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ISBN 0-315-55359-6

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE 17 JUNE 1953 IN THE PROSE OF THE DDR

by

Ian Sparkes



A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN

GERMAN LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1989

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED Master of Arts
YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED Fall 1989

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Abstract

This thesis is to deal with the problem of history and literature in the context of the portrayal of the 17 June 1953 in the literature of the DDR.

There will be a summary of the official positions of both the DDR and the West in regards to the rising, using officially sanctioned history books and documents, to try to present as clear a picture as possible of the differences between the way the rising is regarded. This will also provide, in the case of the East German view, an officially acceptable version of the rising and its causes against which the literary portrayals can be compared and judged. This will be necessary in order to explain why some portrayals have been welcomed in the DDR and others have not.

Any East German writer dealing with the 17 June 1953 faces the problem of balancing his objectivity with the officially accepted account of the rising. Should the portrayal differ too greatly from the history of the rising as presented in the history books and official documents, then there is a danger that the work will not be published in the DDR. Therefore, there will be an examination of several works which will compare how each author portrays the most important aspects of the rising. This will, hopefully, serve to make the differences between the portrayals clearer and demonstrate to what extent the individual portrayals can be seen as being objective. To facilitate this comparison the discussion will not be work by work, but, rather, a thematic approach will be taken, covering the main aspects. There will be a discussion of the

economic conditions in the DDR at that time, followed by a chapter dealing with the role of the party. After a brief discussion of the role of the police and Soviet army in the fifth chapter, there will be a detailed discussion of the involvement of western agents, a very contentious point in the history writing of the two Germanies.

The conclusion reached will question the possibility of writing a purely objective account of the rising, as, as will be set out in the introduction, it seems that neither side is interested in the truth, merely in its own version of it. The discussion will also show that, even if the literary portrayals broadly follow the official version, there is some degree of consensus amongst the authors as to the causes and course of the rising, but that there is also a great deal of disagreement on some very important points.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my parents and Steve for all their support and help. Without their encouragement I would not have been able to complete this thesis. My warmest thanks are also extended to Gavin, Clare, Elke and Jim for making my stay in Canada so enjoyable; Mrs. Christianson for all her kindness and for putting up with me for so long; Helen, for all her help with the computer.

My thanks are also due to my supervisor, Dr. Pausch, for his guidance and constructive criticism; Dr. Marahrens and Dr. Mozejko for their suggestions and comments.

Finally, thank you to the staff of the German department at UKC, especially Dr. Kane, and everyone at the FSU, Jena, who made my year abroad such an enlightening and rewarding experience.

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1. Introduction

The literary portrayal of the 17 June 1953 has posed many difficulties for East German writers. Quite how to approach this event, known officially as a counterrevolutionary putsch in the DDR and as a "Volksaufstand" in the BRD, has proven problematic; when, shortly after the 17 June, Stefan Heym announced his intention of writing a novel about the rising his friend Heinz Brandt warned him against doing so:

Laß die Hände davon! Der 17. Juni ist nicht erzählbar. Drüben nicht, und hier schon gar nicht. Jede Seite ist an ihrer speziellen Legende, keine an der Wahrheit interessiert. Wem willst du deinen Roman widmen? Berija? Dem unbekannten Bauarbeiter der Stalinallee? Dem unbekannten kleinen Funktionär? Dem unbekannten Reformier? Dem bekannten Spitzbart...?¹

In this warning Brandt sums up the main problem facing any DDR author wishing to deal with this subject: each side has its own specific version of events which becomes evident in the case of the DDR when author's works are compared to official documents and history books.

Heym's original intention was to write a novel supporting the government's version of events but, as time progressed, he reworked his novel giving a more objective view. Heym's refusal to accept the SED's "special legend", as Brandt puts it, demonstrates the central problem: if neither side is interested in the truth, but merely in its own politically acceptable version of what happened, just how objective are the literary accounts of the rising? To

¹ Heinz Brandt, Ein Traum der nicht entführbar ist. Mein Weg zwischen Ost und West (Munich: Paul List, 1967) 274.

discover this it will be necessary to determine to what extent history and fiction are blended and in what way. That Heym, a national prize winner of the DDR, changed his account from a novel supporting the government's "agent-theory" to a novel which his West German publisher calls "die ehrliche Auseinandersetzung eines DDR-Bürgers mit den Ereignissen um den 17 Juni"² shows clearly not only the difficulties faced by DDR writers in coming to terms with the rising, but also the different ways in which the rising can be viewed.

The literary portrayal of the 17 June has been discussed before, most notably by Heinrich Mohr and Johannes Pernkopf. Mohr's essay dealing with this topic contains a useful discussion of the history books of the DDR and BRD, a discussion which will be expanded upon in the following chapter of this thesis. Mohr's essay also contains a very useful treatment of Brecht's stance towards the rising. Pernkopf's book also deals with the historical circumstances in some detail and briefly discusses most of the literary works from both East and West Germany dealing with the 17 June. However, neither work deals sufficiently with the problem of history and literature.

This problem has been discussed in some detail by Elisabeth Plessen in her essay dealing with the many difficulties she faced in writing her Kohlhaas novel. In this essay, she gives many valuable insights into the problems of writing an historical novel,

² Stefan Heym, Fünf Tage im Juni (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1983) back cover notes.

observations which can be applied to the literature to be dealt with here. Plessen's statement: "es gibt kein verbindliches Rezept für den historischen Roman, und das ist, meiner Meinung nach, das Spannende, Aufregende und Reizvolle daran"³ would go part way to explain the many variations in the literary treatments of the historical events. Plessen bases this statement on the difficulties she faced in dealing with the plethora of historical documentation dealing with Kohlhaas' life and that which would be necessary in presenting an accurate picture of the period. She is also referring to the dichotomy between historical objectivity and the subjectivity of the author, as it is the author's selectivity in deciding which historical sources to include and which to omit that determines how full and accurate a picture is presented. However, she believes it is quite legitimate to be selective and to blend as much fiction and reality as is necessary to prove the author's case just as another writer, also working on an historical novel, told her he would be forced to invent sources to correspond to his own particular concept of what exactly happened:

So steht jeder Autor, der sich mit Geschichte einläßt, in seiner eigenen Küche und stellt aus seinen Erfahrungen, Kenntnissen, Absichten, Projektionen, Interessen, Versponnenheiten, Verliebtheiten in Details und Träumen, aus seinem Verhältnis zur Sprache und dem Umgang mit Tradiertem und Dokumentiertem seine Version oder seinen Entwurf her. Objektivität, die von den Historikern viel gerühmt auch viel beschworene, apologetisch beschworene

³ Elisabeth Plessen, "Über die Schwierigkeiten, einen historischen Roman zu schreiben. Am Beispiel des Kohlhaas," Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965. Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980) 195.

Objektivität entpuppt sich da als das was sie auch ist:
auch Täuschung, auch Trick oder Götterglaube."⁴

For Plessen the most important element of an historical novel is not historical objectivity, but the furthering of the author's beliefs: an historical novel is still a work of literature rather than a history book.

An interesting problem for DDR authors dealing with the 17 June 1953 arises from the overwhelming amount of documentation, ranging from resolutions adopted by the SED to newspaper reports, concerning the rising. There is also an official view of the rising presented in the history books of the DDR. Any author writing about the 17 June automatically has to be selective in deciding which events to portray. DDR authors also have the additional problem of a cultural policy that does not allow widespread access to works in radical disagreement with the party. This policy would force any author wishing to have his work published to somehow temper any criticism of the party or state. However, even the inclusion of events that can be construed as positive cannot ensure the publication of a work. That the works to be discussed have not always been met with wholehearted approval implies that the presentation of the rising and its causes has not been uniform.

These differences in presentation often stem from the narrative structure, which is the place Rainer Nägele sees as being where the ideological pattern of the work and the perception of both the fictional characters and the reader are encapsulated and

⁴ Plessen 195-96.

determined⁵. It is not the material in itself that holds the ideological content, but the way it is presented through the perspective of the characters. If this is held to be true, then the question of what is considered to be ideologically sound and acceptable lies not necessarily in the thematic material, but in the manner this material is presented and perceived.

The acceptability of the material depends on a careful blending of subjective and objective components within the narrative which, as Plessen states, is not an easy task:

Ich wollte meine Schwierigkeiten mit den historischen Stoff nicht verschweigen; ich, die ich ja auch eine Leserin in alten Dokumenten war, wollte den Leser meines Buchs mithineinziehen, indem ich erklärte: So sehe ich es, das habe ich herausgefunden; dies ist meine Version, wer es anders sehen will, bitte, es ist ihm freigestellt. Ich konnte die Position der allwissenden Erzählerin nicht behaupten.⁶

Ultimately, Plessen suggests, the work will contain some degree of subjectivity, even if only because the author cannot come to terms with the mass of historical documentation, but mainly because the author's own viewpoint is more important than historical accuracy.

This view is partially supported by the historian Alan Bullock who, although he believes it is the task of the historian "to trace the causes, the connections and the consequences"⁷ of historical

⁵ Rainer Nägele, "Geschichten und Geschichte. Reflexionen zum westdeutschen Roman seit 1965," Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur. Ausgangspositionen und aktuelle Entwicklungen, ed. Manfred Durzak (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1981) 245.

⁶ Plessen 198.

⁷ Allan Bullock, "The Historian's Purpose: History and Metahistory," The Philosophy of History in our Time. An Anthology, ed. Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1959) 295.

events, does not entirely subscribe to pure objectivity. Although his method apparently deals in facts, Bullock maintains that there is still a certain amount of intuition to be used, indeed that the historian "is bound to make use of general propositions of all kinds -- about human behaviour, about the effect of economic factors and the influence of ideas and a hundred other things"⁸. Bullock continues by saying that the historian cannot begin to work without "preconceptions" and "assumptions". Such a statement supports the view that literary representations of historical events are legitimate historical documents; many of the authors take the same starting point as an historian might, beginning with certain preconceptions which ultimately develop into a series of events tracing the origins and progression of the rising. Many of the texts to be dealt with will be filled with the influences and preconceptions set out by Bullock.

Impartiality is also impossible according to Egon Friedell in as far as it is only possible to get behind historical causality through the imagination and perception. It is the artist who seeks to reconstruct the myriad threads that form history by use of his imaginative powers, and, in so doing, he is not following a scientific system of values as the writing of historical works is a subjective discipline; Friedell maintains that all history is little more than legend:

Die Legende ist nicht etwa eine der Formen, sondern die einzige Form, in der wir Geschichte überhaupt denken, vorstellen, nacherleben können. Alle Geschichte ist Sage,

⁸ Bullock 295.

Mythos und als solche das Produkt des jeweiligen Standes unserer geistigen Potenzen: unseres Auffassungsvermögens, unserer Gestaltungskraft, unseres Weltgefühls.⁹

This is especially true of literature dealing with historical topics which are often written to comply with an ideological system of values, such as Marxism, as the system sets out a formula through which the writer's creative abilities are to be channelled.

Such a system is evident in the Marxist perspective of history. The Communist Manifesto states that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles¹⁰. This would explain the interpretation given to the June rising in the DDR in both the history books and the literary works. This particular view of history is very important for the literature to be discussed as it implies that the driving mechanism behind history is antagonism, the conflict between different forces, a view borne out by the many of the works to be examined, where a Marxist interpretation of the rising will be given.

It would be quite justified to expect the relevant works to be discussed to contain a great deal of political ideology in regard to the subject matter, but, as Johannes Pernkopf points out, the ideological content of these works is often not as rigid as that of the history books:

⁹ Egon Friedell, Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit. Die Krisis der europäischen Seele von der Schwarzen Pest bis zum ersten Weltkrieg (Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, n.d.) 13.

¹⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei," Werke, vol.4 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1969) 462.

Allerdings weist die literarische 'Bearbeitung' in vielen Punkten über das starre Gegeneinander der Politiker und Ideologen hinaus, hat Zwischenpositionen gesucht, Möglichkeiten von Vermittlung mit den ihr eigenen Methoden angeboten, manchmal sogar die Geschichtsschreibung korrigiert. Dies ist aber von beiden Seiten kaum beachtet, ja, mißachtet und zurückgewiesen worden, weil die jeweilige politisch-ideologische Position nicht aufgegeben werden sollte. Die Literaturkritik beider Seiten haben sich oft in den Dienst solcher 'Drohfinger-Politik' gestellt, dies aber meist in ihren Kategorien ausgedrückt: literarische Mängel! Dies hat die literarische Auseinandersetzung nicht erleichtert, eher erschwert.¹¹

Although the works tend to support the official version of events they do not accept this view unquestioningly. This search for middle ground, for a correct version of the rising has met with varying degrees of approbation and disapproval in the DDR.

Anna Seghers' account, Das Vertrauen, is critical of the party, as is Heym's Fünf Tage im Juni, yet her work has been welcomed in the DDR whereas Heym's has yet to be published there. The emphasis on and portrayal of given events or opinions differ between the two works, despite their similarities, in such a way as to make one novel more acceptable than the other. Both deal with the economic problems, both are critical of the party and both have a similar theme: the defence of an industrial plant during the rising. It is the differences in the set of characters and the views given of the rising, such as the harshness of the criticism of the party, and the narrative structure which are important in forming a picture of the 17 June and it is these elements that

¹¹ Johannes Pernkopf, Der 17. Juni 1953 in der Literatur der beiden deutschen Staaten (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans Dieter Heinz, 1982) Vorwort.

differ between the works. These differences can even be present in works that broadly support the official version of the rising.

In his novel Das dritte Buch über Achim Uwe Johnson touches on the difficulties in portraying the 17 June in DDR literature. The West German Karsch is given the task of writing a biography of the East German cyclist Joachim T. for an East German publishing house. His attempt fails, as Karl Migner points out, as Achim's participation in the rising cannot be accepted in the DDR:

Er ist zum Aufgeben gezwungen, als er erkennt, daß in der Frage der Beteiligung Achim's am Volksaufstand nicht einmal eine Verständigung erreichbar ist, geschweige denn eine Kompromißformel für die geplante Biographie. Achim will die offensichtliche Tatsache nicht zugeben, und auch wenn er es täte, könnte sie keinesfalls in dem Buch erscheinen. Karsch aber kann auf sie nicht verzichten, wenn er seine Arbeit ernst nimmt: Es zeigt sich, daß es eine gesamtdeutsche Wahrheit, die von beiden Seiten akzeptiert werden kann, nicht mehr gibt.¹²

Again there is the emphasis on the differing interpretations given to the rising in the DDR and the BRD and how Achim presents Karsch with a "Wunschbild von sich selbst oder die offiziell geforderte Existenzformen"¹³. This idealised picture Achim presents can also be applied to the way the rising has been presented in the history books.

The literature dealing with the 17 June 1953 will be discussed in relation to this "special legend" showing how and to what extent DDR authors have deviated from what is officially acceptable. To do this a summary of the relevant passages from the history books of

¹² Karl Migner, Das dritte Buch über Achim (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1966) 46.

¹³ Migner 48.

the DDR and the West will be necessary so as to provide a scale by which the adherence to the "special legend" can be judged. This will involve a comparison of the events related and how they are presented. Rather than compare the works by dealing with each of them separately, a thematic approach will be taken comparing how much weight is given by each author to certain issues, such as the role of the party and the involvement of western agents. The works to be discussed were chosen because they either give as broad an account of the many factors contributing to the rising as possible, as is the case with Stefan Heym's Fünf Tage im Juni and Anna Seghers' Das Vertrauen, or because of their concentration on one specific aspect of the rising which is of special interest here. The use of documentary material will also be looked at to clarify to the extent to which fiction and reality are mixed and in how far the official line is followed. Therefore the main points under consideration will be what is presented, how it is presented and how it was received.

