it.

It is true that, at first glance, the various heads of the Central Committee departments did nothing to stabilize the political system shortly before and during the crisis in late 1989. There was also no reform wing in the SED’s central Party bureaucracy like the kind that developed elsewhere in the Eastern bloc, most notably the CPSU itself.<sup>108</sup> The Central Committee apparatus essentially stayed on the defensive during the peaceful revolution in the fall of 1989. Its members seemed to embody the state of shock that had seemingly gripped the entire party.

This political inefficacy of the apparatus needs to be explained. It begs the question of whether in the late 1980s the Party apparatus was simply no longer in a position to manage a crisis or solve problems by repressive means. It would follow that, over the decades, the Party apparatus and its members had abandoned a characteristic feature of communism—the absolute will to power—and switched into “peacetime mode,” as it were. A “hot” organization had seemingly transformed into a “cold” one, whose members were more inclined to look for new jobs than make a “last stand” in November 1989. To what extent this view is accurate will be the focus of chapter 8 of this book.

## Theoretical-Methodological Approach

In research on the GDR to date, the SED’s Central Committee apparatus has played the role of a “known unknown.”<sup>109</sup> Almost every study on the system of rule in the GDR makes reference to this apparatus and a (limited) number of departments, being deemed particularly important, have even been the subject of more detailed investigations, but the overall apparatus has yet to be examined as a political actor and a “social world” of its own.

The present study does not aim to offer a comprehensive historical overview of the apparatus across the numerous policy fields in its purview—not just security, agitation and Western policy, but dozens more, from agriculture or “church issues” to its approach to the political opposition of the 1980s. The actions of Central Committee departments in each of these policy fields would all be well worth an investigation. The present study, however, endeavors to do no more than to try to better understand this utterly underexplored center of power which acted as the de facto central government of the German Democratic Republic, to grasp the “social world” of a governing body whose departmental heads (in ministerial positions, no less) are still not entirely known to us by name.<sup>110</sup> The key questions outlined above shall serve as a guide in the process. Some additional explanations are due, however, as to how the topic is to be approached. This will be done in the following by outlining the theoretical-methodological approach to this study.

### *The Central Committee Apparatus as an Organization*

The present study is indebted to modern organizational sociology, whose concepts of power, networks, institutions and social practices<sup>111</sup> have been increasingly adopted by historians in the last two decades.<sup>112</sup> This can be seen, in particular, in the first of this study's three guiding questions regarding the transformation of formal and informal structures in the Central Committee apparatus. The question turns upon two fundamental perspectives of research into organizations.

The *first* of these concerns the transformation of organizations. It is an indisputable fact that organizations are designed to perpetuate certain—effective—procedures and behavioral patterns, i.e., to keep their own structures invariant in the face of a changing environment.<sup>113</sup> But this changing environment—society, the economy, etc.—demands a certain flexibility from organizations with regard to their problem-solving capabilities; even maintaining the status quo requires internal structural changes. This was true of Communist Party apparatuses as well.

That said, this study is not about showing that the apparatus changed over time (no organization can become entirely “sclerotic”). Rather, it intends to show the forms and consequences of this transformation. This means, for example, the changing behavioral patterns in “outposts” of the apparatus, of the instructors and “regional commissioners” whose job it was to represent Party headquarters and its agenda to the outside world but who increasingly showed themselves to be open towards the demands of this environment, e.g., of the territorial Party apparatus.<sup>114</sup> It also means addressing the functional differentiation within the Central Committee apparatus, or what the literature often describes as the “chaotic” formation of ever-new specialized departments. The later, on the one hand, did in fact lead to increased efficiency—to offer one conclusion of this study in advance—and ultimately made the apparatus more effective. On the other hand, it naturally resulted in these departments growing ever farther apart in terms of their aims, mentality and habitus—in other words, they developed “local rationalities.” In this respect the key question is to what extent the central Party apparatus was able or forced to change in order to remain stable. Was its “failure” in the fall of 1989 an expression of its inability to learn and transform itself?<sup>115</sup>

The *second* perspective is the classic distinction between formal and informal organizations in sociological theory. The term formal organization is closely bound up with Max Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy or, in the broader sense, to his concept of formal rationality.<sup>116</sup> In older organizational research, the formal organization was linked, for example, to the orientation towards a common goal, written rules, and a hierarchical organization of offices based on a division of labor.<sup>117</sup> A good deal of historical research is still openly or implicitly based on such an understanding of organizations.<sup>118</sup>

The “discovery of the informal organization” during the 1930s in the context of corporate studies resulted in the successive erosion of the rational model of organi-



zation, at least in sociology.<sup>119</sup> The countless “deviations from the classic ideal type of the formal organization<sup>120</sup>—the informal exchange of information (“office grapevine”), unofficial channels, informal hierarchies, expectations regarding the private lives of organization members, networks and routine infringement of the rules<sup>121</sup>—suddenly became apparent and were subsequently examined more closely by scholars. The present study hinges on Luhmann’s observation that “informal organization” is not an adverse derivative of formal organization. Informal structural formations and behaviors are in his view inevitable consequences of formalization.<sup>122</sup> In doing so he frees the formal organization from the “rationality myths” of older organizational research and understands them as the formalization of expectations placed on members of the organization.<sup>123</sup>

Following this perspective, the present study will do more than merely note that a highly formalized communist-party apparatus is characterized by something like networks, violations of the rules, etc. Rather, it will ask to what extent minor or major infractions of the rules prevented the apparatus—or possibly even enabled it—to attain the objectives set by Party leaders. The aim is thus to show the relationship between the formal and informal “organization of the Central Committee apparatus” as well as how this relationship changed over time as Party rule was consolidated.

This interaction between the formal and informal aspects of an organization can be understood in terms of “organizational culture,” because the latter is generally understood to be more than a “set of fundamental, internalized convictions of organization members.” Organizational culture also entails the specific characteristics of a concrete organization that clearly differentiate it from other organizations,<sup>124</sup> the relationship, for example, between the organization’s informal and formal structures.<sup>125</sup> The question of the transformation of formal and informal structures is therefore also a question of the organizational culture existing in Party headquarters.<sup>126</sup>

### ***Staff Structure and Membership Motives***

An investigation of the staff structure of the central Party apparatus can rely on a relatively well-developed theoretical and methodological framework. It can draw on the abovementioned research into East German elites, whose only real weakness is that it has largely ignored one group in particular, fulltime SED functionaries. And yet there are plenty of examples of collective biographies (or prosopographies)<sup>127</sup> of these elites, often written by social historians. Suffice it to mention here the studies at the University of Jena based on the central cadre database of the Council of Ministers of the GDR,<sup>128</sup> namely the work of Heinrich Best and Heinz Mestrup on the first and second SED regional and district secretaries of Thuringia,<sup>129</sup> Jens Gieseke’s analysis of fulltime MfS employees,<sup>130</sup> and Stephan Fingerle’s research on officers in the National People’s Army.<sup>131</sup>

It is true that the biographical data on Central Committee employees compiled in the context of the present study are not representative enough for a collective biogra-

phy, of which more below. The empirical basis is sufficient, however, to outline and interpret core elements of the social and biographical profile of Central Committee employees in historical transformation. It can thus be shown, for example, how and when new generational cohorts with different kinds of experience came to replace the older ones in the apparatus whose experiences were rooted in the period before 1945.

It is also possible to trace the shift in formal educational requirements within the apparatus. This begs the question to what extent we can talk about a “professionalization” of the apparatus. There are also extensive data on the career paths and “social commitment” of Central Committee employees, during and after their time in this organization. These can be consulted to see if they support the image of an organization open to its environment and interconnected with state and society—or, rather, if they indicate that the Central Committee apparatus was a closed or even a “greedy organization” demanding exclusive loyalty and possibly preventing employee transfers to other organizations.<sup>132</sup> Ultimately the present empirical basis enables us to reconstruct the changing social profiles among Central Committee employees.<sup>133</sup>

In this manner I will attempt to establish the position of Central Committee employees in the upper reaches of the sociopolitical hierarchy of the GDR.<sup>134</sup> Were they distinct, as a “Party elite,” from the “socialist service class”? Were they a power-securing elite crucial to the stability of the political system much like the officers of the armed forces?

The process of gauging Central Committee employees as political or functional elites has to take into account the motives that prompted these individuals to join Party headquarters (or, to begin with, the territorial Party or FDJ apparatus). Contemporary witnesses are unanimous that their primary motive was ideological conviction, and that money or privileges supposedly played no role.<sup>135</sup> There was at least a latent sense of obligation, however—“you didn’t say no,” all of the contemporary witnesses interviewed for this study agreed, if “the Party” selected you for a certain position.

The scholarship to date has rarely questioned such testimonies. On the contrary, it has integrated their notions of the Party apparatus as a stronghold of “150-percent” ideologues or of “servile, unconditionally obedient individuals.”<sup>136</sup> And this despite the fact that as early as the 1950s insiders like Carola Stern played down the role of ideology as a motive for becoming a fulltime SED functionary. Stern, who defected to the West in 1951, pointed out that “for a considerable number of functionaries the Party was mainly a good institutional provider” and “not an organization whose goals you were willing to make sacrifices for.”<sup>137</sup>

An important tool for understanding the motives of apparatus employees—and hence the stability and performance of this apparatus—is the distinction between motives and situation-dependent *depictions* of these motives.<sup>138</sup> The distinction can help get a more systematic handle on the differentiation pointed out by Stern. The same goes for theories of action such “rational choice” developed by Chicago sociologist James Coleman.<sup>139</sup> Individual actors, according to Coleman, generally choose behaviors that promise the greatest satisfaction of their interests. Rather than follow-

ing norms, they follow their own intentions. But it is also clear that this instrument of analysis only allows a rough understanding of the motives of Central Committee employees. It cannot offer any definitive answers.

