

About the dealings with National Socialism in the GDR

Rudi-Karl Pahnke 1994

translated by Bergit Doege

1. The downfall of National Socialist Germany as a starting point

In 1943 – almost two years before the end of the National Socialist war – the representatives of Great Britain, of the United States and of the Soviet Union declared the following in a statement (Statement of Moscow about the liability of Hitler-followers for committed atrocities): “As soon as any government constituted in Germany will be given an armistice, those German officers and soldiers, as well as members of the Nazi-party who were responsible for the atrocities, massacres and executions mentioned above or deliberately participated in it, are to be sent back to the countries where they did these horrifying deeds, so that they will be convicted and punished according to the laws of these freed countries and of the free governments constituted there. From all these countries, lists will be compiled with all possible details. Especially the occupied countries of the Soviet Union, Poland and of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Greece including Crete and other islands, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Italy are to be taken into consideration with that. So Germans who participate in mass executions of Italian officers or in the executions of French, Dutch, Belgian or Norwegian hostages or farmers of Crete or those who have a share in these bloodbaths that were caused among the Polish people or in the areas of the Soviet Union now purged by the enemy, have to be prepared for the fact that they will be brought back to the scene of their crimes and will be condemned on the spot by the people they violated.”

The Allies did not push it legally through this way, although there was the Trial of Nuremberg, trials in West Germany, the internment camps in the *SBZ* and later the notorious Waltham-trials. Two years later, after the 8th May 1945, after the *Agreement of Potsdam*, it is said in an announcement about the “*Conference of the three powers*” in Berlin on 2nd August 1945:

“4. All Nazi-laws which served as a basis for the Hitler-regime or put up discrimination because of race, religion or political conviction have to be abolished. No such discrimination, neither a legal nor an administrative or any other kind of it is to be tolerated. 5. War criminals and all those who participated in the planning or in the realisation of Nazi-measures that had the consequence of war crimes or atrocities, are to be arrested and handed over to the court. Nazi-party leaders, influential Nazi-followers and the leaders of Nazi-authorities and Nazi-organisations and all other persons who are a threat for the occupation and its aims are to be arrested and interned. 6. All members of the Nazi-party who participated more than just nominally in their jobs and all other persons who are in opposition to the aims of the Allies are to be removed from the public or semi-public offices and also from the responsible posts in important private enterprises. These persons have to be replaced by persons who seem to be able to participate in the development of true democratic institutions in Germany due to their political and moral qualities. 7. The education system in Germany is to be supervised in the way that the Nazi- and militaristic-doctrines will be totally removed and a successful development of democratic ideas will be made possible. 8. The law system is to be re-organised according to the principles of democracy and of justice on the basis of legality and of equality of all citizens in the eyes of the law without any difference in race, nationality and religion. 9. The administration of Germany has to be carried out in the direction of a decentralisation of political structures and of the development of a local self-responsibility...”

National Socialism, its past history and its surroundings, especially the time from 1933 to 1945, but also 8th May 1945 as the capitulation of Germany and as the day of liberation from National Socialism, are the starting points of all considerations about the dealings with National Socialism – in the GDR, but also in the Federal Republic. The time of National Socialism is, according to the official image, the reality that stands out from the first Socialist state brightly and in principle. The fact that many persons of the party- and state-leadership of the GDR were more or less active anti-Fascists always has to be principally taken into consideration as well. Some figures nearly gain a kind of tragic character with that.

2. The way the GDR saw itself officially

The official way the GDR saw itself was that in the GDR, National Socialism and its basis is abolished a priori. After 1945 judges, teachers and public officials had been made redundant on a large scale (over 500.000 persons were affected), big landowners and industrial magnates were dispossessed and with this, the basis for a new community was created in their opinion.