2. The Historical Background

As this thesis is to discuss the portrayal of the events leading to and during the rising of 17 June 1953 in selected works of DDR literature, paying special attention to the blending of history and fiction and how these literary portrayals were received, it is desirable to form an outline of the official version of the factors contributing to the rising as given in contemporary documents and DDR history books. These are the sources which have been officially sanctioned and therefore against which any literary portrayal will be judged in the DDR. However, as Johannes Pernkopf has said, it is quite impossible to arrive at an objective version of events as the politicians of both German states cannot reach any kind of agreement as to the exact nature of the rising because of the differences in political perspective:

Über den 17. Juni 1953 würde ein Gespräch zwischen Vertretern der beiden deutschen Staaten, vor allem, wenn von Politikern geführt, auch heutzutage noch in starren, unvermittelbaren Positionen enden, wenn es denn überhaupt zustandekäme. An solchem Sachverhalt hat sich in den bald dreißig Jahren, die das "umkämpfte" Ereignis jetzt zurückliegt, nicht viel geändert. Die beiden ideologischen Pole zum selben Ereignis, hier "Volksaufstand", dort "Konterrevolution" genannt, sind auch in Zeiten friedlicher Koexistenz kaum näher gekommen.¹

Nevertheless, there is still a good deal of agreement as to the most important factors leading to the rising.

The first statement issued by the SED concerning the rising

¹ Pernkopf Vorwort n.p.

called the event a "faschistische Provokation"², an attempt to topple the SED and restore a capitalist government to the DDR, and to force a civil, or even a third world war. The backers of the coup attempt were West German and foreign, most notably American secret services, business concerns and imperialists, who exploited the economic confusion in the DDR. Although it is difficult to trace the causes of the rising to one single event it is perhaps best to start with the second party conference of the SED as this was when the party announced the "Aufbau des Sozialismus".

The second party conference of the SED, which took place between the 9 and 12 July 1953, announced the "Aufbau des Sozialismus" as the main goal of its domestic policy. This would, in the context of Marxist theory, lead to an intensification of the class struggle, as is stated in a resolution adopted by the conference:

Die politischen und die ökonomischen Bedingungen sowie das Bewußtsein der Arbeiterklasse und der Mehrheit der Werktätigen sind so weit entwickelt, daß der Aufbau des Sozialismus zur grundlegenden Aufgabe in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik geworden ist....Es ist zu beachten, daß die Verschärferung des Klassenkampfes unvermeidlich ist und die Werktätigen den Widerstand der feindlichen Kräfte brechen müssen.³

The announcement of the "Aufbau des Sozialismus" is central to the events leading to the June 1953 rising in the DDR due to its effect on the economy. Its main intention was to improve the DDR's heavy

² Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands. Beschlüsse und Erklärungen des Zentralkomitees sowie seines Politbüros und seines Sekretariats Vol.4. (Berlin: Dietz, 1954) 437.

³ Dokumente der SED 73.

industry at the cost of slowing the development of light and consumer industries. However, according to Stefan Doernberg in his "für die Ära Ulbricht repräsentative(n) Kurze Geschichte der DDR"⁴, the DDR faced many problems as the eastern part of Germany was even before the war largely dependent on areas such as the "Ruhrgebiet", now in West Germany, for raw materials. Thus, the DDR was still to a certain extent economically reliant on West Germany. In this respect Doernberg states:

So hatten sich beim Aufbau des Sozialismus angesichts der Verschärfung des Wirtschaftskrieges und der Wühlätigkeit des imperialistischen Westdeutschlands gegen die DDR -- die deshalb so nachhaltigen Folgen haben konnten, weil das Gebiet der DDR gegenüber Westdeutschland das vor 1945 wirtschaftlich zurückgebliebene war und sich daher nach wie vor noch in vieler Hinsicht in ökonomischer Abhängigkeit von den schlimmsten Feinden des ersten Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staates befand -- äußerst komplizierte Probleme ergeben. Für ihre Meisterung gab es noch keine Erfahrungen-- weder in der DDR noch international.⁵

Doernberg's typical cold-war style leaves little doubt as to which side is the aggressor, but he does concede that the party also made mistakes by following Stalin's "false theories"⁶ in concentrating on the development of heavy industry, which in turn led to conditions causing dissatisfaction among the workforce.

⁴ Heinrich Mohr, "Der 17. Juni als Thema der Literatur in der DDR," Die deutsche Teilung im Spiegel der Literatur. Beiträge zur Literatur und Germanistik der DDR, ed. Karl Lamers (Stuttgart: Verlag Bonn Aktuell, 1978) 43.

⁵ Stefan Doernberg, Kurze Geschichte der DDR (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1965) 234.

⁶ Doernberg 234.

Doernberg continues his criticism of the party in that he says, "viele Funktionäre des Staates und der Partei versuchten, Schwierigkeiten in der Produktion mit administrativen Mitteln anstatt durch Überzeugung zu beheben."⁷ Nonetheless, the party's aims are held to have been correct:

Administrativ verhängte Normerhöhungen in der Industrie, die zur notwendigen Steigerung der Arbeitsproduktivität beitragen sollten, wurden von den Arbeitern und Angestellten nicht verstanden und stießen auf Widerstand⁸.

This view is consistent with that forwarded by the Neues Deutschland which printed a discussion held at the Karl-Marx-Werk. During this discussion members of the workforce stated that they would not be so "wahnsinnig"⁹ as to voluntarily raise their productivity as this would in effect lower their take-home pay. The Neues Deutschland, however, derided government policy by dismissing this comment thus:

Diese oftmals sehr drastischen Stellungnahmen waren aber nur möglich, weil mit diesen Kollegen noch nicht über die Notwendigkeit technisch begründeter, fortschrittlicher Normen gesprochen worden war.¹⁰

⁷ Doernberg 235.

⁸ Doernberg 235.

⁹ "Normenschaukelei hemmt Verbesserung der Arbeitsorganisation," Neues Deutschland 22 April 1953. (Qtd in Ilse Spittmann and Karl Wilhelm Fricke, eds., 17. Juni. 1953. Arbeiteraufstand in der DDR (Köln: Edition Deutschland Archiv, 1985) 180).

¹⁰ Neues Deutschland, "Normenschaukelei".

The necessity of a rise in productivity is not questioned, merely the methods. But, the result was still an estrangement of the party from the people which was aggravated by the party's measures against the middle classes.

In April 1953 ration cards were withdrawn from those who owned private businesses and other sections of the community deemed to be middle class, such as the "Großbauer", as well as people living in East Berlin and working in West Berlin. These and other measures led to an increase in the number of "Republikfluchten" among the middle class and farming community, which led to further problems in agricultural production and supply in a country already facing shortages. In spite of this the "Aufbau des Sozialismus" was still proclaimed a success by the SED. Therefore, there had to be other reasons forwarded by the SED for the uprising as economic problems alone could not be held responsible.

The resolution adopted by the second party conference of the SED warned in typical cold-war rhetoric that the world is split into two diametrically opposed camps: the camp of peace and socialism, led by the Soviet Union, and the camp of imperialism, led by the United States, "das Zentrum der kapitalistischen Regierungen, der Kriegshetze, der reaktionären und ausbeuterischen Elemente in der Welt"¹¹. With this the SED clearly defined the antagonism that existed between the two Germanies.

World events seemed to support the SED's view that there was a threat to the DDR from within as well as without. The trial and

¹¹ Dokumente der SED 70.

execution of Slansky for treason in Czechoslovakia was used as evidence to warn against a Fifth Column in the DDR:

Die Prozesse in den Volksdemokratien gegen die Verschwörerbanden der Rajk, Kostoff, Slansky und Konsorten zeigen uns eindeutig, daß die Imperialisten ihre Versuche zur Bildung neuer "Fünfter Kolonnen" nicht nur ständig wiederholen, sondern noch verstärken. Es wäre Opportunismus, sich dem Glauben hinzugeben, daß solche Versuche nicht auch bei uns in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik unternommen würden.¹²

This view is borne out by Doernberg who claims there was a large network of agents and terror organisations in West Berlin with bases throughout the DDR and that these organisations had infiltrated various parts of the state apparatus, including the "Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung", and many large industrial plants. Heinz Heitzer also gives considerable weight to this view, saying that there were counterrevolutionary groups in the DDR, "in denen meist ehemals aktive Faschisten den Ton angaben"¹³. The involvement of former Nazis is corroborated in Geschichte der DDR, which also states that disaffected members of the middle classes were won over by the western intelligence agencies.

The text book DDR Werden und Wachsen sees the network of agents as being used to lure specialists away from the DDR, thereby further worsening the economic situation. This kind of economic sabotage worsened the situation of the SED, but the party also made things more difficult by introducing "ungenügend durchdachte Maßnahmen zur Überwindung dieser Schwierigkeiten, insbesondere die

¹² Dokumente der SED 396.

¹³ Heinz Heitzer, DDR. Geschichtlicher Überblick (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Marxistische Blätter, 1979) 110.

administrative Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen um 10 (in einigen Industriezweigen bis zu 30) Prozent."¹⁴ This demanded rise in productivity would cause the SED many problems.

The history writers of the DDR also cite the escalation of the cold-war against the DDR as a major cause of the rising. With the setbacks for the Americans in Korea and the failure of the Eisenhower administration's policy of roll-back, the pushing back of the boundaries of communism, in the Far East, the American government and its allies turned their attention toward Europe. This aggressive stance towards eastern Europe was clearly demonstrated by the BRD's foreign policy in the ratification of the European Defence Community Treaty. This was seen as being another means of preventing the reunification of Germany, a priority of the SED. In 1952, the Soviet Union proposed a treaty whereby Germany's unity would be restored and a totally independent, neutral Germany would come into being. However, Adenauer's government and the western allies preferred to work towards the integration of the BRD into NATO. With this the SED believed the best chance of a united Germany was passed up.

The SED also viewed the founding of a "Forschungsbeirat für Fragen der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands" under the control of the "Ministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen" as an aggressive action. Doernberg emphasises the importance of this "Forschungsbeirat",

¹⁴ Rolf Badstübner et al, Geschichte der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1981) 157.

claiming its members were "Vertreter der aggressivsten Kreise des Monopolkapitals und des Junkertums sowie rechte Führer der SPD und des DGB."¹⁵ Doernberg continues that it was the task of this organisation to coordinate "die Vorbereitungen für den sogenannten Tag 'X', den Tag, an dem die Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Macht in der DDR gestürzt werden sollte."¹⁶

West Berlin was to play a special role in the West's plans:

Es war zu einem imperialistischen Brückenkopf ausgebaut worden - zum 'Schaufenster der freien Welt' - zur Menschenschleuse für Agenten und für die Abwerbung von DDR Bürgern, zu einem Zentrum des Wirtschaftskrieges, zur Ausgangsbasis subversiver Aktionen und zum Stützpunkt zahlreicher Geheimdienste, Agentenorganisationen und Propagandazentralen.¹⁷

The role of West Berlin in the rising is also emphasised in the literary works to be discussed.

Another influence from West Berlin was RIAS, "Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor". DDR Werden und Wachsen shows RIAS to be part of a propaganda machine directed against the DDR:

Der von den USA als eine der stärksten Rundfunkstationen Europas eingerichtete Sender RIAS entwickelte sich zum wichtigsten Instrument der antikommunistischen Hetze. Tag um Tag und Stunde um Stunde verbreitete dieser Sender Lügen und Verleumdungen über die DDR, appellierte an primitivste Instinkte, schürte Chauvinismus und Nationalismus, predigte Haß und Feindschaft gegen den Sozialismus.¹⁸

¹⁵ Doernberg 231.

¹⁶ Doernberg 231.

¹⁷ Badstübner et al 156.

¹⁸ Heitzer et al, DDR Werden 236.

RIAS played an important part in stirring up opposition to the SED government within the DDR and in West Berlin. It would continue this role on the day of the rising.

The SED's version of the rising says the economic conditions inside the DDR were exploited to force a counterrevolutionary putsch. That the SED made mistakes in its handling of the economy is admitted, yet the most important item causing discontent among the workforce, the demanded rise in productivity was not rectified by the party. Realising that there was growing discontent about the economic situation the politbureau introduced a new policy, known as the "Neuer Kurs" on June 9 1953 saying that "eine Reihe von Fehlern begangen wurden"¹⁹. The party also admitted having neglected "die Interessen solcher Bevölkerungsteile wie der Einzelbauern, der Einzelhändler, der Handwerker, der Intelligenz."²⁰ However, these mistakes would be rectified immediately and there would be an improvement in the living standards of the entire population. These measures would "die Verbundenheit der Bevölkerung mit der Regierung stärken und festigen."²¹ This declaration, however, proved incorrect. The party had distanced itself further from the working class by making concessions to everyone but them.

¹⁹ Dokumente der SED 428.

²⁰ Dokumente der SED 428.

²¹ "Ministerrat beschließt Neuen Kurs," Neues Deutschland 12 June 1953. (Qtd. in Spittmann and Fricke 183).

As time progressed and strikes broke out on the Stalinallee, the party changed course yet again. In the issue of 14 June 1953, the Neues Deutschland criticised certain officials of "VEB Wohnungsbau" for their high handed treatment of the workforce in imposing new norms without the cooperation of the brigades²². This seeming contradiction between the Central Committee and the party paper was repeated on 16 June when Tribüne, the FDGB ("Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund") newspaper, published an article supporting the increase in the norms, saying the decision was "in vollem Umfang richtig."²³ Later that same day the politbureau reversed its decision to increase the norms, although it still emphasised the necessity of them:

Das Politbüro hält es zugleich für völlig falsch, die Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen in den Betrieben der volkseigenen Industrie um 10 Prozent auf administrativem Wege durchzuführen.

Die Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen darf und kann nicht mit administrativen Methoden durchgeführt werden, sondern einzig und allein auf der Grundlage der Überzeugung und der Freiwilligkeit.²⁴

The resolution continues by saying that the norms are "gemeinsam mit den Gewerkschaften zu überprüfen"²⁵. The language used in this declaration makes it unclear as to the sincerity of the SED. The

²² "Es wird Zeit, den Holzhammer beiseite zu legen," Neues Deutschland 14 June 1953. (Qtd. in Spittmann and Fricke 184).

²³ Otto Lehmann, "Zu einigen schädlichen Erscheinungen bei der Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen," Tribüne 16 June 1953. (Qtd. in Spittmann and Fricke 184).

²⁴ Dokumente der SED 432.

²⁵ Dokumente der SED 432.

SED would appear to suggest that the norms will be reintroduced using a different method after consultation with the unions.

The "Neuer Kurs", in the view of the SED, forced the West to bring forward its plans for the Tag X as the government's new policy would, within a short time, prove to be successful. To this end Doernberg states the leaders of the attack were flown to West Berlin:

Unter ihnen befanden sich der amerikanische Spionagechef Allan Dulles, seine Schwester Eleanor Dulles, die im Außenministerium eine führende Stellung innehatte, und schließlich auch der durch seine brutale Kriegsführung in Korea bekannte General Ridgway. Aus Westdeutschland wurden nach Westberlin faschistische Elemente eingeflogen. Am 17. Juni kam auch Jakob Kaiser, um die Operationen direkt von der Frontstadt aus anzuleiten.²⁶

The Neues Deutschland also believed the rising to have been instigated and directed by the West. In the edition of the 17 June, the Neues Deutschland claims that the demonstrations of the previous day were instigated by agents exploiting the dissatisfaction of the work force.