This point is an important premise of this study. The motives of those who actively supported Party dictatorship are hard to decipher in retrospect.<sup>140</sup> Ideological positions in the self-testimonies or public speeches of individuals can of course tell us something about their inner convictions and beliefs. But ideologically tainted statements can just as well be the expression of a communist “consensual fiction,” i.e., the speaker expressing himself in ideologically “correct” fashion under the assumption that the majority of his comrades in the apparatus were convinced of the premises of Marxism-Leninism, making open dissent seem risky.<sup>141</sup>

Moreover, ideological positioning can also be an expression of what Alexei Yurchak called the performative dimension of “authoritative discourse” (or, to follow Martin Sabrow, the “discourse of domination”).<sup>142</sup> It was less important that those who expressed themselves in accordance with the Party line really “believed” what they said. The important thing was that they did so, confirming Party rule in a performative manner by dint of what they said or their participation in a May Day demonstration.<sup>143</sup> Encountering ideological speech in the sources is a sure indication of one thing only: that the speaker was well aware of what the situation demanded. He understood what had to and could be said in this context, as dictated by the current Party line and perhaps the mood of the crowd.<sup>144</sup>

This is not to question that “ideology” was always an important motive among many Central Committee employees. In the words of one contemporary witness interviewed for this study: “We were all believers.”<sup>145</sup> It is just as certain, however, that belief was one of a multitude of motives for serving the Party. The example of Walter Rädels depicted at the start shows that the will to get ahead and material interests were just as important if not more important. Ultimately historians have no reliable instrument to differentiate in hindsight between the “ideologues,” “pragmatists” and “opportunists.”

What is certain is that few organizations rely on their organizational goal alone—in our case, the building of socialism or the consolidation of Party rule—to motivate their members.<sup>146</sup> Instead, organizations offer their members a range of incentives, including identification with organizational objectives (“building socialism”) but also material incentives and symbolic capital. In this respect, the present study inquires into how the incentives and motivations the Party offered its members changed over the decades in qualitative and quantitative terms. It should become apparent which incentives had the most appeal to them, shedding light on changes in their collective disposition.

### *Power and Rule under State Socialism*

The third investigative thread of this study is the role of the Central Committee apparatus as a power organization. The starting point here is Dolores L. Augustine’s call to

place a renewed emphasis of the themes of power and rule in East German history, in contrast to more recent studies inspired by cultural and social history.<sup>147</sup> To this end, more complex concepts of power and domination are needed, Augustine argues, than has been the case in the research inspired by the theory of totalitarianism.

This oversight identified by Augustine is particularly egregious with regard to the Central Committee apparatus. No doubt the apparatus wielded power—the literature to date has never seriously questioned that this was one of the Party’s main pillars of rule. And yet this literature has not gone into any real detail about how this exercise of power manifested itself in political practice, how the Central Committee departments “ruled” in concrete terms, how they dealt with opposition, or which instruments of power they employed.<sup>148</sup> The image, inspired but the theory of totalitarianism, of the apparatus as an all but omnipotent power machine<sup>149</sup> long seemed satisfactory. But even more recent GDR studies with its social- and cultural-history orientation does not have the tools at its disposal to explain the exercise of power by Central Committee departments as a political process in its own right—that is to say, not merely as something derivative of Politbüro resolutions.

Of course, representatives of social-history approaches to the GDR such as Alf Lüdtke and Thomas Lindenberger, Sandrine Kott and Dorothee Wierling have an elaborate understanding of the process of rule under party dictatorship. The concepts of “domination as a social practice” and “*Eigensinn*,” or self-willed behavior mark, a radical change in perspective<sup>150</sup>—away from an “inside view of SED rule” towards a “hodgepodge of SED claims to power and the social relationships of GDR inhabitants.” But this shift in perspective was also linked to a different social vantage point,<sup>151</sup> away from the center of power towards the “lowest level of social relations”: the collective farm, the village community, the work brigade. Communist (or Nazi) power apparatuses, however, became the subject of these perspectives only, for example, when it came to explaining the margins of maneuver and limits or in some cases the non-compliance of individuals. In this regard, the concept of *Eigensinn* can be applied in a meaningful way to power apparatuses, to the extent that, e.g., the very same clear hierarchies, power relations and antagonisms existed between the “higher” and “lower” levels of the People’s Police or State Security as they did at the “more colorful, lower levels” of East German society. But *Eigensinn* and the conceptualization of domination as a social practice do not help much when it comes to analyzing the power relations that underlie political processes.<sup>152</sup> These approaches are at the very least insufficient for revealing the complexity and dynamics of power when exercised by one organization against another.

The concepts of *Eigensinn* and domination as a social practice at least implicitly assume a dualistic relationship between ruler and ruled. They are geared more towards the internal structures of bureaucracies and administrations than the relationships between different bureaucracies.<sup>153</sup> In this sense they are characterized by Max Weber’s sociology of domination, whose deficits with regard to communist dictatorships include the fact that it does not allow for hybrid forms of the various types of rule

identified by Weber. The definition of hybrids is a necessary requirement, however, for grasping communist Party rule in Weberian terms.<sup>154</sup>

Excluding traditional rule (which is not relevant in our context), Weber defines domination as being either charismatic or legal (the latter with a bureaucratic staff). Charismatic rule is exercised by a charismatic leader, whereas legal rule is based on official laws. Which form of rule does the SED Party apparatus conform to? Although it was bureaucratically organized to an ever-increasing degree, it also availed itself of the Party's charisma.<sup>155</sup> Written and binding norms such as work regulations and party resolutions played a significant role in day-to-day practice. At the same time, however, its relationship to the state was at least at times characterized by its open breach of norms and even laws, essentially intruding on the state's business of governing—without the state ever being in a clear-cut, subordinate relationship to the Party. Ministers such as Erich Mielke and Margot Honecker, at any rate, deliberately ignored attempts of the higher-placed Central Committee departments of security issues and education, respectively, to leverage their Party influence and exercise control over them. The memoirs of former employees, furthermore, reveal that the influence Central Committee departmental heads had was greatly varied and even in the case of a single departmental head could considerably fluctuate over the course of time.<sup>156</sup>

Against the backdrop of these initial findings, the present study draws on more recent approaches from the sociology of rule emphasizing the processual and figurational character of “power” and “rule”<sup>157</sup> and interpreting these as social relations that are constantly subject to change. Micropolitical concepts will also be used,<sup>158</sup> whose advocates interpret the exercise of power as the absorption of uncertainty. Power, accordingly, does not merely come from the ability to push through certain objectives; it is those who are able to control the zones of uncertainty who ultimately have power.<sup>159</sup> The concept of “power figuration,”<sup>160</sup> coined by Wolfgang Sofsky and Rainer Paris, can be used in this context as a guiding concept in inquiring into the power of Central Committee departmental heads. The term refers to “a complex network of asymmetric interrelationships in which a number of individuals, groups or parties are linked and in which changes to one relationship have an effect on the others as well.”<sup>161</sup>

Central Committee employees did in fact often find themselves in asymmetrical “triangular relationships” (e.g., between a ministry, a Central Committee secretary, and the respective Central Committee department), whose configuration depended on each individual actor's power resources.<sup>162</sup> The concept of the power figuration therefore seems more suitable to describing the Central Committee apparatus's practice of rule than the Weberian approach with its focus on the binary relationships between ruler and ruled.

The question of power figurations increases our awareness of the fact that a communist party apparatus could not control “the state” for decades merely by pointing out the ideologically motivated legitimacy of Party rule and that it was ultimately limited in the coercive measures at its disposal, though possible in theory by dint

of its access to the security apparatus. Even a communist party apparatus employed varied instruments of power and exercised its power in a highly diverse manner, certainly with control and coercion but for the most part in a more discreet way: by using its personal and professional authority, through the power of conviction and motivation.<sup>163</sup> A perspective using the concept of power figuration combined with the question of controlling uncertainty can not only help develop a more complex understanding of political processes under state socialism, it can also aid in identifying certain behavioral patterns that make the political practice of the Central Committee apparatus comparable with those of other centralized steering organizations in twentieth-century dictatorships.

### Sources and Structure of This Study

Any research into the central party apparatus of the SED finds itself confronted with a highly imbalanced body of source materials. While it is true that Central Committee departments and commissions have left behind a massive amount of written materials—all manner of reports, analyses and concepts, not to mention preliminary work for the Politbüro and proposals for the Secretariat of the Central Committee—these materials rarely provide the kind of information historians want. Because, while there are hundreds of files relating to the preparation, implementation and evaluation of Party congresses and Central Committee plenums, the genesis of political decision-making in the Honecker era—the actual political process—has been poorly preserved, if at all, in written form. Conflicts and mental dispositions as well are almost impossible to deduce from the written records of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>164</sup>

Written records, in other words, say little about the apparatus. This is partly due to the fact that the GDR had a political culture characterized by highly standardized modes of expression. Functional elites, in particular, had little leeway to make their letters, notes and reports stand out, e.g., in the form of individual feedback, critiques or doubts. This phenomenon was exacerbated by the increasing ritualization of language in written communication in the GDR.<sup>165</sup> The more “substantive” (*gehaltvoll*) exchange of ideas, according to Ralph Jessen, was largely conducted “in informal communication at a day-to-day level,”<sup>166</sup> often over the phone. It is precisely this level, however, that scholars have not had access to.

The contrast between the mass of Party records and their dearth of content is a notable imbalance; their inconsistency over time is another. Thus, the activities of Central Secretariat departments in the early postwar years are less well-documented than in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>167</sup> As of the mid-1970s, however, the records become more sparse or break off entirely, at least for a number of departments. This is because a range of Central Committee departmental heads were given the opportunity in November 1989 to “purge” their written records stored on site at the respective departments.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, the more recent records of several Central Committee departments—among them the departments for cadre issues and youth, as well as for

trade unions and social policy—must still be regarded as “raw data” three decades after the end of the GDR.<sup>169</sup> This is in stark contrast to the fact that all Central Secretariat and Politbüro minutes including their appendices have for years been fully digitalized and made accessible online.

### *Watched by the Stasi*

The written records of the Central Committee apparatus alone are not sufficient to reconstruct the latter’s inner workings. Other records need to be consulted, foremost among them the records of the Ministry for State Security. Contrary to initial expectations, these have proved to be a gold mine with regard to the central Party apparatus. Technically the Central Committee was exempted from Stasi surveillance.<sup>170</sup> State Security, however, was responsible for safeguarding Party headquarters as well as for “security clearance” of new Central Committee employees. These tasks alone gave rise to numerous activities whose documentation offers us an inside look at Party headquarters.