After the war, the Allies distinguished Germans in 1. major offenders 2. incriminated persons 3. less incriminated persons 4. sympathiser 5. exonerated persons. First, the National Socialist organisations were regarded as criminal, except for the HJ and the BDM. That means: every member of such an organisation, graded as criminal, had to prove his or her innocence, or rather inferior guilt in the following proceedings. In the SBZ, the SMAD sentenced about 45.000 persons on the administrative way, therefore without formal court proceedings. “About a third of them was deported to the Soviet Union for hard labour, most of the others were detained in internment camps. The number of death sentences is unknown. The total number of convicted persons being sentenced by courts of the Allies because of war crimes or crimes against humanity, home and abroad, is estimated at about 50.000 to 60.000.” (Erdmann, page 106)

In its own view, the basis for Fascism was exterminated.

In the constitution of 1949 it says in the final provision, Article 144: “The constitutional freedom and rights cannot be objected to the regulations that were and will be issued to overcome National Socialism and militarism and to compensate the injustice they are to blame for.” Or in Article 135 it says: “No criminal law has a retrospective power. Measures and the use of regulations that were made to overcome Nazism, Fascism and militarism or measures necessary to punish any crime against humanity are excepted.”

Johannes R. Becher intensely expressed the official way the GDR saw itself in the GDR-national anthem: “Risen from ruins and turned towards the future, let it serve you well, Germany, united fatherland. Old distress is to be defeated and we will defeat it together, because we have to succeed in letting the sun shine upon Germany – as beautiful as never before.”

The time of National Socialism was the dark backdrop of GDR-development, of GDR-history and of the GDR-self-understanding. In the constitution of 1968 it says in Article 6: “1. The German Democratic Republic exterminated on its territory German militarism and Nazism, in accordance with the interests of the people and with international obligations. It runs a foreign policy that serves socialism and peace, international understanding and safety. 2. The German Democratic Republic is irrevocably and always connected with the USSR (Soviet Union)... 5. Propaganda of militarism and revanchism of all kind, war-smear campaigns and the expression of religious-, racial- and national-animosities will be punished as crimes... Article 8,2: “The German Democratic Republic will never carry out a war of conquest or use its armed forces against the freedom of another nation.”

“The womb is fertile still, out of that crawled” (Bertold Brecht) so does not apply all in all to the GDR, that had got, according to its self-understanding, “things straight with the tyrants” of fascism.

The official way the GDR saw itself became particularly clear in the schoolbooks. In the history book of the 9th grade from 1970 it says as an example:

“6.10: The lessons of the Second World War. The main goal of the battle of the nations of the Anti-Hitler-Coalition, to save the world from slavery through the fascist powers, is reached. To save this result of World War II for a continuous period of peace, was the new main duty after the end of the fighting. The alliance of the nations and governments of various society systems that had proved its worth, had to find new ways to safeguard peace over all existing differences. Here, the powers of the Anti-Hitler-Coalition followed a programme already established during the war for the post-war rules of the world, that was confirmed on the “Conference of Potsdam” from 17th July until 2nd August 1945. The most important components of this programme were the occupation politics in Germany to overcome fascism, the signing of peace treaties with the former satellites of the fascist coalition, the sentencing of the main war criminals in Europe and Asia that took place in the processes of Nuremberg and Tokyo, and the foundation of the UN in 1945. Its main duty was the safeguarding of peace in the world, the peaceful regulation of disputes between different countries and the support of co-operation in the field of economy, culture and science. For the German people, lessons arose out of World War II of which its obeying still is a question of existence until the present day. The German imperialism and militarism legally lost the war. The ruling circles of German imperialism were, above all, not able to recognise that the leftist social order in the USSR was invincible and superior to the fascist coalition. The war proved that the defeat of Hitler-Germany was legal, because it represented the most reactionary social powers which historically had become a thing of the past; it waged the most unfair and the most terrible war and acted as the main power of the world-reaction against the Soviet Union. With its immense greed of conquest, German imperialism was even less able to solve the inconsistency between its far-reaching aggression-plans and its limited political, economic and military possibilities than in World War I. One of the most important lessons from the war was that the German imperialism and militarism could only be prevented from making politics being hostile towards the people, if the working-class is united and leads all the democratic powers of the people in the fight for peaceful national interests.