What started as a peaceful demonstration against the government's economic policies took on a political character and soon gave way to violence. The demonstrators started to call for the government to step down and for a united Germany with free elections. However, many of the workers distanced themselves from the demonstration when this happened as they realised, as is pointed out in the history of the SED, that they had been misled and were being manipulated for political ends by fascists:

²⁶ Doernberg 238.

Viele der Streikenden und Demonstranten distanzierten sich von den konterrevolutionären Provokateuren, die wie die Faschisten hausten. Die Provokateure zerfetzten und verbrannten Fahnen und andere Symbole der Arbeiterbewegung, verwüsteten Einrichtungen der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands, staatliche Dienststellen und Büros demokratischer Organisationen, plünderten und brandschatzten Warenhäuser, Buchhandlungen und Kioske. Brutal mißhandelten und ermordeten sie klassenbewußte Arbeiter und andere Werktätige, die ihnen mutig entgegentraten.²⁷

The attempted putsch was defeated by the SED, which ensured "die Einheit und Schlagkraft der Partei und der sozialistischen Staatsmacht"²⁸ and sent its most experienced members "in die Schwerpunkte der Volkswirtschaft"²⁹, and by class conscious workers and the intervention of the Soviet army and organs of state security. The Geschichte der DDR sums up the actions of the Soviet army as follows:

Sie ließ keinen Zweifel daran, daß die UdSSR eine Invasion der imperialistischen Mächte nicht dulden würde, und unterband den Versuch, in der DDR einen blutigen Bürgerkrieg zu provozieren. Entschlossen verteidigten auch die Angehörigen der Volkspolizei und des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit die sozialistische Revolution.³⁰

The Soviet military commander declared a state of emergency and imposed a curfew in East Berlin on 17 June. This also happened in several other areas of the DDR. According to Doernberg there were disturbances in 272 out of 10,000 municipalities in the DDR³¹. It

²⁷ Geschichte der SED 294.

²⁸ Geschichte der SED 294.

²⁹ Geschichte der SED 294.

³⁰ Geschichte der DDR 158.

³¹ Doernberg 239.

is also estimated that only about five percent of the workforce went on strike³².

If a comparison of these figures is made with those given in western histories a perhaps surprising correlation can be seen between them. Arnulf Baring places the number of municipalities in which it came to unrest at 274, only two more than the official DDR figure. He is also very close in his estimate of 372,000, or 6.8 percent of the workforce, for the number of people involved as opposed to the official 300,000, or 5 percent³³. There are also other areas of agreement and disagreement about the true version of events. A brief comparison of these areas might serve to form a clearer picture of the rising and as to why some aspects of the literary treatments of it are not considered acceptable in the DDR.

It is generally agreed that the announcement of the "Aufbau des Sozialismus" was one of the major factors leading to the rising as the concentration on heavy industry it demanded created the necessary economic conditions and dissatisfaction in a country already facing severe economic difficulties. Hermann Weber points to the disaffection amongst the working class, emphasising not only the great advances they had made, but also the difficulties they faced:

So blieb der Lebensstandard der Arbeiterfamilie (gerade auch im Vergleich mit dem der Wirtschaftsfunktionäre oder der 'Intelligenz') bescheiden. Natürlich bestimmten nicht nur Löhne und Preise die Lebensbedingungen. Die Arbeiter

³² Geschichte der DDR 138.

³³ Arnulf Baring, Der 17. Juni 1953 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1983) 68.

sahen in Polikliniken, Kulturhäusern, Erholungsheimen, Feriendienst des FDGB, Kindergärten und Kinderhorten, Krankenversicherung ohne Karenzzeit, gleichem Lohn für Frauen, Studienmöglichkeiten usw. sehr wohl echte Fortschritte, die aber die Misere der Lebenshaltung nicht aufwiegen konnten.³⁴

That in a workers' state the workforce was being paid less than other sections of the community caused much bitterness amongst the working class. Other areas of dissatisfaction amongst the workforce were the lack of any real union representation and the lack of common ground between them and the SED.

The SED's measures against the middle classes and the collectivisation of agriculture are cited by David Childs as further reasons for the economic conditions as they led to a drop in the production and supply of goods and food. However, the historians of the West also stress the importance of the rise in norms, a rise that Baring feels to be justified:

Die Forderung nach einer Erhöhung der Normen war nicht ganz so unberechtigt, wie man zunächst annehmen könnte. Nach dem Krieg war die Arbeitsproduktivität in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone, wie übrigens auch in den anderen Zonen, beträchtlich zurückgegangen. Dies erklärte sich aus der allgemeinen Desorganisation, den Demontagen und der Ernährungslage und hatte zur Folge, daß Ende 1947 die Zahl der Beschäftigten in der Zone gegenüber der Vorkriegszeit um 180,000 Personen zugenommen hatte, obwohl die Produktion durch die Demontagen und den Rohstoffmangel auf einen geringen Prozentsatz der Vorkriegsproduktion zusammengeschmolzen war.³⁵

Baring sees the economic difficulties facing the DDR and believes the demanded rise in productivity to be justified. However, he does concede that the refusal to rescind the norms with the introduction

³⁴ Hermann Weber, Geschichte der DDR (Munich: DTV, 1985) 236.

³⁵ Baring 31.

of the "Neuer Kurs" showed "wenig politisches Fingerspitzengefühl"³⁶.

The introduction of the "Neuer Kurs" not only alienated the workforce, but also created confusion amongst the party workers as it was announced without them being given any sort of preparation or directives from Berlin. The functionaries in the factories were at a loss as to how to explain the sudden change in course in all but the question of the norms, especially as the politbureau had admitted the rest of its domestic policy to have been a failure.

One of the main areas of disagreement between the history writers of the DDR and the West is the involvement of western spies and intelligence agencies. Baring believes the strikes and demonstrations took the West completely by surprise and Ernst Richert talks of "dem tatenlosen Beiseitestehen des Westens"³⁷. Weber also believes it would have been impossible for outsiders, such as agents, to take control of the strikes. He believes the leaders to have been "ohne Ausnahme besonnene, ältere Kollegen, die durch Zuruf ausgewählt wurden, ohnehin das Vertrauen ihrer Mitarbeiter besaßen, und sich plötzlich in den einzelnen Streikleitungen wiederfanden"³⁸. Richert comes to the same conclusion, saying the strike leaders were of the "mittleren

³⁶ Baring 48.

³⁷ Ernst Richert, Das zweite Deutschland. Ein Staat, der nicht sein darf (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn, 1974) 203.

³⁸ Weber 243.

Generation"³⁹ and, to a large extent, former non-commissioned officers. This cannot, however, be used to support the theory that the strike was infiltrated by fascists. Baring concedes that they were probably against communism, but attributes the presence of so many former soldiers to the fact that they were used to taking on responsibility and command in times of crisis due to their experiences in the military. Although it is widely denied that the western intelligence agencies did little else than observe the situation and report on it, Baring agrees that RIAS played a significant role in the rising with its bulletins concerning the situation.

There is some degree of consensus regarding the course of the demonstration. Yet, it is unclear as to when the Soviet troops intervened, whether before or after violence broke out. Richert says the troops intervened only when the situation became desperate and the governmental system appeared threatened; Childs, referring to an early (1957) edition of Baring's 17 June 1953 claims they intervened as soon as the demonstration became violent. That there was violence is agreed on, yet Weber denies that HO kiosks and non-governmental buildings were attacked. But, party buildings and party members were attacked and prisons stormed and inmates released indiscriminately, including Erna Dorn, a former Nazi concentration camp guard. There is also disagreement as to the action of the Soviet troops, Weber saying the rising was "im

³⁹ Richert 201.

wesentlichen von sowjetischen Truppen mit Gewalt unterdrückt"⁴⁰, and Baring claiming they did everything in their power to avoid bloodshed, even going as far as to allow an anti-government rally to take place in Halle even though they had surrounded the site hours beforehand.

The role of the party is also given a different treatment in the West. Baring claims the party was forewarned that there would be a strike on the 16 June as building workers sent a letter to Grotewohl demanding the norms be rescinded or they would take action. Nonetheless, he was assured by his advisors that there would be no such action. Lehmann's article in Tribüne, supporting the demanded increase in production, was allowed to appear and this, according to Otto Nuschke, the deputy senior minister, was the "Zünder...für die ganze Erregungswelle"⁴¹. Rather than sending its most experienced members into the factories, Baring suggests the SED actually called the provincial economic directors to Berlin, despite their protests, to discuss necessary changes to industrial policy. When the strike, which some had expected, did develop, the local party officials were helpless as they were totally unprepared to deal with a situation which had always been considered unthinkable. Similarly, the Volkspolizei did not know how to react and some police and party functionaries joined the demonstrators. Indeed, the police only reacted when the Volkspolizei was placed under Soviet command.

⁴⁰ Weber, 243.

⁴¹ Baring 180.

These similarities and differences in the portrayal of the rising demonstrate the confusion surrounding the events. Clearly both sides have their own particular version of the causes and sequences of events. Although there is agreement on some aspects, it is far from unanimous. The western version links the rising to economic factors and the gulf between the party and the people and denies active involvement on the part of the West. Although mitigating circumstances are conceded, the party is held responsible for the rising due to its treatment of the workforce.

The official history telling of the DDR links the rising of 17 June 1953 to world events, such as the Korean War and the death of Stalin, in order to put it in the wider context of a global class struggle shaped by the events of the cold-war. The fourteenth conference of the Central Committee of the SED states that the rising began as a legitimate strike by workers with a genuine grievance. (That the strike was indeed legitimate was emphasised by the justice minister, Fechner, who was later arrested for trying to excuse this fascist coup attempt as a legitimate strike). But, the demonstration was infiltrated by western agents who tried unsuccessfully to turn the workers against the government and, as Doernberg puts it, suffered a fiasco⁴².

This official view of events is adopted to a large extent by the DDR authors dealing with the rising. That is not to say that there is complete agreement or that all the historical events are portrayed. Some, such as Hermlin, concentrate on one specific

⁴² Doernberg 239.

event, others take a much broader approach, as do Seghers and Heym, trying to find causes as well as depicting the actual rising itself. In so doing they both blend fictitious characters and plots with references to real situations. There are also portrayals which deal with only specific themes, such as the agent theory or the class conscious worker. Indeed, the works tend to have a thematic structure to them, elements being taken from the official version and being transferred into fictional circumstances. These themes remain fairly constant even though the works were published at various times over twenty years.

Many of the historical documents pertaining to the rising have been used by DDR authors in their works dealing with the 17 June. Some have been incorporated directly into the texts whereas others have been used in forming the author's representation of the events. In the standard literary history of the DDR the rising is discussed in terms of full agreement with the party line. However, it does make mention of the difficulties facing writers dealing with the 17 June as a literary theme:

Wie anderen Teilen der Bevölkerung und besonders der Intelligenz fiel es jedoch auch den Schriftstellern schwer, diese Erscheinungen der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung richtig zu bewerten.⁴³

Why writers should find it so difficult to treat it correctly is not explained, yet it cannot be denied as the number of discrepancies between the treatments show.

⁴³ Horst Haase, et al, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur. Literatur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1976) 195.

3. The Economic Conditions

In the literary portrayals of the 17 June 1953 much attention is given to the economic conditions of the time as it was problems in the economy of the DDR that created the discontent amongst the workforce that led to the strike. However, this issue has been largely ignored in the secondary literature dealing with these texts. The single most important economic factor leading to the rising was the demanded rise in productivity. However, this is not the only issue dealt with, the general conditions of the time also being discussed. The SED was in a position where it had to make the choice between developing consumer industries or heavy industry. Carl-Jakob Danziger, in his memoirs Die Partei hat immer Recht, sums up the problem by saying that if the SED neglected heavy industry it would leave the DDR undefended in a hostile environment, but if it chose to develop heavy industry, in order to ensure the defence of the country, it would disaffect the population; the SED had the choice: "entweder Stahl oder Wurst auf der Stulle."¹ The announcement of the "Aufbau des Sozialismus" committed the government to developing heavy industry, the thinking being that this was the way to secure the economic and manufacturing base of the DDR. Once the heavy industrial basis of the state had been firmly secured the party could turn its attention to the consumer industries.

¹ Carl-Jakob Danziger, Die Partei hat immer Recht. Autobiographischer Roman (Stuttgart: Werner Gebühr, 1976) 119.

The emphasis on heavy industry meant that shortages in the food supply endured in the DDR, a subject dealt with by Anna Seghers in Das Vertrauen, first published in 1969. During his trip to West Germany, Riedl wants to buy his mother some wool, but he is confused by the selection available, which leads him to reflect on the conditions in his own country:

Uns fehlen daheim, dachte Riedl, genug Maschinen, damit gemacht wird, was die Menschen am dringendsten brauchen. Ich aber, ich brauche nichts. Ich habe nach nichts Besondrem Verlangen. Bestimmt ein Fehler. Sogar ein schlimmer Fehler. Denn deshalb versteh ich gar nicht, warum die Menschen um mich herum so zornig verlangen, was sie nun einmal brauchen.²

By allowing Riedl to reflect on his own particular needs Seghers not only provides an insight into the economic situation in the DDR, but also into the mood prevalent there. The inference to be drawn from this scene is that those things the population most want cannot be produced until the machines they are lacking are built, that is until the industrial base has been firmly established: there must be a concerted effort to rebuild the DDR's heavy industry, but this could in turn lead to further anger.

These conditions of shortage led to a thriving black market, which is often mentioned as part of the background leading to the rising. Heym includes an incident in which a woman tries to buy five pounds of butter in the HO. Witte inquires what she intends to do with so much butter, but when she refuses to tell him he answers for her, saying having bought it in East Berlin at the lower price,

² Anna Seghers, Das Vertrauen (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1985) 18.

she will take it to West Berlin and resell it for a higher price, exchanging the profit she makes from Deutschmarks to DDR-marks at the black market rate of one Westmark to five DDR-marks³. Werner Reinowski includes a similar incident in Die Versuchung in which a woman from the West tries to buy goods in East Berlin because they are cheaper. However, the situation is reversed when Frau Wagner goes to West Berlin to buy kippers as the few that were available in the East have all been sold. It is against such a background of shortages and discontent that the rising was to develop.

During VEB Merkur's annual outing, again in Heym's Fünf Tage im Juni, the workers discuss various aspects of their everyday life; this discussion is dominated by economic concerns, but not those governing the reconstruction of the country's industry, but rather those concerning the business of day-to-day living:

Die Marmeladenpreise waren erhöht und vor wenigen Tagen wieder herabgesetzt worden; Pietrzuch hatte einen Vetter, bei dem hatten sie die Steuern aufs Häuschen zwangsweise eingetrieben; und der Frau, die dem Blumenladen am Friedhof betrieb, waren die Lebensmittelkarten entzogen worden, jetzt mußte sie das Vielfache zahlen für alles; und was gab es schon in den Läden; und Wohnungen, nicht dran zu denken; aber Csiseks Nachbar war eingelocht worden, weil er ein paar Dutzend Eier nach West-Berlin verbrachte, und so was nannte sich Arbeiterregierung, in großen Limousinen herumfahren, das konnten sie; das mußte sich alles ändern.⁴

The workforce at VEB Merkur is concerned with its standard of living more than anything else. The things they discuss refer to the measures introduced by the SED early in 1953. Amongst these

³ Heym, Fünf Tage 68.

⁴ Heym, Fünf Tage 29.

measures were the withdrawal of ration cards from certain sections of the population and price rises on certain goods such as jam which were supposed to be for the benefit of the population. However, these measures had the effect of alienating very many people as Heym pointed out in a memorandum sent to the editor of the Tägliche Rundschau dated 21 June 1953:

Die Erhöhung der Marmeladenpreise, z.B., bedeutete, daß jeder Bürger der DDR jeden Morgen beim Frühstück an eine unpopuläre Maßnahme erinnert und dadurch verärgert wurde, denn Marmelade ist es, was er sich aufs Brot streicht.⁵

Heym goes on to say that the withdrawal of ration cards from those deemed to be capitalist elements in society actually caused sympathy for them, as is seen in his novel by the reference to the florist.