The Party apparatus constantly urged its employees to be “vigilant,” a practice which is commonly described in the literature as “excessive” or even “pathological.” But espionage was a very real threat, and SED headquarters were indeed the focus of Western intelligence services.<sup>171</sup> It took State Security almost two decades to ward off major breaches of security. About half a dozen such cases are documented up to the late 1960s, several of them even more serious than the infamous Guillaume affair in West Germany. It was in light of this fact that the Stasi arrested several Central Committee employees on suspicion of spying.<sup>172</sup> The records of these interrogations—even considering that these written sources were often “self-projections” of the interrogator<sup>173</sup>—are extremely revealing with regard to the inner workings of Party headquarters. They speak volumes on internal conflicts, networks, and corruption, lending ample color to the supposed “gray zone of the arcanum of power.”

Equally illuminating are the files on the “operational cases” conducted against senior employees of the Central Committee during the 1970s and 1980s. Yet another source of information on the apparatus’s practice of rule are the reports of senior staff members in ministries and other state bodies who were recruited as unofficial collaborators. They offer at least a selective picture of how Central Committee departments were viewed by the state apparatus. Finally, the Stasi’s contacts to Central Committee employees—sometimes official, sometimes unofficial—also offer information on the inner workings of the “Big House.”<sup>174</sup>

Of course, MfS sources should not be misconstrued here as a “window on reality” in the Central Committee apparatus. Much of the information compiled by the Stasi is distorted by open or hidden conflicts, making them an unreliable source with regard to the apparatus. At the same time, however, this information is so abundant and varied that consulting it can invariably help us gain a new and more nuanced picture of SED headquarters. Indeed, the present study in its final form would not have been possible without the Stasi files.

A third empirical cornerstone, apart from the apparatus's own written records and Stasi files, are the thirty-two in-depth interviews conducted for this study with twenty-six former employees of the Party apparatus of the SED as well as the state apparatus. Just as in the case of the Stasi records, one needs to exercise caution with interviews of contemporary witnesses.<sup>175</sup> Harald Welzer, for example, asserts that "the narratives of contemporary witnesses are constructs intended for a certain target group," their contents and relevance being entirely dependent on the social situation of the interview.<sup>176</sup> James Mark points out in a similar vein that communist biographies before and after 1989 were and are still being permanently rewritten in line with political expedience.<sup>177</sup>

Yet even critics of oral history agree that interviews do in fact offer insights into the lifeworlds of individuals and the retrospective assessment of their experience.<sup>178</sup> The prerequisite here is that the interview situation be made transparent. The question also needs to be considered of to what extent the interviewer has influenced the course of the interview and the self-portrayal of the interviewee.<sup>179</sup> The following will offer a brief outline of the general context and conditions of the interviews conducted for this study.

The interviewees' attitude toward the interviewer<sup>180</sup> covered a spectrum from aloof to well-meaning.<sup>181</sup> Most of the interviewees asked to remain anonymous, either before or after the interviews. Only six of the twenty-six interview partners agreed to be mentioned by name in the study; the names of the others were altered or often replaced with fictitious initials in order to prevent them from being identified. And yet most were open and helpful when it came to looking for additional interviewees.<sup>182</sup> All of them shared a desire to communicate to the interviewer an in-depth understanding of their "world," their careers, and the way the Central Committee functioned. At the same time they also wanted to present these things as something completely "normal," comparable to day-to-day politics in the Federal Republic. One departmental head described the cadre policy of his department as a "completely normal process,"<sup>183</sup> and a former employee in this "unit" explained her promotion to division head by the fact that she found it "a bit alluring," adding: "There's nothing unusual about it."<sup>184</sup>

From the perspective of most of its employees, the apparatus was hardly a dictatorial power machine. It was a "normal" center of power whose tasks seemed similar to those of West German ministries and party headquarters. At least this is what the interviewees claimed in the context of their interviews. Which should raise a red flag in this instance, in line with the concerns voiced by Harald Welzer. These contemporary witnesses were essentially translating their experiences to a younger, West German interlocutor in attempting to explain to him twenty to twenty-five years after the fall of the Wall how the Central Committee of the SED worked in political practice. It is likely that in the context of this effort to translate their experience certain aspects of their "apparatus life" were relegated to the sidelines, being deemed too hard to convey to an outsider.<sup>185</sup>



Another conspicuous feature is that the interviewees used different narratives, depending either on their relative positions in the apparatus or on their belonging to a certain generation. Senior Central Committee employees—the departmental and division heads—of the so-called reconstruction generation, born between 1927 and 1932, were fond of using a particular narrative strongly emphasizing the “legality” of their own behavior. They claimed that they didn’t interfere (*hineinregieren*) in the economy, and that they didn’t give orders to lower-level Party organs. (“We didn’t intervene at the regional level either, they would have rapped us over the knuckles for that.”<sup>186</sup>) Even in hindsight the members of this group identify with SED policies. They were self-critical in most cases, but did not fail to mention the “fault” of the Soviet Union and the “destabilizing” policies of the Federal Republic.

The second narrative was predominantly used by younger employees, born roughly between the late 1930s and the mid-1950s. These contemporary witnesses make a clear “distinction between us and them,” i.e., their own immediate circle and the “older” members of the apparatus, sometimes including departmental heads.<sup>187</sup> In general they distanced themselves more strongly from Party headquarters and SED policies.

### *A Prosopography of Central Committee Employees*

The written records of the Party are of limited use not only with a view to the inner workings and day-to-day affairs of the apparatus. The “cadre-policy analyses” of the Central Committee’s Cadre Issues Department were likewise insufficient for reconstructing the social and biographical profiles of its employees for the purposes of this study. This is because these cadre analyses were the “fruit of the apparatus’s self-observation and as such a piece of cadre policy themselves.”<sup>188</sup> In effect these analyses were a synthesis of raw data (which has not been preserved) used to find preconceived answers to very specific questions. They wanted to conclude, for instance, that the level of education of its employees was steadily improving, or that these members had a high degree of “Party experience.” The aim was certainly not to prove that the profiles of Central Committee departments varied.<sup>189</sup>

I have therefore attempted to offer a counterweight to said analyses of the Cadre Issues Department in the form of a prosopography of the politically active employees in the Central Committee apparatus of the SED.<sup>190</sup> This was based in part on the Party résumés of Central Committee employees documented sporadically in the records of the Central Committee Secretariat.<sup>191</sup> Another useful source, however, were the records of the MfS, which conducted security clearances on most of the political employees and in doing so compiled and archived their résumés.<sup>192</sup> In this manner 2,690 political employees were able to be identified by name for the period from 1945 to 1989, about 1,300 of these with résumés at least containing their date of birth and the type of work they did at the apparatus. More or less detailed information on social background (occupation of the employee’s father and mother) as well as professional and political activities both before and after entering the Party apparatus could also be obtained in most cases.

This data corpus has one shortcoming that needs to be mentioned straight out: the majority of this data was generated by the SED itself, meaning that its categories and focal points had a formative effect on the prosopography compiled here. Nonetheless, the data should be fairly reliable. The pressure to be “honest” with the Party when writing one’s own résumé was extremely high, as evidenced by the many proceedings concerning the “falsification of questionnaires.” The question of representativity is trickier. While the ca. 1,300 résumés are relatively equally distributed over the entire period of investigation, they are not a representative sample of the population of some 4,000 to 5,000 employees presumably working at the Central Committee apparatus between 1945 and 1989. And yet random samplings have shown that the data corpus generated here can be used, for example, to calculate the average age of political employees at a certain point in time and that the results, compared to those of the Cadre Issues Department using a complete set of data, are only off by a couple of tenths.<sup>193</sup> In this respect, the data corpus seems sufficient to provide an approximate picture of the political employees in the Central Committee.

The study combines a systematic and a chronological structure. The three main chapters, 2, 4 and 6, follow the same pattern. Each of these chapters deals with a classic period of East German history (the “years of building socialism,” the “reform decade,” and the Honecker era). And each of these chapters has subchapters addressing organizational and staff development as well as the governing practices of the Central Committee apparatus. Chapter 1 takes a look at the late 1940s providing a kind of prologue, whereas chapter 8 depicts the final crisis and the fall of 1989 from the perspective of the apparatus.

In addition, the study contains three longitudinal analyses, each with a specific focus and covering the entire period of investigation. Each addresses a topic pertaining to the history of the Central Committee apparatus and which is particularly instructive with regard to the study’s guiding questions but not limited to one of the chronological main chapters.

Chapter 3, for instance, interprets the Central Committee apparatus as an information-processing system, analyzing its methods of generating information as a basis for the political process beyond its sometimes dysfunctional reporting system. Chapter 5 examines the relationships and interactions between the Central Committee apparatus and East Germany’s Ministry for State Security. It joins the debate over whether and to what extent the MfS in some instances put itself above its “client,” the SED. Finally, chapter 7 focuses on Party finances, inquiring to what extent the significance of “material incentives” increased over the decades for employees of the apparatus. The chapter ends with a section on corruption and abuse of office in the Central Committee apparatus, a topic which briefly seemed to take on a sense of urgency throughout the SED in the late fall of 1989. Such problems were inconceivable in the spring of 1945, the subject of the next chapter.