The 8th May not only brought the defeat of fascist Germany. At the same time it was the day of liberation of the German people from the Nazi-barbarity and it gave them the possibility to learn a lesson from the war and from history of the last decades and to work for a dignified place among the peace-loving people of the world.”

In the schoolbook for history, 10th grade, Part II from 1964 it says in the introduction to the headword “The consolidation of the socialist world-system – further intensification of the common crisis of capitalism (1949-1961): “Until the year 1950 the workers of the Soviet Union under the leadership of its communist party essentially succeeded in overcoming the consequences of the fascist robbery-war.”

(In this schoolbook, by the way in contrast to the schoolbook editions before and afterwards, in the report about the XX. Party conference of the KPDSU, the argument about the personality cult on Stalin was mentioned. So it says in this schoolbook: “Stalin spread mistrust to a great extent and arrested many honest people, among them numerable leading functionaries of the Central Committee and of the state, under the accusation of allegedly planning a conspiracy against the Soviet state. For the justification of these mass-persecutions Stalin elaborated the thesis in 1937, that with the further development of the Soviet state the class struggle in the land apparently has to be tightened up more and more. This was a thesis

not being tenable theoretically, because with the liquidation of the exploiter-class and the victory of socialism, the moral, political and ideological unity of the Soviet society was created and consolidated. The negative characteristics of Stalin played an important part in the creation of the personality cult. His rudeness and his moodiness were already mentioned by Lenin in 1922. The achievements of the Soviet state went to Stalin's head. He stopped to listen to other people's opinion and imagined himself to be infallible. Stalin did not believe in the power of the people and did not feel the necessity of being together with them and to discuss with them. He isolated himself from the workers and peasants and did neither visit industrial plants nor collective industries. Since Stalin did not trust the masses, he also did not rest on the party but on the state bodies for punishment, to which he gave a higher position than to the party itself. Until the death of Stalin in 1953, the fight against the personality cult was extremely difficult, because in these times all successes of socialism and the victory in the "Great Fatherland War" were connected with the name of Stalin. Any behaviour against him would not have found any support from the people and would have been regarded as an anti-Soviet-action. Besides, many facts which attest the wrong acts of Stalin and the violation of the socialist legality, were only uncovered after his death. The personality cult considerably hindered the development of the Soviet Union and caused a damage onto its international position. Without this phenomenon, the Soviet Union could have developed even quicker and more successful. But in spite of these impediments that the time of the personality cult caused, the Soviet people and the party scored a lot of great successes, they made their headway on their path to socialism...

The contribution of the Central Committee was to have entirely re-established the standards of Lenin, primarily the principal of collective leadership.")

The GDR was, after the way the official agitation and propaganda saw it, the only legal German state, because it "represented the true interests of the whole nation and realised the right to self-determination of the German people. With this, it also fulfils the principle of the anti-Hitler-coalition. The worker's and peasant's state is the only legal German state because it helps laws of the development of the nation to socialism on the road to success and with that it forms the basis for the national reincarnation of Germany" (page 82).

In the times of cold war, the official agitation and propaganda especially was directed at The United States of America and West Germany. So it says in this schoolbook: "The USA became the refuge of world-reaction and the main power of aggression. It set itself the goal to spread out its economic, political and military expansion around the whole world" (page 67). Already, relatively early and growing, the West German state was identified with the time of National Socialism. That is why it then says in the relevant texts, "that the reunification of the nation is attached to two basic conditions: The victory of socialism in the GDR and the overcoming of imperialism and militarism in West Germany through the working class in alliance with all democratic and national-coloured powers. Only the socialist GDR embodies the true national interests and the future of the entire German people."