Along with these more general measures the government also decided to raise the norms by ten percent. It is this aspect of the SED's economic policy that receives the fullest literary treatment. The importance of the ten percent raise in norms has been summarised by Fritz Schenk, a functionary in the government at that time, as follows:

Das war gleichbedeutend mit einer Lohnsenkung um diesen Satz, denn die Normen waren damals schon so hoch, daß es den Arbeitern unmöglich gewesen wäre, den Verlust durch erhöhte Leistung auszugleichen.⁶

⁵ Stefan Heym, "Memorandum," Wege und Umwege. Streitbare Schriften aus fünf Jahrzehnten, ed Peter Mallwitz (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1980) 202.

⁶ Fritz Schenk, Mein doppeltes Vaterland: Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse eines geborenen Sozialdemokraten (Würzburg: Neumann, 1981) 61.

By raising the norms the workers had to increase their own production by ten percent to earn the same wage as before. It was this measure that caused the initial strikes in East Berlin. With the introduction of the "Neuer Kurs" the government had reversed many of its unpopular decisions, it reinstated ration cards to those who had been denied them and lowered prices for food stuffs, but it did not rescind the new norms. To the workers it seemed as if the government had given something to everyone but them. The severe discontent caused by this was brought to a head on 16 June when the FDGB newspaper insisted the new norms should stay.

Franz Schonauer denies that Seghers discusses the economic causes of the rising:

Mit keinem Wort geht die Schriftstellerin auf die Ursachen des Aufstandes ein, auf die falsche Normenpolitik, die infolge mangelnder "materieller Anreize" auf schiere Ausbeutung hinauslief und so zu einer Erbitterung und einer Vertrauenskrise bei der Arbeiterschaft führte, die sich keineswegs aus der Tätigkeit westlicher Agenten und Diversanten versteht.⁷

However, this is plainly untrue, Seghers devoting a lot of attention to the matter. The raise in norms seemed to affirm the belief that the government, in spite of its claims to be a workers' party, was as exploitative as the old capitalist bosses. In his discussion of Das Vertrauen, Ulrich Fries summarises the feelings of the workforce at the Kossin steel works:

Als den Arbeitern des Kossin-Werks im Frühjahr 1953 bedeutet wird, daß die geplante Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen zu Lohnneinbußen führen, dieser Verzicht auf längere Sicht zur allgemeinen Verbesserung der

⁷ Franz Schonauer, rev. of Das Vertrauen, by Anna Seghers, Neue Deutsche Hefte 2 (1970) 132.

materiellen Situation und zur Sicherung des Sozialismus beitragen wird, mögen viele von ihnen der Logik des Arguments nicht folgen. In ihrer Skepsis gegenüber der Versicherung (!), daß im Unterschied zu früher und zu ihren Kollegen im Westen sie selbst die Besitzer des Werkes seien, werden sie sowohl durch die materiellen Implikationen als auch durch die autoritären Methoden bestärkt, mit denen die Bürokratie die Produktivitätssteigerungen durchsetzen will.⁸

In Seghers' novel, the workforce cannot be convinced that the demanded rise in productivity is for their own benefit; Uhlig is not concerned with who owns the factory, he is only interested in earning a decent wage for his work. Uhlig cannot see the logic in doing extra work for less pay, "um ein, zwei Jahre zu warten, bis sein Happen Fleisch ein paar Pfennige billiger sei."⁹ The party and union representatives at the plant are unable to convince the workforce of the necessity for an increase in production as the arguments it uses are too weak.

For Seghers much of the problem is that the necessity of the norms is not presented effectively. It is possible to fulfill the new norms, as Gerber's brigade does, but, as Hagen points out, this brigade is the exception rather than the rule. As the BPO ("Betriebsparteiorganisation") chairman, Hagen warns against putting through the new norms as they are worked out by administrators who have no idea how the people actually work in the factories. However, although the new norms should not be pushed through using administrative methods, they are still deemed to be

⁸ Ulrich Fries, "Figurenkonzept und politische Argumentation in den Romanen 'Die Entscheidung' und 'Das Vertrauen'," Text und Kritik 38 (1982) 73.

⁹ Seghers 140.

necessary. Without the new norms the standard of living cannot rise but the workforce is not content to raise its production without some kind of material incentive. Hagen concedes that they are not asking too much of the workers in the DDR compared to their counterparts in the West. But the workers in the West do not notice any injustices they suffer as they have been bought off by a more comfortable material existence.

Heym also shows the workforce to be very dissatisfied with the demanded raise in productivity. Heym's criticism comes from a party member:

Dronke sprach, ruhig, tiefe Stimme: "Die Kollegen sind so gut wie alle verärgert. Sie haben nicht schlechter gearbeitet als sonst, und plötzlich ist da weniger in der Lohntüte. Ich bin in der Partei, und ich weiß, warum ich drin bin, aber bei mir waren's vierunddreißig Pfennig die Stunde, das spürst du."¹⁰

That a class-conscious party member believes the SED to be exploiting him is a far more serious accusation than Seghers makes. Unlike Hagen, Dronke cannot see the validity in the party's direction. Many of the other workers at VEB Merkur also cannot understand that they own the factory; they are more interested in their wage packets than abstract political theories.

Just as Hagen opposes norms imposed through administrative means, so does Heym's BGL ("Betriebsgewerkschaftsleitung") chairman Witte. Witte believes the new norms could lead to a forced reversal in policy, "wenn nicht sogar zu einer Niederlage."¹¹ For his

¹⁰ Heym, Fünf Tage 53.

¹¹ Heym, Fünf Tage 8.

opposition to this policy Witte is seen as a trouble maker by his BPO. Similarly, Fries believes those who oppose the norms at Kossin are portrayed as regressive and obstructive to the securing of socialism:

Die Frage der Steigerung der Produktivität läßt jeden Einwand seitens der Betroffenen an den Formen der administrativen Durchsetzung zum Indiz ihrer Rückständigkeit werden, wenn sie als Maßnahme zur Sicherung der Rahmenbedingungen des Sozialismus identifiziert wird.¹²

Although Hagen opposes the norms as he believes the party is moving too fast, he does accept that they are necessary. Witte also believes the rise to be necessary, but opposes it as he realises that it could be dangerous for the party, whereas Hagen eventually accepts it. There are two main differences between Seghers' and Heym's portrayals in this instance: Hagen opposes the rise in norms as chairman of the BPO, whereas the BPO at VEB Merkur supports it fully, leaving Witte, the FDGB chairman to oppose it; also those workers who oppose the norms at VEB Merkur are not seen as being regressive, rather they are ordinary, honest workers. The opposition to the norms is expressed by Kallmann who believes the workforce is still being exploited:

"Wir Arbeiter sind immer die Ausgebeuteten." Kallmann zuckte die Achseln. "Das ist seit je gewesen, überall in der Welt, und das wird wohl auch so bleiben, Kapitalismus oder Kommunismus. Oder glaubt einer, daß er wirklich den Wert wieder rauskriegt, den er produziert?"¹³

¹² Fries 74.

¹³ Heym, Fünf Tage 30.

Kallmann is a valued member of the workforce at VEB Merkur and a Social Democrat. His opposition is not expressed in terms that oppose the political fundamentals of the society, but rather it is based on the way the workforce is treated by the government which has forced this new directive on them from above with no consultation.

The similarities between how Seghers and Heym deal with the norms are manifest, but for Heym there is no connection between being opposed to the new norms and being opposed to the state, as is made clear by Dronke's comment. Seghers, however, sees those who are opposed to a rise in productivity as lacking any political consciousness.

The introduction of the "Neuer Kurs" rescinded the unpopular measures with the exception of the raised norms. Werner Reinowski sticks firmly to the SED view that the "Neuer Kurs" was bound to lead to an improvement in the living conditions in the DDR and therefore forced the western secret services to bring forward their plans for putsch, as the director of "Ozeandienst", one of the participating organisations in West Berlin puts it: "Der Befreiungstag für die Ostzone muß erheblich vorgelegt werden. Muß sofort beginnen!"¹⁴ The "Neuer Kurs" is, however, welcomed by the class conscious West Berliner Peter Bracke who disagrees with his father, who believes the opinion of the SPD newspaper that it is a sign of weakness:

¹⁴ Werner Reinowski, Die Versuchung (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1956) 324.

Im Gegenteil, Vater, das ist doch Stärke. Vor allem doch ein Beweis dafür, daß Pieck und Grotewohl ehrliche Arbeiterführer sind, und darüber müssen wir uns alle freuen, alle deutschen Arbeiter.¹⁵

However, Peter is unsure as to the wisdom of retaining the norms as they are the main cause of the dissatisfaction amongst the workers. Peter raises this matter with Max Wagner, a worker on the Stalinallee, who tells him that the norms will be rescinded anyway: "Das werden sie doch sowieso, ich glaube, der Beschluß wird morgen schon bekanntgegeben."¹⁶ Reinowski's intention is to support the government's claim that it had removed all grounds for dissent, but he goes a step further than merely supporting the SED's actions by saying that the norms were to be rescinded anyway. This is plainly untrue, the party preferring to keep the norms and only rescinding them when, faced with a large demonstration outside the "Haus der Ministerien" on 16 June, it became absolutely necessary. In this way Reinowski not only shows the government to be aware of the workers' displeasure, but he also avoids showing the rescinding of the norms to be a panic measure.

The "Neuer Kurs" is also welcomed by Witte, but with some reservation as the norms, the real point of contention, have not been declared invalid. Seghers mentions the "Neuer Kurs" only very briefly in the context of a party meeting:

In einem neuen Beschluß hatte das Politbüro vorgeschlagen, verschiedene Anordnungen zurückzunehmen,

¹⁵ Reinowski 339.

¹⁶ Reinowski 381.

die Widerspruch erregt hatten in vielen ganz verschiedenen Gebieten des Lebens.¹⁷

Seghers' commentary is neutral, but it follows a section in which the norms have been thoroughly discussed, the implication being that there is no cause for discontent, as all the unpopular measures have been removed.

The treatment of the economic conditions of the time is very similar in all of the works. The same basic conditions and policies are discussed, but there is a difference in how they are presented. Reinowski chooses a West Berliner to praise the government's policies to legitimise them. He is also very uncritical, everything being presented as a self-evident truth, such as the repealing of the new norms which Wagner believes is just a matter of course. Both Seghers and Heym are critical of the norms, but Heym has the most vocal opponent of them be a trade unionist rather than a party functionary. Although Witte is in the SED, he is isolated from the BPO. Peter Zimmermann, whilst making it clear that Witte is isolated, believes Witte to be a model East German literary figure:

Held des Romans ist der Leiter der BGL und damit gemäß einem in der Literatur des Bitterfelder Weges bevorzugten Konfliktmodell der untere Funktionär, der als Interessenvertreter der Arbeiter gegen die Fehlentscheidungen übergeordneten Staats- und Parteiorgane ankämpft und am Ende Recht behält: Hätte sich die Regierung rechtzeitig zu Konzessionen bereitgefunden, wäre der 17. Juni eventuell zu vermeiden gewesen.¹⁸

¹⁷ Seghers 204.

¹⁸ Peter Zimmermann, Industrieliteratur der DDR. Vom Helden der Arbeit zum Planer und Leiter (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987) 106.

However, Zimmermann also presents the reason why Witte cannot be considered a positive figure: he does not have a party function, but is a functionary in the FDGB, and is proven to be correct in his assessment of the situation and proves the BPO and the party leadership to have been wrong in their assessment as they refused to listen to any criticism or to practise self-criticism. Instead of leading the masses in building socialism, the party obstructs the whole process. In Heym's portrayal there is none of the understanding on the part of any of the members of the BPO that there is in Kossin. Seghers also gives far more emphasis to the need for the norms than Heym does. Although Witte agrees they are needed, he is not prepared to see them pushed through regardless of the consequences. The question of the economy is dealt with thoroughly in the literary texts, but is largely passed over in the secondary literature in favour of the larger political issues, such as the role of the party.

4. The Role of the Party

Early DDR socialist realist theory demanded that the party should be portrayed as being at the forefront of the revolution. Although this literary dogma gradually became less rigid, it is still necessary to show the party in a sympathetic light. This does not rule out criticism, but the criticism must not be negative. In a partisan literature of the type existing in the DDR, criticism of the state and its institutions can only go so far; the literature of the DDR may not attack the fundamentals on which the state is built, but must be consciously partisan in its support of these fundamentals. The importance for the DDR of having a partisan literature has been emphasised by Helga Herting and Werner Jehser:

Ohne parteiliche Wertung vermag die sozialistisch-realistische Kunst nicht zur Erkenntnis der historischen Wahrheit, der bestimmenden Gesetzmäßigkeiten menschlichen Handelns, Denkens und Verhaltens vorzudringen.¹

A partisan evaluation of events is necessary as this is the only way in which the truth behind the historical process can be exposed. This statement is very important for an examination of the role of the party during the June uprising as, as has been seen, in the official history of the rising the SED acted swiftly and unerringly in quelling the revolt. In the literature, however, the picture of the SED is often very different. Presumably, any literary interpretation of the rising showing the SED not to have

¹ Herting, Helga and Werner Jehser, Parteilichkeit und Volksverbundenheit. Zu theoretischen Grundfragen unserer Literaturentwicklung (Berlin: Dietz, 1972) 197.

taken decisive action against the rising would be condemned as giving a false picture of the 17 June.

The SED comes in for varying degrees of criticism for its behaviour during the rising, but Helmut Hauptmann shows the party in a totally positive light in his reportage Das komplexe Abenteuer Schwedt², which focuses on the people at a heavy industrial plant and the development of the plant itself. Choosing Siegfried Graupner, the director of a "Lehrkombinat", as his party representative, Hauptmann sticks firmly to the party legend. Hauptmann's factually based work mentions the 17 June in connection with a speech made by Walter Ulbricht at the Schwedt works. Ulbricht singled Graupner out for special praise as being a prime example of the dedicated worker and party functionary who worked patiently and selflessly for the "Aufbau des Sozialismus". Hauptmann fills in Graupner's background saying that, having realised his mistake in following National Socialism, he worked his way up through the party. On the 17 June Graupner leapt from his sickbed and led his apprentices to work:

Er hält eine kurze Rede, er beantwortet viele Fragen, dann nimmt er die FDJ Fahne von der Wand, reißt sie hoch und stürmt auf die Straße: "Wer kommt mit?" Demonstrationen waren untersagt. Aber alle kamen mit; marschierten hinter der blauen Fahne zur Baustelle.³

Hauptmann's heroic description of the scene shows the spontaneous response of class conscious workers under the party's leadership in

² Helmut Hauptmann, Das komplexe Abenteuer Schwedt (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1964).

³ Hauptmann 125.

defending the revolution. Graupner's apprentices also come to his aid when he is beaten up by "Provokateure". Their actions in defending the workplace had the desired effect: "Am 18. juni wurde störungsfrei gearbeitet"⁴. In his depiction of this incident from the history of Schwedt, Hauptmann follows the party line precisely.