## Notes

1. The following incident is recorded in Bruno Beater 1. Stellvertreter des Ministers für Staatssicherheit, an Bruno Wansierski, ZK-Abteilung Sicherheitsfragen, betr.: Äußerungen des Mitarbeiters des ZK der SED, Genossen Walter Rädcl, 6.9.1972, BStU, MfS, SdM, Nr. 1092, fol. 27; Peter Raab: Information, 6.7.1972, BStU, MfS, SdM, Nr. 1092, fols. 28–31.
2. Ibid., fol. 30.
3. To make matters worse, Rädcl was actually not a departmental head at all but a “mere” politicalem-  
ployee of the Central Committee’s Party Organs Department.
4. As members of the Central Committee’s cultural department were recently portrayed—certainly  
tongue-in-cheek—by Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature* (New York,  
2009), 158.
5. The scene is excerpted in detail at the start of chapter 4, “Organizational Development,” of this book.
6. This has been a point of criticism for over two decades, see Hermann Weber, “Zum Stand der For-  
schung über die DDR-Geschichte,” *Deutschland Archiv* 31, no. 2 (1998): 249–57, here 256.
7. The term stems from Eugenia Belova and Valery Lazarev, *Funding Loyalty: The Economics of the Com-  
munist Party* (New Haven, 2012), 5–7.
8. Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat. Partei, Staat und Gesellschaft 1949–1990* (Munich, 1998).
9. Monika Kaiser, *Machtwechsel von Ulbricht zu Honecker. Funktionsmechanismen der SED-Diktatur in  
Konfliktsituationen 1962 bis 1972* (Berlin, 1997); most recently Gunnar Decker, 1965. *Der kurze  
Sommer der DDR* (Munich, 2015), e.g., 71, 324f.
10. Or so the words of a contemporary witness rather than a historian: Carl-Heinz Janson, *Totengräber  
der DDR. Wie Günter Mittag den SED-Staat ruinierte* (Düsseldorf, 1991), 164. On the GDR, see,  
e.g., Thomas Ammer, “Die Machthierarchie der SED,” in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission “Auf-  
arbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland” (12. Wahlperiode des Deutschen  
Bundestages)*, vol. 2: *Machtstrukturen und Entscheidungsmechanismen im SED-Staat und die Frage der  
Verantwortung*, a publication of the Deutscher Bundestag (Baden-Baden, 1995), 803–67; Monika  
Kaiser, “Herrschaftsinstrumente und Funktionsmechanismen der SED in Bezirk, Kreis und Kom-  
mune,” in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission*, ed. Deutscher Bundestag (Baden-Baden, 1995),  
1791–1834; Gunter Holzweißig, *Zensur ohne Zensor. Die SED-Informationsdiktatur* (Bonn, 1997);  
Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat*.
11. Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (Boston, 1989).
12. See, e.g., Jan Pakulski, “Bureaucracy and the Soviet System,” *Studies in Comparative Communism*  
19, no. 1 (1986): 3–24; Kenneth Jowitt, “Soviet Neotraditionalism: The Political Corruption of a  
Leninist Regime,” *Soviet Studies* XXXV, no. 3 (1983): 275–97; Michael S. Voslensky, *Nomenklatura:  
The Soviet Ruling Class* (New York, 1984), translated by Eric Mosbacher. A similar view of the SED  
can be found to a certain extent in Joachim Schultz, *Der Funktionär in der Einheitspartei. Kaderpoli-  
tik und Bürokratisierung in der SED* (Berlin, 1956); Carola Stern, *Porträt einer bolschewistischen Partei:  
Entwicklung, Funktion und Situation der SED* (Cologne, 1957).
13. Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin: Volume I: Paradoxes of Power, 1878–1928* (New York, 2014), 431–36.
14. Yoram Gorlizki, “Party Revivalism and the Death of Stalin,” *Slavic Review* 54, no. 1 (1995): 1–22.
15. Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?* trans. Max  
Eastman (New York, 1937); the accusation is echoed in Rudolf Bahro, *Die Alternative. Zur Kritik der  
real existierenden Sozialismus* (Cologne, 1979), 253.
16. This wording is found in Thomas Lindenberger, “Die Diktatur der Grenzen. Zur Einleitung,” in  
*Herrschaftsstrukturen und Erfahrungsdimensionen der DDR-Geschichte, Teil 1: Herrschaft und Eigen-  
Sinn in der Diktatur: Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR, Zeithistorische Studien* 12, ed.  
Thomas Lindenberger (Cologne, 1999), 13–44, here 32.
17. On this culture of the central apparatus of the Communist Party essentially built up by Stalin, see  
Kotkin, *Stalin: Volume I*, 435.
18. Stephen Kotkin and Jan Tomasz Gross, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist  
Establishment* (New York, 2009).

19. Interview with Horst Wambutt, June 3, 2013, 27, author's transcript and audio recording. It is worth noting here parenthetically that an apartment in a prefab panelized block in the 1970s and 1980s undoubtedly represented an element of privilege.
20. On the causal relationship between the formalization of a social system and the creation of informal behaviors, see Niklas Luhmann, *Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation, Mit einem Epilog 1994*, 4th ed. (Berlin, 1995), 49.
21. Milovan Djilas, *Die neue Klasse. Eine Analyse des kommunistischen Systems* (Munich, 1957).
22. Luhmann, *Funktionen und Folgen*, 73–88.
23. It is hardly surprising that such a transformation occurred: "Dictators, if they wanted to achieve long-term stability, had to be able to adapt to changing circumstances." Stephan Merl, *Politische Kommunikation in der Diktatur. Deutschland und die Sowjetunion im Vergleich* (Göttingen, 2012), 10.
24. Luhmann, *Funktionen und Folgen*, 33.
25. Christoph Boyer, "Arbeiterkarrieren? Zur sozialen Herkunft der zentralen Staatsbürokratie der SBZ/DDR, 1945–1961," in *Arbeiter in der SBZ-DDR*, ed. Peter Hübner (Essen, 1999), 667–79, here 667, n. 1.
26. On the concept "world of meaning" (*Sinnwelt*), see Martin Sabrow, "Sozialismus als Sinnwelt. Diktatorische Herrschaft in kulturhistorischer Perspektive," *Potsdamer Bulletin für Zeithistorische Studien* no. 40/41 (2007): 9–23.
27. Interview with Wolfgang Herger, December 2, 2010, 22, author's transcript and audio recording.
28. The existence of a Western apparatus distinguished the SED's Central Committee from the apparatus structure of its "brother parties" in the Eastern bloc. A similar breakdown of the Central Committee apparatus of the CPSU is found in Nikolay Mitrokhin, "The CPSU Central Committee Apparatus, 1970–85: Personnel and Role in the Soviet Political System," *Russian History* 41, no. 3 (2014): 307–28, here 311.
29. Richard M. Cyert and James G. March, *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm*, 2nd ed. (Malden, 2006).
30. The term (*Tiefenschichten der Herrschaft*) stems from Ralph Jessen, "DDR-Geschichte und Totalitarismustheorie," *Berliner Debatte Initial* 6, no. 4–5 (1995): 17–24, here 22.
31. A still very useful overview is provided by Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London, 2002); Hermann Weber, *Die DDR 1945–1990*, 5th revised and updated ed., *Grundriss der Geschichte* 20 (Munich, 2012).
32. Jens Gieseke, "Die Einheit von Wirtschafts-, Sozial- und Sicherheitspolitik. Überwachung und Militarisierung als Probleme einer Sozialgeschichte der DDR in der Ära Honecker," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51, no. 11 (2003): 996–1021, here 1006. Early criticisms of the neglect of SED history can be found in H. Weber, "Zum Stand der Forschung," 256; and more recently in Jens Gieseke and Hermann Wentker, "Die SED—Umriss eines Forschungsfeldes," in *SED-Geschichte zwischen Mauerbau und Mauerfall*, ed. Jens Gieseke and Hermann Wentker (Berlin, 2011), 7–15; Thomas Lindenberger, "Ist die DDR ausgeforscht? Phasen, Trends und ein optimistischer Ausblick," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 64, no. 24–26 (2014): 27–32.
33. Armin Nolzen, "Charismatic Legitimation and Bureaucratic Rule: The NSDAP in the Third Reich, 1933–1945," *German History* 23, no. 4 (2005): 494–518, here 495. Only in the 2000s did the local chapters, district leaders and functionaries of the Nazi Party attract the attention of scholars as social spaces and representatives of power. See, e.g., Carl-Wilhelm Reibel, *Das Fundament der Diktatur. Die NSDAP-Ortsgruppen 1932–1945* (Paderborn, 2002); Sebastian Lehmann, *Kreisleiter der NSDAP in Schleswig-Holstein. Lebensläufe und Herrschaftspraxis einer regionalen Machtelite* (Gütersloh, 2006); Christine Müller-Botsch, "Den richtigen Mann an die richtige Stelle." *Biographien und politisches Handeln von unteren NSDAP-Funktionären* (Frankfurt am Main, 2009).
34. Rüdiger Bergien and Jens Gieseke, eds., *Communist Parties Revisited: Socio-Cultural Approaches to Party Rule in the Soviet Bloc, 1956–1991* (New York, 2018).
35. Jens Hüttmann, *DDR-Geschichte und ihre Forscher. Akteure und Konjunkturen der bundesdeutschen DDR-Forschung* (Berlin, 2008), 394.
36. Hermann Weber, *Damals, als ich Wunderlich hieß. Vom Parteihochschüler zum kritischen Sozialisten. Die SED-Parteihochschule "Karl Marx" bis 1949* (Berlin, 2002); Wolfgang Leonhard, *Die Revolution*