It is no question that in the Federal Republic there also existed a concept of the enemy and was cultivated as well: the enemy concept GDR, the enemy concept of a standard socialism under dictatorial conditions – and the details of this dictatorial system were named and accentuated very exactly in the BRD. There, too, the own shares of this polarisation were trivialised or concealed.

But today, the depressing thing for many GDR-citizens is, that the polemical analysis of the West is corresponding to a large extent to the facts of the GDR, as we can and have to recognise from mountains of files. That leads to suppression or denial with many former GDR-citizens, or rather to a nostalgic distortion of the reality of that time.

In the official agitation and propaganda of the GDR, an image of the BRD was passed on that was reactionary, rightist from its roots, or rather even had a direct tendency to National Socialism or was controlled by National Socialists from the underground...

So it says in a book from Hans-Georg Canyé called “Where yesterday is today” (Wo gestern heute ist), published by the Kinderbuchverlag in 1971, on page 100:

“In the summer of 1969, the term “Right-wing-cartel” (Rechtskartell) appeared in the political life of the BRD. Soon it was usual in the BRD and in the international public to call the amalgamation of all revanchist, militaristic and fascist powers a “right-wing-cartel”. The CDU/CSU was counted among it as well as parts of the major industries, the NPD, the revanchism-associations and the monopoly press that is stirring up hatred against the socialist states and against any progress. We have to look back again on these first years after the end of the war. In the “Agreement of Potsdam”, the ban of all fascist organisations was pronounced, no incriminated Hitler-functionary should ever be able to return to public life again. Already in 1945, in the prisoner camps of the US-Americans, the French and the British, some officers of the beaten “Hitler-Wehrmacht” for example, together with some other dignitaries of the “Third Reich” thought about how they could publish their views and aims with the help of a newspaper: A rearmament of Germany against the Soviet Union and a battle against anyone having blamed imperialist Germany for the Second World War. In 1951, the newspaper “Die deutsche Soldatenzeitung” (The German Soldier-newspaper) was published for the first time, supported by means from Bonn. In 1970, this newspaper was called “Deutsche Nationalzeitung” (German National-newspaper) and was published weekly with a circulation of 100.000 issues. Soon, the former guards of the concentration camps, the SS-men, also founded their own organizations. They called themselves “traditional communities” – so communities for the cultivation of the past. In 1956, when the anti-fascist Communist Party of Germany was banned, there existed already 1.118 of such organizations. They marched on the streets of West Germany, beat up democrats and celebrated Hitler’s extermination wars and their collaboration as “legitimate”. Parties were founded which openly declared their support for the philosophy of NS-time. The foundation of the National Democratic Party (NPD) and their winning of seats in parliaments of the districts were high points of this development. For many West-German citizens, parties and organizations of this kind seemed to be only outsiders for a long time. Not enough attention was paid on what Erich Kernmeier, a leading man of the SS-organization, already said in 1955 about the interaction of the Federal government and these SS-associations quite frankly: “There is no decision of the government that we do not know about within 24 hours through our friends.” When setting up the fascist power and with the preparation of his war, Hitler had his main-allies in the leading men of industry. They served Hitler and they earned millions of Marks with the politics of Hitler. These “Wehrwirtschaftsführer” (leaders of war-economics), as they were called then, could soon after 1945 re-establish their powerful positions in the BRD, and the armament for the war was their main matter. That is why they became the driving forces, the real responsible bodies of this collection of the stubborn...”

With the introduction of the compulsory military service in 1962, a certain pressure of authorization was sensed also in the GDR. This led to a tightening up of the polarization to the other side, to the Federal Republic. Since that time, a little book was published in many editions that was handed out to all soldiers and with that was worked with also in the political lessons of the NVA, the National People’s Army. “A hundred questions, a hundred answers to the compulsory military service.” I have here in front of me a copy of 1966. There it says to the question No.1 from the meaning of being a soldier: Whom serves the soldier?