This very positive description of Graupner does not preclude some moderate criticism of him. Graupner is not perfect, as Hauptmann explains; he is too attentive to his party work and, as a result is drifting apart from his wife. In this respect, he is very similar to Max Wagner from Die Versuchung. Wagner's family life and his relationship with his colleagues suffers because of his well-meaning fervour in helping to build socialism. His dogmatism and overbearing attitude in questions of politics serve to alienate him from his colleagues on the Stalinallee. Wagner erroneously believes that everyone else has the same ideals as he has and this has clouded his judgement in that he views anyone expressing disagreement with him or the party to be an "Opfer der Feindpropaganda"⁵.

This uncompromising attitude on Wagner's part leads to accusations that he is a "Schönfärber" of the kind attacked by the Märkische Volksstimme, Organ der SED-Bezirksleitung Potsdam on 27 June 1953. The Märkische Volksstimme attacked certain party officials for reporting to the press that workers were voluntarily working extra shifts when they were not and for passing resolutions

⁴ Hauptmann 125.

⁵ Reinowski 52.

that had either not been discussed with the workforce or did not correspond to the workers' actual beliefs. Wagner is accused of doing just this by his colleagues:

Unsere Genossen oben wissen nicht, was los ist, wenn wir es ihnen nicht sagen. Du bist ein Schönfärber, weil du ihnen erzählst, daß die Stimmung gut ist.⁶

Reinowski's criticism of the party is directly in line with the SED's own criticism of its officials. This kind of whitewashing was seen as damaging as it created the gulf between the party and the masses necessary for the rising to take place. However, Reinowski directs his criticism at the middle level of the party bureaucracy, thereby excusing the party leadership. Whereas Reinowski's character is acting through ignorance of any possibility of compromise, believing every true socialist to be as committed as himself, Wagner does agree to mend his ways after he has discussed his colleagues' grievances with them.

No such repentance is shown by Banggartz in Fünf Tage im Juni. Banggartz, the party secretary at VEB Merkur, is also a dogmatist who believes the party knows best and, like Wagner, his relationship to the party is reflected in his personal life:

Sein ganzes Leben lang hatte die Partei Härte von ihm verlangt. Und er war hart gewesen, sich, seiner Frau, allen gegenüber. Er war auch jetzt hart: wie leicht wäre es, sich mit einem kleinen Kompromiß seine Ruhe zu schaffen.⁷

Banggartz does not heed Witte's warnings because of his inability to accept anything other than the official party line as being

⁶ Reinowski 52.

⁷ Heym, Fünf Tage 8.

correct. Any opposition or disagreement with the party is seen as weakness or subversion. Leading up to the 17 June the party became increasingly detached from the masses. Heym sees this as being the result of the party's inability to recognise the full extent of its mistakes and to adapt its policies accordingly. This is expressed in the novel by Sonneberg who asks for Witte's understanding:

Aber versuch mal, auch unsereinen zu verstehen. Ich hab gelernt, daß eine Erkenntnis erst dann richtig ist, wenn ein entsprechender Parteibesluß vorliegt.⁸

Heym's accusation can be applied to the whole party.

The complacency within the party is aptly demonstrated by the report Dreesen, the local party secretary, receives which totally contradicts Witte's assessment of the situation as it contains "Selbstverpflichtungen zu weiteren Normenerhöhungen, Lob der Partei, daß diese den längst fälligen Schritt zur Normenerhöhung getan, Stimme der Massen"⁹. This report demonstrates the complete inability of the party to believe anything other than its own wish-picture of the country; this is also the case with Banggartz who believes everything that he says as director of the BPO, "nur war das, was Banggartz sagte, zu oft das, was er zu glauben wünschte"¹⁰.

⁸ Heym, Fünf Tage 164.

⁹ Heym, Fünf Tage 59. This excerpt appears to be based on the resolution adopted by the Ministerrat of the DDR of 28 May 1953 in which the government promises to raise the norms in accordance with the wishes of the workers.

¹⁰ Heym, Fünf Tage 7.

Heym's thinly veiled references to historical material is surpassed by his inclusion of actual documents. Each section of his novel is prefaced or followed by quotations from official documents from the DDR and the West. Indeed, Heym even includes the actual SED resolution announcing the raise in norms at the supposed insistence of the workforce. In the context of the fictional plot, the document forces the reader to reflect on reality using the knowledge he has gleaned from the novel. This technique forces the reader to apply the picture of the fictional party organisation to the actual SED as it acted in 1953. Malcolm Pender believes that the inclusion of these documents "far from underpinning the fictional sections of the novel, serves only to highlight their theatricality"¹¹, but it is their very presence which lends the novel an air of objectivity and supports Heym's case. As Ute Brandes rightfully says, it is the documents which provide the reader with the opportunity to compare the historical and the fictional planes of the novel and to recognise "neue historische Zusammenhänge":

In der sorgfältigen, scheinbar überparteilichen Verzahnung von Fiktion und Dokument verleiht das authentische Zeugnis dem Roman einen Anschein von Wahrheit, der sonst einem fiktiven Text nicht eigen ist. Die Auswahl und Platzierung der Dokumente sorgen jeweils für klare ideologische Konfrontationen oder sachliche Bestätigung und Ergänzung der abgrenzenden Romanhandlung.¹²

¹¹ Malcolm Pender, "Stefan Heym," The Writer and Society in the GDR, ed. Ian Wallace (Fife: Hutton Press, 1984) 41.

¹² Ute Brandes, Zitat und Montage in der neueren DDR-Prosa, (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984) 132.

Such confrontations question the SED's version of the rising by turning the party's own words against it. By juxtaposing official documents against his text Heym can question the party's view without commenting directly on it.

The most important document Heym uses prefaces the novel. Heym quotes the following passage from the Statut der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands, adopted in 1954, under the section headed "Die Parteimitglieder, ihre Pflichten und Rechte":

Das Parteimitglied ist verpflichtet: ...die Selbstkritik und die Kritik von unten zu entwickeln, furchtlos Mängel in der Arbeit aufzudecken und sich für ihre Beseitigung einzusetzen; gegen Schönfärberei und die Neigung, sich an Erfolgen in der Arbeit zu berauschen, gegen jeden Versuch, die Kritik zu unterdrücken und sie durch Beschönigung und Lobhudelei zu ersetzen, anzukämpfen...¹³

Heym's novel leads the reader to question the validity and sincerity of this statement by the SED, especially as Banggartz, as a representative of the party, cannot accept Witte's criticism:

Es war wie ein böser Traum, unsinnig, unerhört, Arbeiter gegen die Arbeiterpartei und ihren Sekretär; und wer war schuld daran, Leute wie Witte: Witte, der die Normerhöhung nicht vertrat, Witte, der sich gegen die Partei stellte, Witte, der diesen Aufruhr zu verantworten hatte.¹⁴

This refusal to accept the truth is made even worse when he admits to himself that he had suspected that something was wrong:

Geahnt hatte er längst, was da im Betrieb vorging; spätestens seit gestern, in der Kantine, hatte er gewußt. Aber er hatte es nicht eingestanden, sich nicht und der Partei nicht.¹⁵

¹³ Heym, Fünf Tage 5.

¹⁴ Heym, Fünf Tage 65.

¹⁵ Heym, Fünf Tage 126.

His failure to admit his mistake to himself or the party stems from his belief that the party need only hold its course to avert any trouble, a view echoed in Heinz Brandt's memoirs. In his memoirs, Brandt relates an episode in which Bruno Baum reassured Grotewohl that the SED leadership had nothing to fear as long as it did not weaken or fall into panic.

The kind of dogmatism displayed by Banggartz is also attacked by Seghers, but in a far less damaging way. The most dogmatic figure in Das Vertrauen is not a party representative but Lina Sachse, an active member of the FDJ. Lowell A. Bangerter describes her manner as "doctrinaire" and claims she is "a cold, negative figure" unable to convince anyone of what she says¹⁶. Like Banggartz, Lina's speech is full of clichés and stock phrases. However, unlike Banggartz, she can move her colleagues by her delivery, by her "Gelassenheit, ihr ernstes Überzeugtsein"¹⁷. It is this conviction that she is right that leads Lina to distrust anyone who questions the party, as this in turn questions her whole set of values. Her relationship with Thomas fails, among other reasons, because of her inability to come to terms with his questions concerning the release of Stalin's doctors upon his death. She cannot admit that there was anything more than a mistake made by accepting the word of a perjurer, a mistake that was corrected by the mechanism of socialist justice. The eventual

¹⁶ Lowell A. Bangerter, The Bourgeois Proletarian. A Study of Anna Seghers, (Bonn: Bouvier, 1980) 142.

¹⁷ Seghers 141.

result of her unwavering faith in the party and inability to accept the possibility of it making mistakes alienates Thomas from her. Seghers' attack on the rigid dogmatism of the party is on a far smaller scale than Heym's, but this is not the only criticism she levels at the SED.

Knipp sees the motif of trust as being the "ideelle Kern" of Das Vertrauen¹⁸, but trust as used by Seghers has what Sigrid Bock calls a "class character"¹⁹, denoting the relationship between the individual and society. This kind of trust involves mutual assistance and interest, particularly on the part of the party, as it is only with the help of others that the individual can develop the attributes necessary for him to contribute to society. Seghers provides three examples of people who have lost their trust in the party and are unable to regain it, partly due to a lack of effort on their part.

Heiner Schanz was wrongly expelled from the party for apparently giving information to the Americans after the war. Although he was not guilty of this, his pride will not allow him to take the first step towards reconciliation. His bitterness has been compounded by his brother, also a party member, who has ignored him since his expulsion and dismisses him to the works' party secretary, Richard Hagen, as "futsch"²⁰. Although Richard rejects

¹⁸ Knipp 404.

¹⁹ Sigrid Bock, "Epische Welt und Menschenbildkonzeption. Zum Roman Das Vertrauen von Anna Seghers," Weimarer Beiträge Sonderheft (1969): 146.

²⁰ Seghers 161.

Günter's opinion of his brother and resolves to discuss the matter with Heiner, it is too late and Heiner takes part in the rising. Although Hagen fails in his duty to the workforce, Seghers shows him to be concerned with them, unlike Banggartz.

Janausch is alienated in another way. He is insulted by Thomas Helger and Ernst Krüger, who for him are both representatives of socialism in that they are active, class-conscious members of the FDJ. The unfeeling nature of this insult has quite an effect on the already disaffected Janausch. He has an unhappy home life of which the others appear ignorant, just as the party organisation at VEB Merkur is unaware of Kallmann's home life: "Da haben wir Schränke voll Kaderakten, dachte Witte, und wie wenig wir wissen"²¹. These files follow the individual throughout his life, yet they cannot tell the party everything.

Heinz Köhler is passed over by the party when it has to recommend someone for higher education because of his cadre file. Although he is one of the best apprentices and academically very good, he is ignored because of his mark for "Staatsbürgerkunde": zero. This is because of his cynical attitude and because his father lives in the West. Heinz is dismissed as a hopeless case as is Janausch, whom Hagen labels "das trockne und böse, selbstsüchtige Männlein"²². This inability by the party to come to terms with people's emotional needs is made more explicit by Toms:

²¹ Heym, Fünf Tage 23.

²² Seghers 93.

Ihr seid sonderbare Leute. Ihr habt Ideen wie sonst niemand, vom Verändern und vom Warum und Wodurch. Ja, ihr schwört darauf, wenn es sich um die Welt handelt, zum Beispiel hier, wo alles innen und außen ein Schutthaufen war, und ihr wollt es verändern, und es gelingt euch. Wenn es aber um einen einzelnen geht, dann seht ihr ihn an, als wär er ein Klotz, oder nun mal so ist und fertig, unverrückbar und unveränderlich.²³

As soon as the party loses its trust in someone it abandons him. However, this harsh criticism is tempered by Hagen's good intentions and the inclusion of other characters who do not lose their trust in the party because of the way they have been treated by it.

Ulsperger, the Kossin works' director, was the victim of the Stalinist terror conducted against German communists in the Soviet Union during the war. Nevertheless, he still works for the cause and does not mention his experiences as the goals of the communist movement are far more important than what has happened to him. Although Seghers agrees with the official line that the party did alienate many people, the inclusion of Ulsperger's past helps reinforce the view that the party cannot be held entirely responsible for this, a feature absent in Heym's novel.

Thomas Helger is an example of how a person can be helped to overcome his past with the help of others. As a child he was in a Nazi orphanage, from which he escaped only to meet up with a group of other young people. He meets this group again in 1953 and spends some time with them in West Berlin, where they are arrested for theft and implicate Thomas. Although he is proven innocent, he is

²³ Seghers 37.

harshly disciplined by the party. However, because of the help he received from Waldstein, the director of the orphanage after the war, he has developed a sense of what is right and can overcome any personal set-backs and he remains loyal to the party. For Heinz Neugebauer this is the most important element when evaluating how positive a character is:

Die Autorin, die ihren Figuren Fehler zubilligt, mißt sie daran, ob sie die Kraft aufbringen, diese zu überwinden.²⁴

Thomas, because of his contact with others, has developed the strength of character to overcome any personal difficulties or conflicts. This strength of character has been developed through his contact with others, an element Sigrid Bock sees as being essential for the development of a socialist society²⁵.

Herein lies the basic difference between Thomas on one the hand and Janausch, Heinz and Heiner on the other; Thomas had the help of others in overcoming his difficulties, but he also helped himself by not losing faith in the party or its aims. Seghers does provide the possibility of a different development for the other three, a path that would have been possible if the party had been more attentive to their needs. Knipp believes this other course of development would have been possible with the help of more conscientious colleagues:

Entscheidend ist, daß bei allen drei Arbeitern auch die Möglichkeit einer anderen politischen Entwicklung und

²⁴ Heinz Neugebauer, Anna Seghers. Leben und Werk (Berlin: Das europäische Buch, 1978) 170.

²⁵ Bock 147.

Entscheidung gegeben ist, die nicht allein von ihnen selbst abhängt, sondern von den mit ihnen zusammen arbeitenden politisch bewußteren Kollegen und Genossen. Mangelnde Aufmerksamkeit und Verantwortung diesen drei gegenüber hat erst deren zweifelnde und schwankende Haltung in einer geschichtlichen Entscheidungssituation zu feindlichen Aktivitäten werden lassen.²⁶

Seghers again softens her criticism of the party by implying that they, like Thomas and Ulsperger, are partly responsible for their own actions. Certainly, they could have been helped and are examples of what Lowell A. Bangerter calls "incidents of establishment failure to respond adequately to psychological and emotional needs", and which show "how socially destructive the results of such neglect are."²⁷ Bangerter goes on to say that "when basically good East German workers are drawn to the wrong side of the June uprising, Seghers lays much of the blame at the door of unfeeling, uncaring functionaries"²⁸. Although it is true that the party does carry much of the blame for alienating these people, it is not correct to accuse the party of being unfeeling or uncaring.

Richard Hagen is portrayed as being very caring; the worst thing he can be accused of is being inattentive, as he himself realises:

Du warst den Menschen nicht nah genug. Du hast nicht genug gewußt. Von den Menschen nicht und auch nicht von ihrer Arbeit.²⁹

²⁶ Knipp 423-424.

²⁷ Bangerter 144.

²⁸ Bangerter 144.

²⁹ Seghers 266.

Seghers' criticism of Hagen is far less severe than Heym's criticism of the BPO at VEB Merkur. Hagen is against raising the norms by administrative means, Banggartz insists on it regardless of how unpopular it might be or how much friction it may cause. However, in Heym's novel the element of personal failure present in Das Vertrauen is completely absent. Seghers gives much weight to this element, going as far as to have one of the main characters, Thomas Helger, "fail". After his misadventure in West Berlin, Thomas is for the most part shunned by his colleagues and has his candidacy for the party withdrawn, yet he still stays loyal to his cause. In spite of the injustice done to him, Thomas still does the right thing and takes part in the defence of the works on the 17 June, thereby overcoming his personal failure and conflict with the party.