- entlässt ihre Kinder, 2nd ed. (Cologne, 1955); Fritz Schenk, *Im Vorzimmer der Diktatur. 12 Jahre Pankow* (Cologne, 1962).
37. Peter Christian Ludz, *Parteielite im Wandel. Funktionsaufbau, Sozialstruktur und Ideologie der SED-Führung. Eine empirisch-systematische Untersuchung* (Cologne, 1968).
  38. For a historiographical positioning of Ludz, see also Jens Gieseke, “Die SED-Parteielite zwischen Wandel und Erstarrung. Peter Christian Ludz’ Modernisierungstheorie,” in *50 Klassiker der Zeitgeschichte*, ed. Jürgen Danyel, Jan-Holger Kirschm, and Martin Sabrow (Göttingen, 2007): 110–13.
  39. See, esp. Gerd Meyer, *Die DDR-Machtelite in der Ära Honecker* (Tübingen, 1991).
  40. See esp. Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politbüro. Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin, 1991); Günter Schabowski, *Der Absturz* (Berlin, 1991) and *Das Politbüro. Ende eines Mythos. Eine Befragung* (Reinbek, 1991).
  41. C. Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, 1–69.
  42. Ammer, “Die Machthierarchie”; Kaiser, “Herrschaftsinstrumente”; Dietmar Keller, “Die Machthierarchie der SED-Diktatur,” in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission*, ed. Thomas Ammer (n.p., 1999), 3013–22; see also Monika Kaiser, “Die Zentrale der Diktatur. Organisatorische Weichenstellungen, Strukturen und Kompetenzen der SED-Führung in der SBZ/DDR 1946 bis 1952,” in *Historische DDR-Forschung: Aufsätze und Studien*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Berlin, 1993), 57–86; and Andreas Herbst, Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, and Jürgen Winkler, eds., *Die SED. Geschichte—Organisation—Politik. Ein Handbuch* (Berlin, 1997).
  43. See, e.g., Schabowski, *Das Politbüro*; Schabowski, *Der Absturz*; Reinhold Andert and Wolfgang Herzberg, *Der Sturz. Erich Honecker im Kreuzverhör* (Gütersloh, 1990); Hermann Axen and Harald Neubert, *Ich war ein Diener der Partei. Autobiographische Gespräche mit Harald Neubert* (Berlin, 1996); Brigitte Zimmermann and Hans-Dieter Schütt, *Noch Fragen, Genossen!* (Berlin, 1994); Zimmermann and Schütt, eds., *ohnMacht. DDR-Funktionäre sagen aus* (Berlin, 1992). For an outstanding (counter) example of an early and systematic interviewing of contemporary witnesses guided by historiographical methods, see Theo Pirker, Mario Rainer Lepsius, Rainer Weinert, and Hans-Hermann Hertle, eds., *Der Plan als Befehl und Fiktion. Wirtschaftsführung in der DDR. Gespräche und Analysen* (Wiesbaden 1995).
  44. Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat*. The SED as a mass-membership party is virtually nonexistent in this work. Schroeder dedicates a mere half a page of his 782-page history to “dissatisfaction in the ranks of the SED” as a contributing factor to the inner erosion of state socialism—a half page mostly filled with a quote from Erich Mielke. *Ibid.*, 78.
  45. Particularly with reference to the “fundamental contradiction” between “specialist and ideological bureaucracies” in the GDR, a significant distinction in the present study. Sigrd Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft: zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR 1945–1989* (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), 13; on the controversies unleashed by Meuschel in GDR studies, see Thomas Lindenberger, “In den Grenzen der Diktatur. Die DDR als Gegenstand von ‘Gesellschaftsgeschichte,’” in *Bilanz und Perspektiven der DDR-Forschung*, ed. Rainer Eppelmann, Bernd Faulenbach, and Ulrich Mählert (Paderborn, 2003), 238–45, here 239f.
  46. Andreas Malycha and Peter Jochen Winters, *Die SED: Geschichte einer deutschen Partei* (Munich, 2009).
  47. Andreas Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker* (Munich, 2014), 2. Malycha justifies his partial equation of the SED and GDR history with the argument that “a distinction between the state party with its totalitarian claims to power and the real existential conditions of SED dictatorship . . . is well-nigh impossible.”
  48. See, e.g., the contributions in Dierk Hoffmann and Hermann Wentker, eds., *Das letzte Jahr der SBZ. Politische Weichenstellungen und Kontinuitäten im Prozeß der Gründung der DDR* (Munich, 2000); Michael Lemke, ed., *Sowjetisierung und Eigenständigkeit in der SBZ/DDR (1945–1953)* (Cologne, 1999).
  49. Jan Foitzik, “Einführung,” in *Sowjetische Kommandanturen und deutsche Verwaltung in der SBZ und frühen DDR: Dokumente*, ed. Jan Foitzik (Berlin, 2015), 7–32, here 8.
  50. In particular, Jan Foitzik, *Sowjetische Interessenpolitik in Deutschland 1944–1954: Dokumente, Texte und Materialien zur Zeitgeschichte 18* (Munich, 2012); Foitzik, ed., *Sowjetische Kommandanturen*.

- Still important despite a number of critical objections: Rolf Badstübner, Wilfried Loth, and Wilhelm Pieck, *Wilhelm Pieck—Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik 1945–1953* (Berlin, 1994); see also, esp., Jochen P. Laufer and Georgij P. Kynin, eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941–1948*, Vols. 1–3 (Berlin, 2004); Gerhard Wettig, *Der Tjul'panov-Bericht: Sowjetische Besatzungspolitik in Deutschland nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 2012).
51. See, e.g., Monika Kaiser, “Wechsel von sowjetischer Besatzungspolitik zu sowjetischer Kontrolle? Sowjetische Einflussnahme und ostdeutsche Handlungsspielräume im Übergangsjahr von der SBZ zur DDR,” in *Sowjetisierung und Eigenständigkeit*, ed. Michael Lemke 187–231; Gerhard Wettig, “Die sowjetische Besatzungsmacht und der politische Handlungsspielraum in der SBZ (1945–1949),” in *Die DDR und der Westen: transnationale Beziehungen 1949–1989*, ed. Ulrich Pfeil (Berlin, 2001), 39–62.
  52. For an overview, see the contributions in Manfred Wilke, ed., *Anatomie der Parteizentrale. Die KPD/SED auf dem Weg zur Macht* (Berlin, 1998); Manfred Wilke and Michael Kubina, “Die Etablierung einer Okkupationspartei. Ergebnisse des Projektes zu Struktur, Funktion und Entwicklung des zentralen Parteiapparates der KPD/SED,” in *Der SED-Staat: Geschichte und Nachwirkungen. Gesammelte Schriften von Manfred Wilke. Zu seinem 65. Geburtstag zsgest. und hg. von Hans-Joachim Veen*, ed. Manfred Wilke (Cologne, 2006), 133–66.
  53. Michael Kubina, “Der Aufbau des zentralen Parteiapparates der KPD 1945–1946,” in *Anatomie der Parteizentrale*, ed. Manfred Wilke (Berlin, 1998), 49–117; Michael Kubina, “In einer solchen Form, die nicht erkennen lässt, worum es sich handelt . . . ‘Zu den Anfängen der parteieigenen Geheim- und Sicherheitsapparate der KPD/SED nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg,’” *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz* (IWK) 32, no. 3 (1996): 340–74.
  54. Thomas Klein, “Für die Einheit und Reinheit der Partei.” *Die innerparteilichen Kontrollorgane der SED in der Ära Ulbricht* (Cologne, 2002).
  55. Andreas Malycha, *Die SED. Geschichte ihrer Stalinisierung 1946–1953* (Paderborn, 2000); see also Harold Hurwitz in collaboration with Ursula Böhme und Andreas Malycha, *Die Salinisierung der SED. Zum Verlust von Freiräumen und sozialdemokratischer Identität in den Vorständen 1946–1949* (Opladen, 1997).
  56. Leonhard, *Die Revolution entlässt ihre Kinder*; Erich W. Gniffke, *Jahre mit Ulbricht* (Cologne, 1966); H. Weber, *Damals, als ich Wunderlich hieß*.
  57. Richard Gyptner headed the Central Secretariat, thus occupying a key position in Party headquarters; Paul Verner began as director of the Youth Department in the Central Secretariat; Richard Stahlmann was the first director of the Department of Transportation. Michael F. Scholz, *Skandinavische Erfahrungen erwünscht? Nachexil und Remigration. Die ehemaligen KPD-Emigranten in Skandinavien und ihr weiteres Schicksal in der SBZ/DDR* (Stuttgart, 2000).
  58. Heike Amos, *Politik und Organisation der SED-Zentrale 1949–1963: Struktur und Arbeitsweise von Politbüro, Sekretariat, Zentralkomitee und ZK-Apparat* (Münster, 2003).
  59. Since the early 1990s, Kaiser has published several organizational histories of SED headquarters. See Kaiser, “Die Zentrale der Diktatur.”
  60. Ludz, *Parteilite im Wandel*.
  61. Only when she can clearly demonstrate the function of individual senior Central Committee members, e.g., in connection with the tightening of cultural policy in 1965, does she refer to them by name—in this case Siegfried Wagner and Lothar Oppermann, the respective heads of the Culture and Education departments. Their signatures on secretariat drafts calling for a tightening of policy are hence proof that they must have been dogmatists.
  62. Kaiser, *Machtwechsel*, 63.
  63. *Ibid.*, 134.
  64. See, e.g., Malycha and Winters, *Die SED*, 164f., 192; and more recently—albeit from a journalistic perspective—Decker, *1965*. Decker closely follows Kaiser in consistently viewing “the functionaries” as the decisive force in the dualism between reformers and “dogmatists” or “ideologues,” all the while treating them as an “amorphous, mysterious mass of undetermined size.” See also the review of