“Things got straight with the German warmongers and militarists, with the spoilers of our nation and of so many other nations. In our part of Germany, humanism and democracy were victorious. Under leadership of the party of the working class, the people of the German Democratic Republic gave themselves a good and save prospect with the setting up of socialism. With the National People’s Army (NVA) they created a reliable and powerful military instrument for the defense of its socialist achievements. The National People’s Army

is flesh from the flesh and blood from the blood of the working people of our republic. It is commanded by generals and officers who proved themselves in the anti-fascist resistance fight against militarism, fascism and imperialistic wars or rather achieved high contributions in the greatest revolution of German history, with the creation and consolidation of the GDR. From the generals of the NVA alone, 17 participated in an active way in the resistance against fascism in various countries of Europe. 88 % of the generals and officers of the NVA are sons of workers and working peasants, 12 % are sons of employees. The average age of the officers is 29 years. But in West Germany, the imperialists and militarists held the reins of state power. They created a class-instrument with the Federal Armed Forces of Bonn, that serves them in keeping up the maintenance of the old hated exploiter-structure and for revanchist war adventures. The Army of Bonn continues with the evil traditions of the Prussian-German militarism and its raids. It is commanded by generals and officers who won their spurs with the Nazi-Wehrmacht or rather with the creation of the counter-revolutionary and war-hungry state of Bonn... In the Federal Armed Forces the soldier serves the old militaristic forces who took us on the verge of a national catastrophe already twice. He serves the capitalist system that is historically condemned to decline, the predatory West German imperialism. In the National People's Army the soldier serves the social powers which prevent German imperialism and militarism from setting the world on fire again. He serves the working people, the forward-striving, victorious socialism."

The anti-fascism is the outstanding characteristic in the image and self-portrait of the GDR and also of the National People's Army of the GDR. So it says: "The NVA is the first army in German history that can claim for itself to be the guardian of the interests of the German nation."

The National People's Army and the GDR are being identified with anti-fascism. So it says in just this booklet: "A particularly glorious chapter in the history of our nation are the heroic deeds of German anti-fascists in the Spanish struggle for freedom from 1936 – 1939. Even at the time when the fascist Wehrmacht, as "German Army", brought murder and doom over nearly every country in Europe and the "German Soldier" became the horror of the nations, there were fighters who stood on the right side with weapons in their hands and proved to the world that there was another Germany, a Germany which was fighting as well, but for a good thing. These fighters united in the movement "Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland" (National Committee for a free Germany). The National Committee was created in July 1943 in Moscow on initiative of the Central Committee of the KPD, primarily by Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht; and developed to the political, organizational center of the fight of the German anti-fascists during World War II. This fight led into the foundation of the GDR and finds its continuation in thinking, feeling and acting of every soldier, non-commissioned officers and officers of the NVA. It is the devoted fight of all citizens of the GDR under leadership of the SED for the first victorious revolution in the history of the German people for the full setting up of socialism on German soil" (p. 16 f).

To the self-portrait of the anti-fascist state and the anti-fascist army also belonged the gesture of the fighter made of steel and determined to do anything: "The soldiers of our army, who should master their weapons and their combat technique excellently, have to have a high physical capability at their disposal. Primarily, such qualities as power, endurance and speed, combined with strength of character and the will to triumph" (p.39).

In these times, a nuclear war was to be reckoned with and one was prepared for being able to wage this war and to win it as well. So it says in this little booklet: "A nuclear war with missiles would place extraordinary high demands on the moral of the people and the army. The outcome of the war will be to a high degree dependent on the ability of the people and of the armed forces to withstand the very hard ordeals of such a war and to keep up the will to

triumph. The community of the socialist countries have an incomparably higher moral potential than a military alliance of imperialistic states. The Marxist-Leninist ideology turns into a powerful factor which has an extensive effect on the moral of the socialist people and their armed forces. The steady, widespread strengthening of the socialist world-system and the consolidation of the armed-brotherhood are of extensive meaning for the international class struggle, for the taming of the aggressive imperialistic powers, above all in the USA and in West Germany.”