Heym, however, firmly blames the party for creating the conditions necessary for the rising. The nearest he comes to a softening of his position is when, on the 16 June, Witte is allowed back into the works to organise the defence. Reinhard Zachau sees this as signifying "die Einsichtsfähigkeit der Parteimaschine, daß er trotz Firmenverbot auf dem Höhepunkt der Krise im VEB Merkur als offizieller Gewerkschaftsfunktionär bleiben darf."³⁰ But, this is only one possible interpretation; it is also possible to see this as an implicit criticism of the party as the defence of the works has to be organised by the chairman of the BGL, not the SED. Even

³⁰ Reinhard Zachau, Stefan Heym (München; C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1982) 88.

if Witte is allowed to stay because the BPO has realised its mistake it is still a harsh criticism of the party as it has no real alternative as Witte is the only functionary who has any credibility in the eyes of the workforce.

Unlike Heym, Seghers sticks firmly to the party line, whilst agreeing that the party had become estranged from the masses. She agrees, "wenn Massen von Arbeitern die Partei nicht verstehen, ist die Partei schuld, nicht die Arbeiter!"³¹ But she, through the motif of trust, emphasises that the masses must maintain its bond with the party to build socialism, which again agrees with the SED:

Ehrliche Arbeiter, die zeitweilig irregingen, haben deswegen nicht aufgehört, ehrliche Arbeiter zu sein, und sind als solche zu achten. Gerade sie brauchen jetzt am meisten die Hilfe und Geduld der Partei, gerade sie brauchen heute am meisten die Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, auch wenn ihnen das selbst noch nicht klar ist. Das Zentralkomitee erwartet von allen Mitgliedern und Funktionären, daß sie nun die Reife ihres Bewußtseins und die Weite ihrer Herzen unter Beweis stellen in der leidenschaftlichen Beschäftigung mit gerade diesem Teil der Arbeiterschaft.³²

Hagen wants to do exactly this; he wants to become nearer to the workforce. Heym, however, totally rejects such an optimistic view, when Sonneberg asks Witte whom the party represents:

Ja, wen, dachte Witte. Die Klasse, die Marx und Engels einst gesichtet, die 1871 in Paris auf die Barrikaden stieg und 1917 den Winterpalast erstürmte und 1933 von heroischen Ausnahmen abgesehen, die Flagge strich? Für wen hütete man den Gral? Und wer hatte die Gralshüter ernannt?³³

³¹ Dokumente der SED, 441.

³² Dokumente der SED, 441-442.

³³ Heym, Fünf Tage 192.

Witte questions the right of the SED to rule and claim it is the representative of the working class: Witte can only bring himself to say the party represents the revolution, but cannot say it represents the proletariat.

The party functionaries discussed so far have all been fictional characters, but actual members of the contemporary SED government are sometimes featured in the works. To criticise the party and its fictional representatives is one thing, but to criticise actual party leaders is another. When people such as Walter Ulbricht do appear they are dealt with in a much more lenient way. Indeed, Reinowski goes as far as to praise Ulbricht and the leading party functionaries. Wagner, as a member of the middle layer of party bureaucracy, has a very definite view of the SED hierarchy:

Die hauptamtlichen Funktionäre, die vorher tüchtige und fleißige Arbeiter gewesen waren, bezeichnete er und schätzte er nach wie vor als "richtige" Arbeiter. Zu diesen Ansichten gehörte, daß der körperlich arbeitende Mensch immer an seiner Haltung und Kleidung zu erkennen sein müsse.³⁴

Not only does Reinowski show the government to be an "Arbeiterregierung" in the true sense of the word, but he emphasises the fact that Ulbricht and his colleagues were, and still are, recognizable as workers themselves. He emphasises Ulbricht's closeness to the workers by saying he was angry that the new norms were pushed through administratively without consultation with the masses. Reinowski distances the people at the head of the

³⁴ Reinowski 53.

government from the decision to raise the norms by claiming they were angry about it: this was also done by the Politbureau of the SED. The Politbureau rescinded the norms on 16 June saying that the norms could only be raised with the full cooperation of the workforce; interestingly, it seems as though the Politbureau was trying to distance itself from a policy it was responsible for, as it also distinguishes itself from the government, assigning itself an apparent supervisory rather than decision making role.

Heym's criticism of the SED government is contained in excerpts from a speech made by Ulbricht on 16 June :

...ist es nach wie vor richtig, die Arbeitsproduktivität zu erhöhen, aber es ist falsch, auf administrativem Wege Normenerhöhungen zu verfügen. Deshalb hat das Politbüro der SED in seiner heutigen Sitzung beschlossen, der Regierung vorzuschlagen, die Anordnungen der einzelnen Ministerien auf obligatorische Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen als unrichtig aufzuheben. Wir sind der Meinung, daß eine Erhöhung der Normen nur auf der Grundlage der Überzeugung und der Freiwilligkeit erfolgen kann...³⁵

Again it can be seen how Ulbricht tried to set himself apart from the rest of the government. The speech is phrased in such a way as to make it seem that he had corrected the mistakes made by the others. This speech was made to the session of the "Berliner Parteiaktiv" of 16 June. Although the speech is set apart from the rest of the text, being included as part of the documentary material, it is referred to by the narrator as Witte and other party members from VEB Merkur have just attended the meeting:

Und die Redner. Im Hintergrund die von oben angestrahlten Reihen fast bewegungsloser höherer Funktionäre, sprachen sie in der Manier, in der sie immer sprachen, belehrend,

³⁵ Heym, Fünf Tage 177.

die Augen weniger auf ihre Zuhörer gerichtet als auf das Papier vor ihnen; und doch waren da sonderbare Töne: eine Abstraktion, als wäre es nicht ihre Partei, von der sie sprachen, als wären es nicht sie selbst, ihr Politbüro, ihr Zentralkomitee, die geirrt hatten.³⁶

Even though they do not appear in the narrative, the narrator seems to be trying to form a picture of Ulbricht's and Grotewohl's thoughts, whose speeches precede this section. The narrator speculates on why the leadership is suddenly changing direction, admitting its failure, yet trying to distance itself from its own policies. The only conclusion the narrator can reach is that they, like Banggartz, knew what was happening, but chose to keep it "dem eignen Bewußtsein vorenthalten"³⁷. The party leadership is shown as being politically impotent, unable to take control of events, preferring to distance itself from the responsibilities it must face:

Führer, die nicht führen wollten oder konnten, die keine Anweisungen gaben, nur vage Versprechen -- und das in einer Situation, die Anweisungen erforderte, und in einer Partei, wo auch die kleinsten Aktionen auf ordentliche Anordnungen hin erfolgten.³⁸

This condemnation of the leadership is compounded by an insight provided into Witte's thoughts. On leaving the meeting, Witte can only think of the verse: "--uns aus dem Elend zu erlösen/können wir nur selber tun--"³⁹. The "wir" here can be seen as referring to the party as a whole; it had created the conditions for the discontent

³⁶ Heym, Fünf Tage 180.

³⁷ Heym, Fünf Tage 181.

³⁸ Heym, Fünf Tage 181.

³⁹ Heym, Fünf Tage 181.

and must therefore do something to ease the situation. However, the party leadership has given no hint as to what to do if the strike continues on the 17 June, therefore the "wir" can also be seen as referring to the BPO at VEB Merkur. The party did not send its most trusted members into the main points of industry as it claimed, but ignored the obvious, leaving the local party organisations to cope by themselves as best they could.

The role of the party organisations in ensuring production continued at Kossin and VEB Merkur are given a great deal of attention, but again, there is a difference between the two works. At Kossin the party is prepared for trouble and has time to formulate a plan for the defence of the plant; at VEB Merkur there is no such plan as the BPO does not accept that there is the danger of a stoppage. Therefore, when the strike does happen, it is left to Witte, the BGL chairman, to organise the resistance to the strike.

At Kossin, Hagen and Ulsperger have people they can trust in every department to ensure that production is maintained and to keep an eye on those whose support is doubtful or wavering. A similar plan is instigated by Witte. Both address the workforce and Hagen is successful in preventing many from joining the strike; Witte, however, knows that the strike is inevitable and only succeeds in stalling the strike for a while.

Hagen has the confidence of his class and knows that the party can stop the strike without the help of the Soviet troops. Although

he knows there are those who oppose him he knows that the workers can defeat the strike through the strength of their movement:

Ich hab auch erlebt, wie die Richtigen und Gescheiten, Mittel und Wege fanden um durchzudringen. Fertig zu werden mit den anderen -- ohne Panzer. Wir haben keine Panzer gebraucht, wird es später heißen. Im Kossin-Werk ist es gar nicht erst zum Streik gekommen, so ähnlich wird es heißen. Ich weiß, wer fertig wird mit wem. Das ist wofür ich bürgen kann.⁴⁰

As Bangerter says, the Kossin works is "a nucleus of strength directed against the subversive forces, around which faithful East German workers rally to put down the revolt."⁴¹ And this is how it is portrayed by Seghers who shows the strike to have been defeated from within, by the party, thereby reinforcing her message that it is people who, if they have faith in the strength of their class, can shape history.

This incident does not correspond to reality as it did take the intervention of the Soviet forces to defeat the rising. Bangerter believes Seghers' sanitised version of events corresponds to "a wish picture of events as they should have happened", as she was unable to accept them as they did happen⁴², and that the defeat of the rising without the intervention of the military emphasises the strength of the party and reaffirms its inevitable victory.

Franz Schonauer also disputes the legitimacy of Seghers' omission of the Soviet intervention and denies the truth of it:

⁴⁰ Seghers 242.

⁴¹ Bangerter 143.

⁴² Bangerter 143.

Statt dessen liefert Anna Seghers' Roman Das Vertrauen eine Legende, in der alles, dank der Wachsamkeit und Weisheit der Partei und ihrer Genossen -- an der Spitze der Parteisekretär des volkseigenen Betriebes -- und dank der brüderlichen Hilfe der Roten Armee zum Guten sich wendet oder sich wenden wird. Eine Idylle der Gerechtigkeit und des Vertrauens, so etwa will die Autorin uns glauben machen, das ist die DDR nach dem 17. Juni 1953, nach der Niederschlagung des konterrevolutionären Aufstandes.⁴³

Schonauer seems to suggest that the party's representatives are somehow superhuman, which is far from the case. As Knipp rightly says, they are ordinary people, "die indessen in ihren alltäglichen Lebensbeziehungen, konfrontiert mit geschichtlichen Entscheidungssituationen, Exzeptionelles leisten, weil sie die Kraft ihrer Klasse verkörpern."⁴⁴ Hagen and the other leading party functionaries possess the conviction and experience of years of experience gained in Spain and the years of illegality which enable them to respond quickly and successfully to the rising. It is their faith in Marxism that enables them to shape history. Their victory is an assurance of the continuation and eventual success of the revolution.

Stefan Heym does not come to the same conclusion as Seghers.

Heym believes the revolution has been shown to be in danger:

Die Weltgeschichte ist nicht ja-ja, nein-nein. Aber ein Gutes hat dieser Tag: wenn wir ihn überstanden haben, und den morgigen auch, werden wir feststellen, daß es nicht mehr so sein kann wie früher. Ein jeder wird für sich selber zu denken haben, und wer es nicht tut, kann nicht mehr als Kommunist gelten.⁴⁵

⁴³ Schonauer 132.

⁴⁴ Knipp 436.

⁴⁵ Heym, Fünf Tage 165.

The revolution cannot proceed as it has been; if it does it will be endangered. Witte's worst fears are borne out when he is relieved of his function and shunted off to the "Parteischule". This is in contrast to Hagen, who also goes to the "Parteischule", as Hagen goes through choice to learn how to improve; Witte is sent, as he is still being troublesome. To make matters worse, Banggartz is promoted to the ministry. This final bitter comment is included in the "Nachspiel" and serves to demonstrate that nothing has changed.

Hagen's decision to go for further education is a very positive note, and he is held in high esteem by his colleagues and has the trust of his superiors. This is a luxury not afforded to Witte. Although he is a member of the SED, Witte is the chairman of the BGL rather than the BPO. Witte also suffers from having an unfavourable cadre file for having refused to join the picket line with members of the Nazi party in 1933. From the very beginning, he is in a position where he must fight to make himself heard. But, instead of conforming and trying to endear himself to the party, he carries on making himself unpopular for the good of the party. Witte starts from a position of weakness, unlike Hagen, which constitutes one of the most important differences between the two portrayals of the June rising: Hagen has the confidence of the party and develops the party's character by trying to become closer to the workers. Witte is seen as an opponent by the party and he and his criticisms of the party are proven to be right. The reason for these differences probably lies in the motivations of the authors.

Seghers wants to demonstrate the power of the communist movement and support socialist society. The desire to support the social and political order determine the kind of figures included in the novel and they correspond to the kind of figures referred to by Elisabeth Simons in her comments about DDR literature in general:

Bis auf wenige Ausnahmen stehen bewußte Sozialisten, Menschen mit hohem Selbstbewußtsein und reicher Innenwelt, Revolutionäre von heute im Mittelpunkt des Geschehens. Ihre Konflikte und Entscheidungen, ihre Erfolge und Niederlagen bestimmen Handlung und Ideengehalt.⁴⁶

Heym also wants to support socialist society, but not as it exists. His work is directed less at supporting the existing social order than at perfecting it. Seghers appears to be acting as Ulsperger does, suppressing the least desirable aspects of the rising for the good of the party and its future. Heym, however, warns against such whitewashing through Witte who paraphrases the quotation from the party statute prefacing the novel:

Sie kennen mich, Fränzchen, ich halte von Statuten und Verfassungen nur insofern etwas, als man sie mit Leben erfüllt. Aber vielleicht könnte man ins Statut unsrer Partei einen Artikel aufnehmen, der die Schönfärberei verbietet und die öffentliche Verehrung einiger Genossen, und der alle Mitglieder zu furchtloser Kritik verpflichtet und jeden bestraft, der diese Kritik zu unterdrücken sucht....⁴⁷

Again, Heym is accusing the party of complacency and deluding itself. The best way of showing this was for him to choose a figure

⁴⁶ Elisabeth Simons, "'Das Andersmachen von Grund auf.' Die Hauptrichtung der jüngsten DDR-Literatur," Weimarer Beiträge Sonderheft (1969) 186.

⁴⁷ Heym, Fünf Tage 260.

who, in the eyes of the party, is a negative figure and then show clearly how he is the only true Marxist in the party organisation. Witte is nonetheless a figure who supports the system and, like Hagen and Wagner, fits into the tradition of the experienced party man taking a leading role in overcoming the difficulties of the "Aufbau des Sozialismus" and helping to form the new socialist society.

5. The Volkspolizei and the Soviet Army

The SED praised the "Volkspolizei" for its role in suppressing the rising. In the historical accounts, there is some disagreement about how quickly the police took action and to what extent they were able to prevent violence. There is also a very large discrepancy as to the number of casualties following the intervention of the Soviet army. As has been seen, Anna Seghers dismissed the Soviet intervention in her novel, portraying the Soviet army as "concerned brothers who lend their moral support"¹, but do not take an active role within the novel. The intervention by the occupation force does however receive a fuller treatment in other works as does the role of the "Volkspolizei".

In Strobel und der andere, Uwe Berger concentrates on the part played by the "Volkspolizist" Willi Strobel during the rising. Sticking firmly to the SED version Berger states "daß die Volkspolizei von Anfang an entschieden ihre Pflicht erfüllte und, ohne sich hinreißen zu lassen, das Notwendige tat, bis die Besatzungsmacht eingriff."² In Berger's account, the Volkspolizei are decisive in determining the course of the rising and containing it until the Soviet army intervenes. Faced with a group of rioters, Strobel and his colleagues, defending a bridge, stand firm and fire

¹ Bangerter 143.