- Günter Agde, “Rezension zu: Decker, Gunnar: 1965. Der kurze Sommer der DDR. München 2015,” *H-Soz-Kult*, October 20, 2015, <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-24563> (retrieved on June 3, 2016).
65. André Steiner, *Die DDR-Wirtschaftsreform der sechziger Jahre. Konflikt zwischen Effizienz- und Machtkalkül* (Berlin, 1999), 73f., 84. The interviews conducted by Theo Pirker, M. Rainer Lepsius, Rainer Weinert and Hans-Hermann Hertle with former leading economic functionaries of the GDR show that the period of reform, rather than uniting the apparatus against Ulbricht, only made it more diverse and divided. Pirker et al., *Der Plan als Befehl und Fiktion*.
  66. And yet even this hefty study offers precious few insights into the specific political practices and inner dynamics of the apparatus. In his introduction on the “structure, development and operation of SED Party headquarters” in the Honecker era, Malycha indicates that there are “still significant research gaps.” Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker*, 2.
  67. The Ministry of National Defense (MfNV), the Ministry of the Interior (Mdi), and the Ministry for State Security (MfS).
  68. Armin Wagner, *Walter Ulbricht und die geheime Sicherheitspolitik der SED. Der Nationale Verteidigungsrat der DDR und seine Vorgeschichte (1953 bis 1971)*, Militärgeschichte der DDR 4, published by the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Berlin, 2002), 236–51; Heiner Bröckermann, *Landesverteidigung und Militarisierung: Militär- und Sicherheitspolitik der DDR in der Ära Honecker 1971–1989*, Militärgeschichte der DDR 20, a publication of the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Berlin, 2011), 79–81.
  69. Siegfried Suckut, “Generalkontrollbeauftragter der SED oder gewöhnliches Staatsorgan? Probleme der Funktionsbestimmung des MfS in den sechziger Jahren,” in *Staatspartei und Staatssicherheit. Zum Verhältnis von SED und MfS*, ed. Siegfried Suckut and Walter Süß (Berlin, 1997), 151–66; Silke Schumann, *Die Parteiorganisation der SED im MfS*, MfS-Handbuch, published by the BStU (Berlin, 2002); Jens Gieseke, *Die hauptamtlichen Mitarbeiter der Staatssicherheit. Personalstruktur und Lebenswelt 1950–1989/90* (Berlin, 2000), 229–36.
  70. Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker*, 259–63.
  71. Wilhelm Mensing, *SED-Hilfe für West-Genossen. Die Arbeit der Abteilung Verkehr beim Zentralkomitee der SED im Spiegel der Überlieferung des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit der DDR (1946–1976)*, a publication of the BStU (Berlin, 2010).
  72. Heike Amos, *Die SED-Deutschlandpolitik 1961 bis 1989: Ziele, Aktivitäten und Konflikte* (Göttingen, 2015), esp. 50–65.
  73. Jochen Staadt, *Die geheime Westpolitik der SED 1960–1970: Von der gesamtdeutschen Orientierung zur sozialistischen Nation*, Studien des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat an der Freien Universität Berlin (Berlin, 1993).
  74. Anke Fiedler, *Medienlenkung in der DDR* (Cologne, 2014); Ulrich Bürger, *Das sagen wir natürlich so nicht! Donnerstag-Argus bei Herrn Geggel* (Berlin, 1990).
  75. Bürger, *Das sagen wir natürlich so nicht!*
  76. Siegfried Lokatis, “Verlagspolitik zwischen Plan und Zensur. Das ‘Amt für Literatur und Verlagswesen’ oder die schwere Geburt des Literaturapparates der DDR,” in *Historische DDR-Forschung*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Berlin, 1993), 303–25; Siegfried Lokatis, “Dietz. Probleme der Ideologiewirtschaft im zentralen Parteiverlag der SED” in *Von der Aufgabe der Freiheit: politische Verantwortung und bürgerliche Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Hans Mommsen zum 5. November 1995*, ed. Christian Jansen (Berlin, 1995), 533–48; Siegfried Lokatis, *Der rote Faden. Kommunistische Parteigeschichte und Zensur unter Walter Ulbricht*, (Cologne, 2003).
  77. Joachim Ackermann, “Der SED-Parteiapparat und die Bildende Kunst,” *Eingegrenzt—Ausgegrenzt: Bildende Kunst und Parteiherrschaft in der DDR 1961–1989*, ed. Hannelore Offner and Klaus Schroeder (Berlin, 2000), 15–87.
  78. Darnton, *Censors at Work*.
  79. For an overview of the state of research, see the editors’ introduction and various contributions in Bergien and Gieseke, *Communist Parties Revisited*.

80. Krzysztof Dąbek, *PZPR retrospektywny portret własny* (Warsaw, 2006); Dąbek, "The Idea of Social Unity and Its Influence on the Mechanisms of a Totalitarian Regime in the Years 1956–1980," in *Communist Parties Revisited*, ed. Rüdiger Bergien and Jens Gieseke (New York, 2018).
81. Michel Christian, *Camarades ou apparatchiks? Les communistes en RDA et en Tchécoslovaquie (1945–1989)* (Paris, 2016).
82. William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (London, 2003); Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith, eds., *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev* (London, 2009); Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic, eds., *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964* (London, 2011); Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle, eds., *Brezhnev Reconsidered* (Houndmills, 2002). See also Susanne Schattenberg, "Von Chrusčev zu Gorbačev—Die Sowjetunion zwischen Reform und Zusammenbruch," *Neue Politische Literatur*, 55, no. 2 (2010): 255–84.
83. Thus, for example, Khrushchev's "Party revival" after the death of Stalin strengthened the role of the central apparatus, which was also the key executive authority in Khrushchev's various economic reform efforts despite a slew of "anti-bureaucratism" campaigns. On Khrushchev the "Party politician" and "apparatchik" see Gorlizki, "Party Revivalism"; Hans-Henning Schröder, "Lebendige Verbindung mit den Massen: Sowjetische Gesellschaftspolitik in der Ära Chrusčev," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 34, no. 4 (1986): 524–60; Stephan Merl, "Kapitel III: Entstalinisierung, Reformen und Wettlauf der Systeme 1953–1964," in *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands, Vol. 5: 1945–1991. Vom Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs bis zum Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion*, ed. Stefan Plaggenborg (Stuttgart, 2002), 175–318; Alexander Titov, "The Central Committee Apparatus under Khrushchev," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964*, ed. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic (London, 2011), 41–60.
84. Titov, "The Central Committee Apparatus," 42.
85. Older Sovietology came to the same conclusion. See, e.g., T. H. Rigby, "The Soviet Regional Leadership: The Brezhnev Generation," *Slavic Review*, 37, no. 1 (1978): 1–24.
86. Andreas Oberender, "Die Partei der Patrone und Klienten. Formen personaler Herrschaft unter Leonid Breschnev," in *Vernetzte Improvisationen. Gesellschaftliche Subsysteme in Ostmitteleuropa und in der DDR*, ed. Annette Schuhmann (Cologne, 2008), 57–76; Yoram Gorlizki, "Too Much Trust: Regional Party Leaders and Local Political Networks under Brezhnev," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 3 (2010): 676–700; Susanne Schattenberg, "Trust, Care, and Familiarity in the Politburo: Brezhnev's Scenario of Power," *Kritika* 16, no. 4 (2015): 835–58.
87. On Honecker's political style, see most recently Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker*, esp. 72–75; Martin Sabrow, "Der unterschätzte Diktator. Erich Honecker war kein Apparatschik und auch kein politisches Leichtgewicht: Eine kritische Würdigung zum 100. Geburtstag," *Der Spiegel* 34 (2012): 46–48; Sabrow, "Der führende Repräsentant. Erich Honecker in generationsbiographischer Perspektive," *Zeithistorische Forschungen / Studies in Contemporary History* 10, no. 1 (2013): 61–88.
88. Belova and Lazarev, *Funding Loyalty*.
89. The following have been published to date: Nikolay Mitrokhin, "'Strange People' in the Politburo: Institutional Problems and the Human Factor in the Economic Collapse of the Soviet Empire," *Kritika* 10, no. 4 (2009): 869–96; Mitrokhin, "The CPSU Central Committee Apparatus."
90. As succinctly put by Frank Ettrich, *Die andere Moderne. Soziologische Nachrufe auf den Staatssozialismus* (Berlin, 2005), 142.
91. This branch of research was booming in the second half of the 1990s, see especially the contributions in Peter Hübner, ed., *Eliten im Sozialismus. Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, Zeithistorische Studien 15 (Cologne, 1999); Stefan Hornbostel, ed., *Sozialistische Eliten: Horizontale und vertikale Differenzierungsmuster in der DDR* (Opladen, 1999).
92. Hans Ehler and Armin Wagner, eds., *Genosse General! Die Militäreelite der DDR in biografischen Skizzen* (Berlin, 2003).
93. Gieseke, *Die hauptamtlichen Mitarbeiter*; more recently on the basis of interviews: Uwe Krähnke et al., eds., *Im Dienst der Staatsicherheit. Eine soziologische Studie über die hauptamtlichen Mitarbeiter des DDR-Geheimdienstes* (Frankfurt am Main, 2017).



94. Ralph Jessen, *Akademische Elite und kommunistische Diktatur. Die ostdeutsche Hochschullehrerschaft in der Ulbricht-Ära* (Göttingen, 1999).
95. Anna-Sabine Ernst, “Die beste Prophylaxe ist der Sozialismus”: Ärzte und medizinische Hochschullehrer in der SBZ/DDR 1945–1961 (Münster, 1997).
96. Dolores L. Augustine, “Red Prometheus: Engineering and Dictatorship in East Germany, 1945–1990” (Master’s thesis, Cambridge, MA, 2007).
97. Peter Hübner, “Einleitung: Antielitäre Eliten?,” in *Eliten im Sozialismus*, ed. Peter Hübner (Cologne, 1999), 9–35, here 27.
98. Besides which there were no analogous high-ranking positions or functional elites in West Germany that would have allowed for a comparative analysis as in the case of doctors, university instructors and military officers.
99. Mitrokhin, “The CPSU Central Committee Apparatus,” 311.
100. Janson, *Totengräber der DDR*.
101. Erich Fischer, *Geständnisse und Bekenntnisse* (Schkeuditz, 2002).
102. Manfred Uschner, *Die zweite Etage: Funktionsweise eines Machtapparates* (Berlin, 1993).
103. Most of the many Central Committee members Fischer discusses are referred to by their initials, though not uniformly, which makes for somewhat laborious reading.
104. Jay Rowell, *Le totalitarisme au concret. Les politiques du logement en RDA* (Paris, 2006); Rowell, “Der Erste Bezirkssekretär: Zur Scharnierfunktion der ‘Bezirksfürsten’ zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie,” in *Länder, Gaue und Bezirke: Mitteldeutschland im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Michael Richter, Thomas Schaarschmidt, and Mike Schmeitzner (Halle, 2007), 213–30. Mario Niemann likewise refers to the importance of informal networks for Party rule at the regional level in his investigation of first and second regional secretaries. Mario Niemann, *Die Sekretäre der SED-Bezirksleitungen 1952–1989* (Paderborn, 2007).
105. Andrea Bahr, *Parteiherrschaft vor Ort. Die SED-Kreisleitung Brandenburg an der Havel 1961–1989*, Kommunismus und Gesellschaft 3 (Berlin, 2016).
106. Some initial reflections along these lines: Rüdiger Bergien, “Parteiarbeiter. Die hauptamtlichen Funktionäre der SED,” in *SED-Geschichte*, ed. Gieseke and Wentker, 164–86.
107. See, e.g., the illuminating memoirs of the first director of the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany in the GDR: Günter Gaus, *Wo Deutschland liegt. Eine Ortsbestimmung* (Hamburg, 1983), esp. 12.
108. See esp. Mitrokhin, “‘Strange People’ in the Politburo.”
109. The term is used in Bernhard R. Kroener, *Der starke Mann im Heimatkriegsgebiet. Generaloberst Friedrich Fromm. Eine Biographie* (Paderborn, 2005).
110. The relevant overview at Wikipedia is just as incomplete as the available introductions to the finding aids of the existing records of the individual Central Committee departments held at the German Federal Archives. Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker*, 84f., offers only an overview of Central Committee departmental heads for the years 1971 to 1989, the period of investigation of his study.
111. On the concept of “power” in organizations, see esp. Erhard Friedberg, *Ordnung und Macht. Dynamiken organisierten Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main, 1995); on “networks,” see Veronika Tacke, “Netzwerk und Adresse,” *Soziale Systeme, Zeitschrift für Soziologische Theorie* 6, no. 2 (2000): 291–320; on “social practices,” see Andreas Reckwitz, “Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken,” in *Unscharfe Grenzen. Perspektiven der Kulturosoziologie*, ed. Andreas Reckwitz (Bielefeld, 2008), 97–130.
112. Just a few examples of many: Bernhard Löffler, *Soziale Marktwirtschaft und administrative Praxis. Das Bundeswirtschaftsministerium unter Ludwig Erhard* (Stuttgart, 2002); Löffler, “Moderne Institutionengeschichte in kulturhistorischer Erweiterung. Thesen und Beispiele aus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” in *Geschichte der Politik. Alte und Neue Wege*, ed. Hans-Christof Kraus, *Historische Zeitschrift: Beihefte; N.F. 44* (Munich, 2007), 155–80; Armin Nolzen, “Die Dienststelle des Stellvertreters des Führers/Partei-Kanzlei als Verwaltungsbehörde der NSDAP. Struktur, Organisationskultur und Entscheidungspraxis,” in *Im Schatten der Macht. Kommunikationskulturen in Politik und Verwaltung 1600–1950*, ed. Stefan Haas and Mark Hengerer (Frankfurt am Main,