All these examples show that the GDR basically has nothing to do anymore with National Socialism. National Socialism, that is the tradition of the BRD. There may have been some people in the GDR as well who were connected with this bloody and dictatorial system of National Socialism – so it seemed at that time – but they more or less endured it. They were victims of this system and are not to be regarded as offenders. The active resistance fighters of the National Committee for a Free Germany and all the others founded the GDR and set up an anti-fascist system with this. The others were sentenced, eliminated, the fascist roots were exterminated.

3. The drawback bashfully concealed

It was relatively early clear for a chosen few, that this propagandistic way the GDR saw itself did not correspond to reality. Wolfgang Leonard for example describes in “Die Revolution entlässt ihre Kinder” (The revolution releases its children), how the future SED-leadership treated the little PG’s (=Partei Genossen; Party comrades); that a part of the little PG’s felt this party as being turned towards them, because soon a new chance would be given to them. By order of the SMAD, “the majority of former National Socialists got back their active and passive right to vote” (Erdmann, p.118)

The following comes to one’s attention when studying the FDJ-files of the archives: In 1945/46, when they started to plan a new youth-work and youth-movement, it was investigated very exactly which form of youth-work, or rather structure of youth-work would be conceivable for future Germany. Enquiries were made very precisely to see what would be possible. The most exact investigation is about the HJ. There is a very precise distinction between the enticed HJ’s and the competent youth-leaders in the HJ and the unscrupulous seducers of the youth. That followed the same line like the motto of Stalin: “The Hitlers come and go, but the German people, the German state, remains”. Obviously, also in the GDR advantages were taken on a larger scale from the abilities, skills and knowledge of HJ- and NSDAP-members, they were put into groups, structures and so on until the setting up of the later NVA and FDJ. The National Democratic Party, that existed since 1948, also was a melting pot for former people from National Socialist groups which, for their part, had to carry out the change that had to take place and formally also did that./ carried out that change. Since 1945 there have been existing notes about activities from National Socialist-orientated people of the later GDR – from the province of Brandenburg, the province of Saxony, from Halberstadt and so on – in the files of the Ministry of the Interior, of the State Security Service (“Stasi”), of the FDJ.

Names are given there, it is reported there that “Edelweiss-groups”, which really do not belong to these categories, adorned themselves with National Socialist insignias; that HJ-leaders returned from the internment camps and raised an illegal youth group in just this National Socialist sense. It is reported in the files – in 1946/1948 and also later – that young persons wish Hitler back, because under the Nazis the prisoners of war were better off than the population was now.

All of this is imaginable – and there were also informal insights that a part of the population still adheres to the National Socialist ideology and finds it hard to separate from these models. But it is an entirely different matter, that functionaries of the NSDAP or of the HJ worked in particular positions of the SED-state, or of FDJ-youth organizations, or rather were put into service of the party, of the state or of the MfS-apparatus.

With their past, these persons obviously were being well in hand and could be made useful – with the help of blackmail or threat, sparing or by granting privileges. In principle, public court cases were also always thinkable again if it seemed politically appropriate. Evidently, a silent Nazi-reserve was kept just in case (see also “Spiegel” No.19, 1994 / page 84 ff). We have to take it as a basis that on the part of the SED certain functionaries, persons, professors or also lecturers, who had a clear National Socialist past, were willfully put in service of the socialist state. They were just applicable in a flexible way and therefore useful instruments.

In 1955, the Youth College at the Bogensee (Jugendhochschule am Bogensee) near Wandlitz was visited by a delegation of the Central Council (Zentralrat) of the FDJ. Konrad Naumann, from the later “Politbüro”, was one of the ones who carried out a sharp evaluation. The Youth College was working ineffectively, this was the opinion of the party, FDJ- and state-leadership. At the visit it was noticed on record, that a lot of mistakes were being made at this youth college.