² Uwe Berger, "Strobel und der andere," Die Einwilligung. Sechs Erzählungen, (Berlin: Aufbau, 1954) 85. Berger's "Erzählung" deals with the conflict between Strobel and Urbach, a petty criminal, from the time they meet in a prisoner-of-war camp in Egypt until the 17 June, when Urbach is arrested for his part in the rising, inciting violence against the police.

warning shots, but do not yield their ground. In describing the scene the narrator makes it quite clear that it is a western inspired putsch that the police were facing:

Aber sie vergossen kein Blut. Nur die Schreier, die offenbar nicht auf eigene Faust handelten, wollten Blut, so oder so, damit die Erbitterung stieg und der Putsch Nahrung bekam.

Mehrere Stunden dauerte dieser Zustand. Den wenigen Putschisten gelang es nicht, die Masse zum Losbrechen zu bringen. Die Haltung der Volkspolizisten war dabei entscheidend.³

For Berger, the police went on duty on the 17 June expecting trouble and were prepared. Therefore, they were able to react calmly and contain the rising peacefully. Fritz Schenk agrees that the police avoided violent confrontation, saying that Zaisser had forbidden the use of weapons.

Fritz Selbmann, the only minister to address the demonstrating building workers on 16 June, plays down the importance of the rising in Anhang den Tag vorher betreffend. Selbmann gives his impressions through the eyes of a functionary, Heinz Lorenzen, who observes the demonstration in front of the "Haus der Ministerien". Lorenzen sees a weak police cordon which is soon broken through by the demonstrators, thereby isolating individual policemen:

Vereinzelt standen junge Volkspolizisten in der Menge eingekeilt, ohne Waffen, etwas hilflos, gezwungen lächelnd. Sie sahen aus, als wüßten sie nicht, was sie eigentlich in dieser Menge zu tun hatten und wie sie sich in dieser ganz ungewohnten und neuartigen Situation

³ Berger, op.

verhalten sollten. Und so mochte es ja auch wirklich sein.⁴

Although the police appear to be in a helpless position, unprepared for the demonstration and unsure how to react to it, they are in no danger and nor do they present a threat. Indeed, they do not have to break up the demonstration, which has an almost carnival like atmosphere, as it just gradually peters out. Although the depiction of the Volkspolizei is very different than Berger's, Anhang den Tag vorher betreffend has been published in the DDR, the reason being, as Mohr suggests, a change in the official attitude towards it:

"Es war alles gar nicht so schlimm," das sagt Selbmanns Text. Er entspricht dem Wandel im offiziellen Umgang mit der Geschichte, nämlich der Neigung, den 17. Juni "herunterzuspielen".⁵

Seen through Lorenzen's eyes the rising was not so threatening. Selbmann's account appeared some years after Berger's and under different political circumstances.

The "Volkspolizei" does not receive as much attention as the Soviet army does. The most comprehensive treatment of the role of the Soviet Union is made by Stefan Heym, who includes larger aspects of the Soviet Union's policy towards the DDR. In an interview with Professor Wilhelm Johannes Schwarz, Heym speculates as to why Fünf Tage im Juni has not been published in the DDR:

Zu der Nichtveröffentlichung hier könnte ich ihnen nur Vermutungen äußern, denn ich bin nicht der Zensor und weiß nicht, was der sich gedacht hat. Ich habe neulich

⁴ Fritz Selbmann, "Anhang den Tag vorher betreffend," Auskunft. Neue Prosa aus der DDR, ed. Stefan Heym (Munich: C. Bertelsmann, 1974) 138.

⁵

mit einem hiesigen Verleger gesprochen, der mir ganz offen sagte, daß in dem Buch einige Dinge behandelt werden, zu denen es noch keinen offiziellen Stellungnahmen der entsprechenden Regierungsstellen gibt. Er nannte unter anderem die beiden Kapitel, in denen als Hauptagierende zwei sowjetische Offiziere auftreten und in denen die Frage auftaucht, wie weit die Ereignisse um Berija 1953 in Moskau einen Einfluß auf den 17. Juni in Berlin hatten.⁶

The portrayal of the Soviet Union has always been problematic in the DDR, because of the special relationship it has with the DDR and the status it enjoys there.

In Fünf Tage im Juni, the Soviet military administration is concerned at the possibility of a rising. The two officers, Solowjow and Bjelin, discuss the options left open to the occupation force if it does occur. The Soviet Union can either withdraw, surrendering its zone of occupation in return for concessions from the West ensuring a united, perhaps even neutral, Germany or it can support the SED and suppress the rising. The apparent indecision on the part of the Soviet leadership is the result of power struggle in the Soviet party for the leadership. Stalin's death had left a power vacuum at the top of the party and it was unclear who would fill it. Solowjow believes the best course of action would be to allow the Germans to sort it out themselves as reforms, in the shape of the "Neuer Kurs", have already been introduced. However, Bjelin sees a severe flaw in his argument:

Wenn es nun aber deutschen Genossen gäbe, die befürchten, daß ein neuer Kurs auch neue Leute erfordern könnte, und die es lieber auf eine Kollision ankommen lassen?⁷

⁶ Stefan Heym, "Beschlagnahmtes Gespräch," Wege 355.

Bjelin's well founded fears that the SED leadership, afraid of losing its influence to another power group within the SED, could do nothing to prevent the rising, which would lead to a serious conflict on the streets of Berlin, leaves the Soviet forces with no option but to intervene in support of Ulbricht.

Although any intervention would mean the Soviet army firing on East German workers, Bjelin realises that the other alternative would be even worse:

Was auch immer sich da anbahnte im Osten dieser geteilten Stadt, ob Streik, Demonstration, Aufstand, ob durch schuldhaftes Versagen oder schicksalhafte Verstrickung, ob organisiert oder provoziert oder spontan, es mußte zerschlagen werden, bevor es zu der großen Konfrontation am Brandenburger Tor führte.⁸

The Soviet Union is in a position where it has no option but to support the current government. To remain inactive could mean war; to force a change in the leadership of the SED could exacerbate the situation by seemingly encouraging the view that the Ulbricht government was to blame for the troubles which would be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Heym believes that the Soviet Union has no option but to intervene to prevent an already dangerous situation from worsening.

Robert Havemann believes the rising was put down by the Soviet army with very little bloodshed, a view echoed by Heym; the only death caused by the army is when Goodie Cass is killed by a bullet that ricochets, an accident, the tanks having fired a salvo of warning shots as they are being stoned. In another episode

Kallmann, when confronted by Soviet tanks, shouts at an officer asking why they do not just kill them all. The soldier carefully moves Kallmann to one side before driving on. Whilst Heym does hint that there was violence, he presents a fairly sanitised portrayal of the Soviet intervention.

Hérmlin also shows the Soviet army to have been very restrained in its response. Die Kommandeuse traces the actions of Hedwig Weber from the time she is released from prison on 17 June by provocateurs, to the time of her recapture later the same day and subsequent trial. In another factually based incident, they allow the rally the former SS-Kommandeuse Hedwig Weber is to address to go ahead even though they have surrounded the square where it is to take place. The soldiers look on somewhat amused by the proceedings:

Am Eingang zum Markt stießen sie auf die ersten Panzer. Ein kleiner Soldat mit rasiertem Kopf lehnte sich an der Fassade und drehte sich eine Zigarette. Eine Frau, die vor der Weber ging, spie ihm theatralisch vor die Füße. Der kleine Soldat sah ihr verwundert ins Gesicht und tippte ein paarmal vorsichtig mit dem Finger an die Schläfe. Jemand lachte verlegen.⁹

The whole incident shows the Soviet soldiers as being little more than bemused onlookers; they are able to disperse the crowd without the use of force but by merely revving their engines. They represent a powerful force but are essentially peaceful: "nur ihre Motoren donnerten."¹⁰ Reinowski shows the Soviet intervention from

⁹ Stephan Hérmlin, "Die Kommandeuse," Auskunft. Neue Prosa aus der DDR, ed. Stefan Heym (Munich: C. Bertelsmann, 1974) 288.

¹⁰ Stephan Hérmlin, "Die Kommandeuse," Auskunft. Neue Prosa aus der DDR, ed. Stefan Heym (Munich: C. Bertelsmann, 1974) 288.

the perspective of Peter Bracke, a class-conscious worker from West Berlin, who finds a reassurance in the tanks similar to that shown by Hermlin:

So oft Peter Panzer mit Sowjetsoldaten sah und wahrnahm,
daß dann die aufrührerischen Gruppen davonestoben, ward
ihm leichter zumute. Mehr Besonnenheit, mehr ruhig und
unbeirrbar dahinziehende Panzer!¹¹

The depiction of the police is less favourable than that of the Soviet army, but, on the whole, there is a broad consensus of opinion that they used as little force as possible. The Soviet army is praised for reacting as quickly and as peacefully as possible in suppressing the rising. But Heym, although in agreement with the other positive depictions, takes a different tack in dealing with the Soviet Union. Heym is more interested in the larger issues leading to the rising than the others, who tend to concentrate more on how it was defeated. In so doing he touches on a sensitive point concerning the Soviet Union's commitment to the DDR. But his portrayal of the two Soviet officers is very sympathetic: they are both what Pavel Petr has called "post-Stalinist citizens"¹² and are aware of the possibilities of a rising. Perhaps this was intended as a criticism of the Stalinist party machinery, Heym implying that it is time for a change of leadership, to introduce equally clear sighted post-Stalinist people into the government of the DDR.

¹¹ Reinowski 430.

¹² Pavel Petr, "Stefan Heym and the Concept of Misunderstanding," Journal of the Australasian Universities'
~~Association 18 (1977) 216~~

7. The Agent Theory

In the DDR the 17 June 1953 has been called "den von langer Hand vorbereiteten Tag X"¹, the day on which the BRD and its American allies would topple the SED government using military means:

In Westdeutschland saßen und sitzen die amerikanischen Agenturen, die auf Anweisung von Washington die Pläne für Krieg und Bürgerkrieg ausarbeiten....In Westberlin wurden von den Kaiser und Reuter systematisch Kriegsverbrecher, Militaristen und kriminelle Elemente in Terrororganisationen vorbereitet und ausgerüstet. Zu den alten faschistischen Morderfahrungen kamen noch zusätzlich die Methoden der amerikanischen Gangster.²

The SED views the rising as being the work of western agents and fascists who had the aim of replacing the socialist system with capitalism. In defence of this theory, the SED quoted the "Bundesminister für gesamtdeutsche Fragen", Jakob Kaiser, who said:

Es liegt im Bereich der Möglichkeit, daß dieser Tag X rascher kommt...es ist unsere Aufgabe, für alle Probleme bestmöglichst vorbereitet zu sein. Der Generalstabsplan ist so gut wie fertig!³

The term "Tag X" was indeed used by West German government agencies, but, according to Pernkopf, it did not signify the violent overthrow of the SED government:

Gemeint ist damit die "Spekulation" um einen wirtschaftlichen und politischen Zusammenbruch des Systems der DDR, für welchen eben diese Sofortmaßnahmen zur Ausgleichung des gesellschaftspolitischen Potentials an jenes der BRDt. ausgearbeitet waren.⁴

¹ Dokumente der SED 437.

² Dokumente der SED 438.

³ Dokumente der SED 438.

⁴ Pernkopf 57.

The SED uses the term "Tag X" to designate a planned putsch, but Pernkopf sees the "Tag X" plans as being "als solche natürlich noch kein Beweis für Putschpläne; sie sind explizit für Maßnahmen nach einem Zusammenbruch der DDR...erarbeitet."⁵ Seen in this context, there appears to have been no plan for the toppling of the SED, but rather that the BRD believed the political and economic structure of the DDR would collapse of its own accord.

Nonetheless, the SED views the 17 June in terms of the world-wide class-struggle. The rising is shown as being an extension of the conflict between East and West in Korea and the confusion following Stalin's death amongst other things. This is reflected in the literature which also puts the rising in the context of the conflict between the two political systems and shows the influence of the BRD and events in other parts of the world.

The most exhaustive attempt to place the 17 June in the context of a world wide class-struggle has been made by Anna Seghers who sets out many of the international events occurring at that time. The atmosphere of international tension and suspicion is aptly demonstrated in the conversation between Riedl and the West German Greibisch. Greibisch raises the question of the trials and executions of the communists Slansky, Raik and Kostoff in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Riedl finds nothing surprising about the trials, as he does not doubt their guilt. Instead he counters with the death of Philipp Müller, who was shot by police during a demonstration in Essen. This incident appears to have little to do

with the main plot, but it serves to introduce the tensions of the time and to show that Kossin is not isolated from the rest of the world as these tensions will later manifest themselves there.

The reference to Slansky is repeated by Heym in Fünf Tage im Juni. When Ewers of the "Staatssicherheitsdienst" is called in to investigate Witte's alleged connection to agent groups, Dreesen is wary of being too openly supportive of Witte, as it is not inconceivable that Witte could have committed "die größten Schändlichkeiten..., dafür gibt's Geständnisse in Moskau, in Prag, in Budapest...."⁶ Although Dreesen supports Witte, he cannot ignore the party's warnings about the possibility of infiltration by agents. However, Heym's reference to Slansky serves a different purpose, when viewed in conjunction with his portrayal of Stalinist party bureaucracy: Witte is up against an organisation that sees a possible enemy in anyone who does not toe the party line.

There are many incidents in Das Vertrauen which appear to be unconnected with the main narrative thread of the novel. Along with the trials in the other Eastern Bloc countries, there is the episode in which the FDJ organisation at Kossin prints broadsheets in support of the Rosenbergs, and there is the introduction of Korean orphans into the orphanage at Greilsheim. These seemingly irrelevant episodes do not merely underline the brutality of the West, but connect Kossin and the DDR to the rest of the world. By including the world wide situation, Seghers gives added weight to the theory that the rising was part of an international class

⁶ Heym, Fünf Tage 97.

struggle, a view subscribed to by Kurt Batt in his discussion of Das Vertrauen. All these separate incidents have to be treated in the novel which lends the novel a very definite structural character, as Christa Degemann, in reference to Kurt Batt, points out:

Hier liegt...ein Romantyp vor, dessen epischer Zusammenhang nicht mehr durch eine einheitliche Fabel gegeben ist. Vielmehr sucht die novellistisch-ensemblehafte Romanstruktur einer von Klassen- und Systemgegensätzen zerklüfteten Welt zu entsprechen.⁷

This also emphasises "das Gegeneinander der Klassen als innere Triebkraft der Geschichte"⁸, as Knipp expresses it. Such a view fits in with Seghers' desire to show the ability of the working class to shape history.

The references to historical events come within the fictional narrative and are illuminated by the effect they have on the people of Kossin. Special attention is not brought to certain events, as it is in Fünf Tage im Juni by setting them apart from the main body of the narrative; rather, Seghers devotes more time to how they affect her characters, hence her attention to Stalin's death and the arrest of his doctors. Although Stalin's death means a lot to Hagen, it makes him aware that there are still many people against him and his ideals; this realisation on Hagen's part demonstrates the importance of Stalin's death for the whole of the DDR. It is important for the country because of what may now happen, a point

⁷ Christa Degemann, Anna Seghers in der westdeutschen Literaturkritik 1946 bis 1983: eine literatursoziologische Analyse (Köln; Pahl-Rugenstein, 1985) 74.

⁸ Knipp 403.

reinforced by the SED which believed that Stalin's death could present the West an opportunity to exploit any subsequent confusion. Hagen reacts to news given within the narrative and can also act upon what he has heard, thereby giving the impression that he can help to form the course of events.