- 2008), 221–51; Armin Nolzen, “Moderne Gesellschaft und Organisation. Transformationen der NS-DAP nach 1933,” in *Interessen, Strukturen und Entscheidungsprozesse! Für eine politische Kontextualisierung des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Manfred Grieger et al. (Essen, 2010), 91–112; Sven Reichardt and Wolfgang Seibel, *Der prekäre Staat. Herrschen und Verwalten im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2011); Klaus Weinbauer, *Schutzpolizei in der Bundesrepublik. Zwischen Bürgerkrieg und innerer Sicherheit: Die turbulenten sechziger Jahre* (Paderborn, 2003); and, furthermore, an example of how a core topic of contemporary history can be reinterpreted through the lens of organizational sociology: Stefan Kühl, *Ganz normale Organisationen. Zur Soziologie des Holocaust* (Berlin, 2014).
113. Luhmann, *Funktionen und Folgen*, 29.
114. On the term “outposts” (*Grenzstellen*), see Veronika Tacke, “Formalität und Informalität. Zu einer klassischen Unterscheidung der Organisationssoziologie,” in *Formalität und Informalität in Organisationen*, ed. Victoria von Groddeck and Sylvia Marlene Wilz (Wiesbaden, 2015), 37–92, here 64.
115. Merl, *Politische Kommunikation*, 10.
116. Tacke, “Formalität und Informalität,” 38.
117. A critique of this definition can be found in Luhmann, *Funktionen und Folgen*, 31f.
118. A critique of this “administrative-history understanding of institutions” combined with an appeal to focus instead on “institutional reality” can be found in Löffler, “Moderne Institutionengeschichte,” here 155, 157. See also Philipp Springer, “Die ganz normale Abteilung XII. Archivgeschichte und MfS-Forschung in institutionengeschichtlicher Erweiterung,” in *Das Gedächtnis der Staatssicherheit. Die Kartei- und Archivabteilung des MfS*, ed. Karsten Jedlitschka and Philipp Springer (Göttingen, 2015), 17f.
119. See esp. Nils Brunsson, *The Irrational Organization: Irrationality as a Basis for Organizational Action and Change* (Chichester, 1991).
120. Tacke, “Formalität und Informalität,” 40.
121. More examples in Luhmann, *Funktionen und Folgen*, 29–39.
122. Tacke, “Formalität und Informalität,” 66.
123. “A social system is formally organized to the degree that its expectations are formalized. . . . [A behavioral expectation is formalized] when it is covered by a membership rule in a social system, i.e., when there is a recognizable consensus that failing to acknowledge or meet this expectation is incompatible with continued membership.” Luhmann, *Funktionen und Folgen*, 38.
124. Sackmann, Sonja A., “Das Zusammenspiel des Informellen und Formellen aus organisationskultureller Perspektive,” in *Formalität und Informalität*, ed. Groddeck and Wilz, 123–42, here 126.
125. The classic study here is Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies* (New York, 1982).
126. On the concept of organizational culture, see esp. Sonja A. Sackmann, “Cultures and Subcultures: An Analysis of Organizational Knowledge,” *Administrative Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (March 1992): 140–61; Joanne Martin, *Cultures in Organizations: Three Perspectives* (New York, 1993).
127. These refer to the study of a historical collective by comparing the lives and careers of the individuals comprising it. Wilhelm Heinz Schröder, “Kollektive Biographien in der historischen Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung,” in *Lebenslauf und Gesellschaft. Zum Einsatz von kollektiven Biographien in der historischen Sozialforschung*, ed. Wilhelm Heinz Schröder (Stuttgart, 1985), 7–17.
128. Heinrich Best, “Wenn Quantität in Qualität umschlägt: die Prosopographie der DDR-Funktionseleiten als ein Beitrag zur Hermeneutik der realsozialistischen Lebenswelt,” *Historical Social Research*, Supplement 20 (2008): 195–210, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-191780> (retrieved June 23, 2016); Heinrich Best, “Platzierungslogiken und Rekrutierungsregime von DDR-Funktionseleiten. Ergebnisse einer Korrespondenzanalyse,” in *(Dys)Funktionale Differenzierung? Rekrutierungsmuster und Karriereverläufe der DDR-Funktionseleiten*, SFB 580 Mitteilungen, Gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen nach dem Systemumbruch, ed. Heinrich Best and Ronald Gebauer (Jena, 2002), 21–32; Stefan Hornbostel, “Die besten Vertreter der Arbeiterklasse. Kaderpolitik und gesellschaftliche Differenzierungsmuster im Spiegel des zentralen Kaderdatenspeichers des Ministerrates der DDR,” in *Sozialistische Eliten*, ed. Stefan Hornbostel (Opladen, 1999), 177–210.

129. Heinrich Best and Heinz Mestrup, eds., *Die Ersten und Zweiten Sekretäre der SED: Machtstrukturen und Herrschaftspraxis in den thüringischen Bezirken der DDR* (Weimar, 2003).
130. Gieseke, *Die hauptamtlichen Mitarbeiter*.
131. Stephan Fingerle, *Waffen in Arbeiterhand? Die Rekrutierung des Offizierskorps der Nationalen Volksarmee und ihrer Vorläufer*, a publication of the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Berlin, 2001).
132. On the concept of “greedy organizations,” see Lewis A. Coser, *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment* (New York, 1974).
133. Heike Solga, *Auf dem Weg in eine klassenlose Gesellschaft? Klassenlagen und Mobilität zwischen Generationen in der DDR* (Berlin, 1995); Heike Solga, “Systemloyalität als Bedingung sozialer Mobilität im Staatssozialismus, am Beispiel der DDR,” *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 4, no. 4 (1994): 523–42.
134. The same approach was used by Gieseke, *Die hauptamtlichen Mitarbeiter*, 28–30.
135. “I was of course a staunch supporter of this project known as the GDR,” is how Peter F. described in retrospect his motives for joining the FDJ apparatus as a fulltime employee, “and so I thought, after giving it some consideration, you have to do this, you’re able to do this.” Interview with Peter F., May 19, 2011, 3, author’s transcript and audio recording.
136. Kaiser, *Machtwechsel*, 38.
137. Stern, *Porträt*, 159. Admittedly, Stern’s perspective was marked by the conflict between systems, so that she tended to view the SED more as a coercive organization than as one that was able to offer its members a plausible way to give their lives meaning.
138. C. Wright Mills, “Situating Actions and Vocabularies of Motive,” *American Sociological Review* 5, no. 6 (1940). It is worth noting in passing that “belief” or “ideological conviction” is a motive that contemporary witnesses find expedient in the context of interviews. Ideological convictions are hard to second-guess and have a certain legitimacy from the perspective of people with a different political mindset.
139. Heinz Abels, *Einführung in die Soziologie*, Vol. 2: *Die Individuen in ihrer Gesellschaft*, 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden, 2007), 166. The main objection to rational choice theory is that actors in modern societies, all the more so in organizations, are not autonomous subjects, that the choices they make depend on social relationships as well as on formal and informal structures. An example of the application of rational choice theory to a communist state party, the CPSU, is the study of Belova and Lazarev, *Funding Loyalty*.
140. Andrew I. Port, “The Banalities of East German Historiographic,” in *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities After Hitler*, ed. Mary Fulbrook and Andrew I. Port (New York, 2013), 1–30, here 8.
141. The term “consensual fiction” (*Konsensfiktion*) is from Luhmann, *Funktionen und Folgen*, 68f.
142. Martin Sabrow, “Einleitung: Geschichtsdiskurs und Doktringgesellschaft,” in *Geschichte als Herrschaftsdiskurs. Der Umgang mit der Vergangenheit in der DDR*, ed. Martin Sabrow (Cologne, 2000), 9–35.
143. Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, 2006), 53.
144. When, for example, Ernst Hansch, director of the Central Committee Department of Agriculture, read page after page from the works of Stalin at the public removal of a high-ranking agricultural functionary in late 1949, this *might* indicate that Hansch was a dyed-in-the-wool Stalinist. All that is certain is that Hansch knew what was expected of a Central Committee departmental head (or knew his best defense against any potential objections from the agricultural functionaries in attendance). Neufassung der Protokoll-Texte über die Fraktions-sitzung vom 22. Dezember 1949 im Haus des Deutschen Bauern, 22.12.1949, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/2.022/18, fols. 121–26, here 124.
145. Interview with Renate Michalik-Erxleben, January 18, 2016, 31, author’s transcript and audio recording.
146. Kühl, *Ganz normale Organisationen*, 239f.
147. Dolores L. Augustine, “The Power Question in GDR History,” *German Studies Review* 34, no. 3 (2011): 634.
148. *Ibid.*