“The teaching staff is too young in its composition. There is also the fact that there is a great proportion of former members of the NSDAP and leaders of the HJ. This condition is one of the reasons for the defects in the work of the school.” This means (in plain English): that within the teaching staff of this “cadre forge” of FDJ and SED, leaders of the NSDAP and the HJ were working there, they passed on their NS-knowledge and their concepts in a Communist look.

It is said in the FDJ-files that certain leaders of the HJ have important abilities in dealing with the youth. Obviously, this evaluation lead to the fact that certain people – if they renounced from the National Socialist ideology – were taken into these branches of work quite unhesitatingly and they could even reach leading positions.

Maybe even more stunning is an event from the year 1951.

1951 was a critical year in the history of both parts of Germany, the “west-integration” of the Federal Republic was on the political agenda, pushed on especially by Adenauer. The leadership of the GDR wanted to stop this “west-integration”, because they obviously had the concept of Germany as a whole taking another direction under a Socialist premise. From certain events it is quite clearly visible that there had been an option for a united, Socialist Germany. That is known in principle. At this time, certain groupings, for example national, nationalistic groups, even National-Socialist oriented groupings of the Federal Republic, turned against this “west-integration”. The FDJ or rather the SED was not afraid to get in contact with such groupings. A meeting was held in Berlin-Reinickendorf between former NSDAP- and HJ-leaders from the Federal Republic and the FDJ-Central Council, where it was quoted every single time who – on which side – had what kind of function during National-Socialist times. Margot Honecker, then still named Feist, made a remarkable speech there about the unity of Germany. The members of the FDJ-delegation had the following functions in the NSDAP or rather HJ: leader of the HJ (“Stammführer”), students of the National-Political-Education-Institute (NAPOLA), leader of the followers of the HJ (“Gefolgschaftsführer”), girls-major-group-leaders (“Mädel-Hauptgruppenführer”), district student leader (“Gau-Studentenführer”), president of the broadcasting-chamber of the Third Reich (“Präsident der Reichsrundfunkammer”). It is remarkable to which great extent members of such organizations were given leading positions within the GDR-youth

organization, but of course also at other places. The HJ was not graded as a criminal organization by the Allies, although Baldur von Schirach appeared in court in Nuremberg and also had to take responsibility for his activities in the HJ. He narrowly escaped from a death sentence, not least at all because he distanced himself publicly from Hitler and National Socialism – whether out of tactical calculation or whether whole-heartedly. Obviously, the chance was also given in the SBZ, to treat i. g. former HJ-cadres in a relative uninhibited way. We partly suspected meanwhile how far that went.

It is quite clearly visible from the files of the MDI, the State Security Service and also of the FDJ – the information was exchanged conscientiously, of course – that from 1945 to 1989, there were always some National-Socialist signs fixed somewhere, that groups and secret societies were formed and more things of that kind. Such phenomena partly was persecuted, at least it was registered intensely. Anti-Semitic remarks, swastika messes and other things always turned up again and could in part not be cleared up.

That there also occurred some curious phenomena is at least to be mentioned. In 1963, a student organization was mentioned in the files of the State Security and the FDJ, that called itself “Order of the poor knights of the temple” (“Orden der armen Ritter vom Tempel”). This order was strictly organized and had a well elaborated statute, a red cross in the form of an Iron Cross of an average size of three centimeters served as its identification mark. After the statement of the order-masters the order was founded to arrange the leisure time and to cultivate camaraderie and friendship. So it is said in their so-called statute i. g. that it should be worked together on the basis of the FDJ-statute to actively build up Socialism and to act in an “Honour and Loyalty-way” and so on. It was said hello to each other with the salutation: “If you stand up for as a good German, your salute has to be German Hail” (“Trittst Du als guter Deutscher ein, so muss dein Gruß Deutsch Heil sein”). The initiators of this order – they called themselves High Master and Master – were at the same time FDJ-functionaries of their classes and received the badge for good knowledge in the FDJ-year of apprenticeship. Since the leadership of the GDR – up to the responsables for school, education and FDJ – decided to interpret the GDR-reality in the sense that the population of the GDR was antifascist because it now was on the right side, such or other facts could of course not be discussed in public.