149. This is not only the case in parts of the German-language history of the GDR. John Connelly describes East German society as “a society shaped decisively, if not in every last detail, by the centralized party bureaucracy.” John Connelly, “The Paradox of East German Communism: From Non-Stalinism to Neo-Stalinism,” in *Stalinism Revisited: The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest, 2009), 161–94, here 191; a similar position is found in Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic* (Basingstoke, 2012).
150. With regard to SED rule, the concepts of “domination as a social practice” and “*Eigensinn*” can be interpreted to mean that no Party resolution was implemented the way the Politbüro had intended it, that every “Party assignment” and every campaign dictated “from above” first had to be appropriated “from below”—which opened up opportunities for resistance as well as participation. For a detailed discussion, see Alf Lüttdke, ed., *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis. Historische und sozial-anthropologische Studien*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 91 (Göttingen, 1991).
151. Thomas Lindenberger, “SED-Herrschaft als soziale Praxis, Herrschaft und ‘Eigen-Sinn’: Problemstellung und Begriffe,” in *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft. Studien zum Herrschaftsalltag in der DDR*, Analysen und Dokumente 30, ed. Jens Gieseke (Göttingen, 2007), S. 19.
152. As Gieseke demonstrates in his study on full-time Stasi employees and Lindenberger in his work on the People’s Police: Gieseke, *Die hauptamtlichen Mitarbeiter*; Thomas Lindenberger, *Volkspolizei. Herrschaftspraxis und öffentliche Ordnung im SED-Staat 1952–1968*, Zeithistorische Studien 23 (Cologne, 2003).
153. These arguments—in this case with respect to the administration of Nazi Germany—in Frank Bajohr, *Parvenüs und Profiteure. Korruption in der NS-Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2001), 133f.; Nolzen, “Charismatic Legitimation,” 515. Whether the Central Committee’s cultural department was processing petitions from indignant East Germans or working together with the Ministry of Culture and State Security to crack down on insubordinate artists does not affect its classification as one of Weber’s forms of domination so long as its organizational culture remains intact.
154. With a view to the organization of the Third Reich, see Nolzen, “Charismatic Legitimation,” 514.
155. Ralph Jessen and Jens Gieseke, “Die SED in der staatssozialistischen Gesellschaft,” *SED-Geschichte*, ed. Gieseke and Wentker, 16–60, here 20f.; Martin Sabrow, “Das Charisma des Kommunismus. Überlegungen zur Anwendung des Weberschen Herrschaftstypus auf die DDR,” in *ZeitRäume. Potsdamer Almanach des Zentrums für Zeithistorische Forschung 2006*, ed. Martin Sabrow (Berlin, 2007), 162–174.
156. With respect to Werner Hering, the head of the Central Committee’s Health Policy Department, see esp. Fischer, *Geständnisse und Bekenntnisse*.
157. Peter Imbusch, “Macht—Herrschaft—Autorität,” in *Grundbegriffe der Soziologie*, ed. Bernhard Schäfers (Opladen, 2010), 166–73, here 168.
158. Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg, *Macht und Organisation: Die Zwänge kollektiven Handelns* (Königstein im Taunus, 1979).
159. *Ibid.*, 13; Willi Küpper and Günther Ortmann, *Mikropolitik. Rationalität, Macht und Spiele in Organisationen* (Opladen, 1992).
160. Wolfgang Sofsky and Rainer Paris, *Figurationen sozialer Macht: Autorität, Stellvertretung, Koalition* (Opladen, 1991).
161. *Ibid.*, 13f.
162. Crozier and Friedberg, *Macht und Organisation*, 44–50.
163. On the varied sources and means of power, see Peter Imbusch, “Macht und Herrschaft in der wissenschaftlichen Kontroverse,” in *Macht und Herrschaft. Sozialwissenschaftliche Theorien und Konzeptionen*, ed. Peter Imbusch (Wiesbaden, 2012), 9–35, here 16.
164. On the challenges associated with the written records of the SED state, see the contributions in Alf Lüttdke and Peter Becker, *Akten, Eingaben, Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte. Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag* (Berlin, 1997), especially Alf Lüttdke, “Sprache und Herrschaft in der DDR. Einleitende Überlegungen,” and Ralph Jessen, “Diktatorische Herrschaft als kommunikative Praxis. Überlegungen zum Zusammenhang von ‘Bürokratie’ und Sprachnormierung in der DDR-Geschichte.”
165. Jessen, “Diktatorische Herrschaft,” 66.

166. *Ibid.*, 74.
167. Though Monika Kaiser's observation that "the written records concerning the activities of most departments of the central Party apparatus is only fragmentary until the mid-1950s" is not quite true. In actual fact, the records of the central administrations and the German Economic Commission (DWK) contain many instances of written correspondence between Central Committee departments and secretaries, providing a good picture of the activities of the apparatus. Kaiser, "Die Zentrale der Diktatur," 65.
168. The records of the Central Committee's Department of Transportation, for instance, responsible for relations with West German communists, were completely destroyed. See Amos, *Die SED-Deutschlandpolitik*, 13, n. 6.
169. As per the decision of the Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR (SAPMO) in the German Federal Archives, archive users have no access to these records.
170. See chapter 5, "Surveillance Development," of the present work.
171. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, not long after its founding, had a special section in its "procurement" department whose primary task was the investigation of members of the KPD party executive and the Central Committee of the SED. Constantin Goschler and Michael Wala, "Keine neue Gestapo." *Das Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz und die NS-Vergangenheit* (Reinbek, 2015), 67.
172. Reinhard Borgmann and Jochen Staadt, *Deckname Markus. Spionage im ZK. Zwei Top-Agentinnen im Herzen der Macht* (Berlin, 1998).
173. Roger Engelmann, "Zum Quellenwert der Unterlagen des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit," in *Aktenlage. Die Bedeutung der Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes für die Zeitgeschichtsforschung*, ed. Klaus-Dietmar Henke and Roger Engelmann (Berlin, 1995), 23–39, 35f.
174. See also Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker*, 259f.
175. For a detailed account of the method used and its development, see Herwart Vorländer, ed., *Oral History. Mündlich erfragte Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1990); Alexander von Plato, "Zeitzeugen und historische Zunft. Erinnerung, kommunikative Tradierung und kollektives Gedächtnis in der qualitativen Geschichtswissenschaft—ein Problemaufriss," *Bios* 13, no. 1 (2000): 5–29; Dorothee Wierling, "Oral History," in *Aufriss der historischen Wissenschaften in sieben Bänden*, Vol. 7: *Neue Themen und Methoden der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Michael Maurer (Stuttgart, 2003), 81–151.
176. Harald Welzer, "Das Interview als Artefakt. Zur Kritik der Zeitzeugenforschung," *Bios* 13, no. 1 (2000): 51–63.
177. James Mark, "Adjusting Biographies: Explaining Communist Party Membership in Central-Eastern Europe 1944–2004," in *Erinnerungen nach der Wende. Oral History und (post)sozialistische Gesellschaften*, ed. Julia Obertreis (Essen, 2009), 109–20.
178. Julia Obertreis and Anke Stephan, "Erinnerung, Identität und 'Fakten.' Die Methodik der Oral History und die Erforschung (post)sozialistischer Gesellschaften (Einleitung)," in *Erinnerungen nach der Wende*, ed. Julia Obertreis (Essen, 2009), 9–36, here 28.
179. *Ibid.*, 33; Welzer, "Das Interview als Artefakt" insists on the same.
180. Three of the interviews used in this study were not conducted by the author himself but rather by Andrea Bahr and Sabine Pannen in the context of their own studies on the SED district leadership of Brandenburg an der Havel and the SED party base, respectively. See Bahr, *Parteiherrschaft vor Ort*; Sabine Pannen, "Wo ein Genosse ist, da ist die Partei!" *Der innere Zerfall der SED-Parteibasis 1979–1989* (Berlin, 2019).
181. Generally speaking, there was a noticeable generational and cultural divide between interviewer and interviewee in every instance. The age difference was at least thirty years but usually forty years or more, and the Western socialization of the interviewer made it impossible for the interviewees to build on shared experience and points of reference with regard to life in the GDR. Most of the interviews took place in the private apartments or homes of the interviewees, only four were conducted at cafés and/or at the interviewer's workplace.
182. This openness is hardly surprising, as without it the interviews would have never occurred in the first place. It is reasonable to assume that those with strong reservations and possibly more dogmatic

- views tended to decline the author's request for an interview. In this respect, those who were willing to collaborate are not necessarily representative of the potential pool of interviewees.
183. Interview with Horst Wambutt, November 7, 2012, 44, author's transcript and audio recording.
  184. Interview with Inge H., December 19, 2011, 19, author's transcript and audio recording.
  185. Most of the interviewees had little to say when it came to topics such as "privileges" (the ones they admitted to having were "completely normal"), salaries ("they got a lot more in the state apparatus") and repression ("we had nothing to do with that").
  186. Interview with Horst K., January 19, 2010, 3, author's transcript and audio recording.
  187. It would be jumping the gun, however, to conclude that these two narratives resulted in a generational conflict in the Big House. Just as important was presumably the fact that the younger employees carried on with their careers after 1989–90, albeit with a loss of social status in many cases. Their years in new organizational contexts most likely have a stronger effect on their perception of the time they spent in the SED apparatus than in the case of their older comrades.
  188. Boyer, "Arbeiterkarrieren?" 674.
  189. The analyses, for example, do not give any indications if and to what extent the age structure varied between departments.
  190. Those employed in more technical jobs had to be excluded entirely here for lack of empirical evidence.
  191. There are no comprehensive cadre files on members of the Central Committee with political functions. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that the cadre file of each respective employee "migrated" with them if they left the apparatus and assumed another function, say, in the state apparatus. On the other hand, following a resolution of the Council of Ministers of February 22, 1990, its "Beschluss zur Verordnung über die Arbeit mit Personalunterlagen," cadre files could be handed over by the Party apparatus to SED nomenklatura cadre—an opportunity most of them made use of.
  192. Researching the records of the Stasi archives requires a last name, first name and date of birth, which limited the results from the very start. Another important research tool were existing biographical reference works on the history of the GDR.
  193. See chapter 4, "Staff Development," of the present work.