In 1963 it was communicated by the MDI, the FDJ, the MfS and others under the column “Particular Incidents”: “As we have been informed by the district leadership (“Kreisleitung”) of the FDJ in Greifswald, the student friend N.N., former secretary of the basis-organization of the ‘Käthe-Kollwitz-School’ was found dead in the Forest of Wamping on 27th March 1963. Facts of the matter: Suicide with the help of an overdose of sleeping pills. The motive of that act is still unknown. The student had left nothing behind except a wallet with some girls-photography, a photography of Hitler and another one of Wessel. On the last photo it said ‘murdered by communists’. The teachers could not understand the reason of that act at all. They estimated N.N. as an honest, upright student who always was known for his good attitude towards studying and for his good performance. Although the FDJ-leadership of Greifswald knew him as being a cautious, but open-hearted FDJ-man who supported a definite point of view. But he was very dependent on others at his association-work and did not manage to exude on the other students. At the last secretary-instructions-meetings he was often missing.”

All such occurrences – and it would be very easy to expand the list of them – made clear how difficult it was in the GDR to have an open examination about the participation of the population in National Socialism. Such things were swept under the carpet, it was suppressed, it was repressed, it was banned from the public consciousness. A priori, the GDR simply was an antifascist state with an antifascist tradition, with antifascist heroes.

I do not want to withhold the following occurrence from you, that can be found in the files of the Stasi. When I was a priest for the youth in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg, there was a girl in my youth-group from an almost dissident family, Pascal de Wroblewsky, a musically very talented girl who also brought other juveniles from her school and class into the youth-group. Among them there was a boy who had – at least on the second visit of our group – instructions from the MfS, as a boy of 14 or 15 years.

In 1976, 1977 and 1978 it was talked about the deportation of Wolf Biermann and about the death of Brüsewitz in the youth-group. For this juvenile boy, this was the reason to consider the group as an “enemy of the state”. He informed – as an IM – about this event. He was recruited by the State Security Service, his parents – mother and father – assisted in this process. They attended the decisive talks, where the recruitment of this juvenile IM was discussed, and the father took a very active role in this process. But the substantial event was the following: After this meeting in the youth-group, an argument blew up between Pascal de Wroblewsky and this boy. The boy said to Pascal that this youth-group was an enemy of the state and that one should not go there, that the whole thing was very bad and one had to distance oneself from it. As a result of that, this boy was called by this girl – both being of the same age - a “red sock or similar, of which one could easily do without”. After that, the boy – there then knowing the precise origins of this girl – called her a “Jewish bitch, that had to be hanged”. This event set off several activities in the following period. The remark had to be hushed up in public in any case. That could not have happened at all. It was even accepted without any difficulties that this girl was talking about “red socks”, “red pigs” or “reds” in general – if only the other thing would be forgotten then as well.

Of course this girl had no qualified educational opportunities anymore in the GDR, but this occurrence was suppressed anyway to cover up the impression that in the GDR it was possible to call a Jewish person a “Jewish bitch” with impunity. As a consequence, nothing happened to the boy. The officer of the Stasi impressed – after the transcript of the conversation – on the parents and the boy that he would have to be more cautious with his comments in future. He did not expound the problem or attacked and announced it as impossible that this boy made an anti-Semitic remark. It was not put up for discussion. This was embarrassing in public, but did not lead to a pedagogic conclusion, to a reappraisal of such attitudes and its backgrounds or of such comments.