Heym also makes the connection between history and the actions of individuals by his inclusion of documentary material. But, by keeping these documents separate from the main narrative, he shows his main character Witte to be fighting against outside forces. Whereas Seghers shows ordinary individuals forming history, Heym shows them reacting to circumstances created by much more powerful forces, such as governments. Witte is still taking part in the historical process, but he has much less control over it than those in Seghers' novel. The main causes of the rising occur outside of the fictional narrative; they are presented in such a way as to make the reader aware of them just as the characters in the novel would be, but not so as to imply that they have any control over them.

Stephan Hermlin makes ample use of documentary material in his Erzählung Die Kommandeuse, which supports the SED's claim that the rising was a fascist putsch. Hermlin focuses on one particular aspect of the rising, the freeing of the SS-Kommandeuse Eva Dorn from prison. Günter Witschel sees Hermlin's concentration on this particular aspect of the rising as showing the rising to have been the work of fascists alone:

In seiner Kurzgeschichte von 1954 Die Kommandeuse legt er

dar, daß am 17. Juni 1953 nicht Arbeiter, sondern ungebesserte Nazis rebellierten.⁹

Compared to the other works dealing with the June rising, Hermlin does give far more credance to the theory that it was a fascist rising, but that is because of his concentration on this one particular event.

Die Kommandeuse was harshly criticised by Marta Nawrath on its appearance in the DDR for being too negative:

Unsere Literaturkritik führt den Kampf gegen eine schematische und lebensunwahre Schwarzweißmalerei. Möglicherweise haben diese Diskussionen Stephan Hermlin dazu verleitet, in seiner Erzählung "Die Kommandeuse" die Vielsichtigkeit seiner negativen Heldin zu gestalten. Aber in Zusammenhang mit den Ereignissen des 17. Juni 1953 interessiert uns keineswegs die Seelenanalyse einer SS-Kommandeuse. Uns interessieren die Vorgänge in unseren Menschen, ihre Handlungen, an denen der Spuk zerbrach. Davon erfahren wir außer dürftigen Andeutungen in Hermlins Arbeit nichts.¹⁰

Hermlin's "Erzählung" is told from the viewpoint of the "Kommandeuse", Hedwig Weber, so there is very little reference to workers loyal to the DDR. Her contempt for others does not allow her to see any serious opposition to the restoration of a Nazi dictatorship.

Hermlin defended his use of a negative figure to depict the 17 June as the perfect symbol for what the rising could have led to:

Es gibt kein eindeutigeres Symbol für den Charakter der

⁹ Günter Witschel, Antagonismen in der DDR-Literatur (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976) 6.

¹⁰ Marta Nawrath, "Methoden des Autors -- Methoden der Kritik," Neue Deutsche Literatur 3.3 (1955) 127.

Ereignisse als die Figur der Weber, Der 17. Juni sollte die Erneuerung von Ravensbrück sein.¹¹

This apparently reactionary view is in keeping with the atmosphere of the time and was shared by Carl-Jakob Danziger who, although he had been expelled from the party, felt compelled to defend the DDR. As a Jew Danziger felt protected by the DDR and the way in which its legal system dealt with Nazis; because of this and his fear of a return to fascism, he was prepared to intervene on behalf of the state:

Eine deutsche Konterrevolution konnte nur eines ans Tageslicht bringen: den versteckten, lauernden, mühsam getarnten Faschismus mit all seinen Begleiterscheinungen. Deshalb war ich sofort engagiert, als ich merkte, daß es um die großen Entscheidungen ging.¹²

Hermlin's fears were shared by Danziger; both believed the rising to be an attempt to restore fascism to Germany. This fear was so great for Hermlin that he chose to concentrate on this one particular aspect of the rising alone. Relating the events from Weber's point of view has a marked effect on the narrative presentation, as Heinrich Mohr explains:

Hermlins Erzählung verschränkt äußeres und inneres Geschehen, Außen- und Innenwelt ineinander, wobei der stärkere Akzent auf der Innenschau liegt, auf der Präsentation dessen, was in der Figur vorgeht. Diese sehr gekonnt gehandhabte literarische Technik suggeriert eine Deutung des 17. Juni als einer, von den Imperialisten inszenierten und von faschistischen Elementen getragenen Verschwörung.¹³

¹¹ Stephan Hermlin, "Methode des Autors -- Methoden der Kritik," Neue Deutsche Literatur 3.3 (1955) 131.

¹² Carl-Jakob Danziger, Die Partei hat immer Recht (Stuttgart: Werner Gebühr, 1976) 122.

¹³ Mohr 63.

By relating the narrative from Weber's point of view Hermlin is able to portray the rising as a purely fascist event.

Sticking closely to the Neues Deutschland report on Erna Dorn's subsequent trial, Hermlin has Weber released from prison by two men who tell her that the Russians are withdrawing and the Americans invading. After asking her why she is in prison, they free her saying they need people like her:

"Leute wie Sie", sagte der Ältere, "können wir brauchen. Sie müssen in den Saalstedter Führungsstab...Da braucht man Leute mit Erfahrung und Überzeugung"¹⁴

This initial scene is strengthened by the inclusion of further documentary evidence; a letter written by Dorn to her father, a former Gestapo operative living in the BRD. Hermlin uses this to point to the nature of the West German government by making reference to the present occupation of Weber's father: "Seine frühere Tätigkeit im Reichssicherheitshauptamt sei für die Justizverwaltung eigentlich eine Empfehlung gewesen."¹⁵ The letter is used again to emphasize the nature of the rising:

Lieber Vater, es ist soweit. Der Osten mußte ja mal frei werden. Bald ziehen wir wieder unsere geliebte SS-Uniform an. Dann wird auch die Stunde kommen, da ich meinen Dienst in der politischen Abteilung oder bei unserer Gestapo versehen kann. Gute Freunde haben sich meiner

¹⁴ Hermlin, Die Kommandeuse 287. This closely follows Dorn's statement as reported in the Neues Deutschland:

Die Haftanstalt wurde gestürmt. Meine Zelltür wurde aufgeschlossen und zwei Personen kamen herein und fragten mich, warum ich in Haft sei. Ich sagte: "Wegen Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit." Sie antworteten: "Solche Leute suchen wir gerade. Sie sind die richtige."

"SS-Kommandeuse im Führungsstab der Provokateure," Neues Deutschland 24 June 1953: 5.

¹⁵ Hermlin, Die Kommandeuse 282.

angenommen, bis endgültig unsere Fahne weht. Das wird nicht mehr lange dauern. Deine Heidi.¹⁶

The text of Weber's letter closely resembles that written by Dorn and found on her person at the time of her arrest:

Möge doch nun auch die Stunde kommen, da unser geliebter Führer wieder funktioniert und die Fahnen der Nationalsozialistischen Partei wehen werden und ich wieder meinen Dienst in der politischen Abteilung oder bei unserer Gestapo versehen kann. Schicke mir doch bitte Ausweise und zwar den von der KP V Gestapo (RSHA), damit ich rüber komme.¹⁷

Hermlin quotes some parts of Dorn's letter verbatim, but he also changes passages. Instead of Dorn's reference to going to the West, Hermlin includes a passage saying the East must be freed; this is much more serious as it does not just imply that the BRD is a safe haven for former Nazis, but indicates that it is expansionist, wishing to impose this system on the DDR as well, which fits in perfectly with the SED's view.

Hermlin is not the only author to deal with the release of Erna Dorn, but he gives it the fullest treatment. Reinowski also mentions it, but much more briefly. In Die Versuchung, Dorn is freed "auftragsgemäß" by western agents. This is reported by Klemm, one of the agents, who finds her release somewhat distasteful as it might alienate support. But, he is assured by his superiors that she has been released on the explicit orders of the American Colonel Deapson. Klemm reaches the following conclusion for the reader: "Es mußte wohl zwischen den einflußreichen amerikanischen

¹⁶ Hermlin, Die Kommandeuse 284.

¹⁷ "Ich schreibe meinen Namen unter das Todesurteil," Neues Deutschland 25 June 1953: 4.

Freunden und der Dorn besondere Beziehungen geben."¹⁸ Reinowski reaches the same conclusion as Hermlin concerning the release of Dorn; that the West intended to restore a fascist government to the DDR. However, he expresses this in a different way, by having even the hardened agent Klemm, who also has a Nazi past, find it distasteful. The enormity of her release is shown by its impact on Klemm, whereas Hermlin shows it through her thoughts alone. In spite of the brevity of the incident, it can leave little doubt as to who is behind the rising and what their purpose is.

By showing the rising from Weber's viewpoint, Nawrath feared, it might cause the reader to have some feelings of sympathy towards her, a suggestion rejected by Hermlin as "völlig unsinnig".¹⁹ Hermlin's portrayal, even though Weber feels herself to be the wronged party, makes it perfectly clear how she is to be seen. Weber addresses a rally as "ein Opfer des kommunistischen Terrors" and an "ehemalige politische Gefangene"²⁰. This introduction is a kind of role reversal; in reality Weber is not the victim, but the persecutor. Fritz J. Raddatz comments on this technique, saying "Hermlin hatte den raffinierten Einfall, die epische mit der moralischen Ebene zu verwirren: er läßt die falsche Person die richtigen Sachen sagen. Auf diese Weise wird Wahrheit gegeben und

¹⁸ Reinowski 423.

¹⁹ Hermlin

²⁰ Hermlin, Die kommandeuse 288.

zugleich zurückgenommen...."²¹ Weber gives her speech, talking of human dignity and the misery imposed by the SED. Yet, while she is talking Hermlin gives an insight into her thoughts: she looks around the crowd and sees no one who can oppose her and is full of contempt for her compatriots who betrayed the Führer and will have to pay for it. Hermlin's entire story focuses on his fear of the return of a Nazi government to Germany. By using Weber as his mouthpiece, he can present these fears in a direct and alarming way. The threat, and that which accompanies it, is emphasised, not the security from the threat. The only opposition shown is the Soviet tanks and a few loyal workers, but this is enough to save the DDR. Hermlin is not concerned with the opposition to the rising but the danger it brought with it; the danger of the restoration of fascism to the DDR.

Reinowski's portrayal of the June rising as the "ausschließlich vom imperialistischen Westen aus inszenierte Tag X"²² also devotes much attention to the involvement of former Nazis. The organisation preparing for "Tag X" is "Ozeandienst", which is intrinsically militaristic and anti-communist in nature and is backed by the BRD and America. However, at the intermediate level it is run by people such as Klemm, a former "Wehrmacht" officer, and it employs other old soldiers such as Kunze, currently a paymaster on the Stalinallee. In the exchange between Klemm and

²¹ Fritz J. Raddatz, Traditionen und Tendenzen. Materialien zur Literatur der DDR (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972) 152-153.

²² Pernkopf 102.

Kunze the conversation centres on "Offiziersehre" and "die Interessen des Vaterlands".²³ The whole rising is orchestrated by America and West Germany who, facing a defeat in Korea and the popular advances made by the SED, are forced to bring forward their plans for the overthrow of the DDR. They intend to do this with the aid of the German people, the majority of whom still think "nazistisch".²⁴

Following the SED version of events closely, Reinowski includes other asides to make it clear that it is in fact a fascist rising. On 16 June, Klemm marks his calendar:

Er riß das Kalenderblatt ab, jetzt stand der 16. Juni da; die Farbe der Zahl schien Klemm, in dem es heiter und hell war, zu düster, er nahm einen Rotstift und malte ein großes rotes Ausrufungszeichen daneben. Klemm mußte lächeln, das Blatt war nun schwarzweißrot.²⁵

The colour symbolism in this rather contrived incident is quite obvious, but its implications are deeper than just showing Klemm to be a representative of the old German order as he decides to keep the piece of paper to remind him of the day he hopes will make him chief of police in Magdeburg. If such incidents are not enough to convince the reader that it is indeed a fascist rising, the leaders of the provocateurs all wear jack boots. Reinowski goes to great pains to support the SED's version of the rising, even saying the

²³ Reinowski 387.

²⁴ Reinowski 327.

²⁵ Reinowski 397.

agent groups are brought to "Kriegsstärke"²⁶, but without saying how relatively small unarmed bands of thugs can start a war.

In Das Vertrauen Anna Seghers also supports the theory that the rising was at least partly sponsored by the West, the reason being that she wishes to show the mechanism behind history as Knipp states:

Zeitgeschichte soll begriffen werden als Resultat von Kollektivhandlungen klassengebundener Individuen. Der Widerstreit unterschiedlich verfaßter Gesellschaftssysteme soll in der historischen Entscheidungssituation aufgedeckt werden.²⁷

Seghers shows that the historical process is the result of the actions of all members of all classes and that the antagonism between the classes is the driving force behind the whole mechanism. However, the involvement of the West in her novel is far less obvious than in Die Versuchung but it still supports the SED's view.

Seghers concentrates on the former owners of the Kossin works, the Bentheim family, who one day hope to regain ownership of their expropriated property in the DDR. For this reason, Bentheim has been buying all the "Ostwerte" he can. He has also hired Meier to lure specialists away from the East, including Berndt, who was tricked into leaving for the West having been persuaded that he would be arrested for failing to fulfill his part of the economic plan. Bentheim is convinced that the Americans will liberate the DDR and restore the capitalists to their rightful position, even if

²⁶ Reinowski 360.

²⁷ Knipp 399.

it means war. Bentheim's views are repudiated by Castricius, who does not believe the Americans will risk another war for the interests of a few German industrialists. Castricius' dismissal of Bentheim's notions not only exposes the futility of the plans of West German capital, but also demonstrates Bentheim's way of thinking, and with it that of his class, to be anachronistic. The forces in the BRD working for the overthrow of the DDR are bound to failure and they should come to terms with the reality of the situation in Germany.

Castricius' clear-sighted assessment of the situation does not make him a positive figure. He is a selfish, nihilistic man, who would rather have his villa bulldozed than allow it to be passed on after his death. This seemingly unconnected incident is one of many which apparently have nothing to do with the main narrative. Many of the scenes in West Germany and the United States are included to show how dissolute life is in the West and also as a yardstick against which the quality of life in Kossin can be measured. In spite of economic difficulties and shortages in the DDR, the quality of life in Kossin is much better than in the West. Berndt realizes this, when the mistrust that pervades life in the BRD results in his being sent to Monterrey in Mexico. In Mexico he sees the exploited Miguel, a poor steelworker, yet envies him because he at least has a place he can call home. This incident also demonstrates the global nature of the class-struggle.

Although Seghers does briefly mention agents infiltrating the DDR, her main concern is with those who defended the works against

the rising as they are the ones who are helping to form the new social system, not supporting the regressive, decaying social order. It is these people who actively support the DDR in a time of crisis who are fulfilling their historical duty.

As for those who actually took part in the rising, the SED agrees that there were some genuinely disaffected workers who joined the strike, but the strike was infiltrated by provocateurs and agents who tried to turn the strikers against the government. In a letter to Peter Suhrkamp dated 1 July 1953, Bertolt Brecht speaks of the demonstrations by workers, of whom he says: "sie waren zu Recht erbittert"²⁸, and how they were infiltrated by provocateurs:

Die Straße freilich mischte die Züge der Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen schon in den frühen Morgenstunden des 17. Juni auf groteske Art mit allerlei deklassierten Jugendlichen, die durch das Brandenburger Tor, über den Potsdamer Platz, auf der Warschauer Brücke kolonnenweise eingeschleust wurden, aber auch mit scharfen, brutalen Gestalten der Nazizeit, den hiesigen, die man seit Jahren nicht mehr in Haufen hatte auftreten sehen und die doch immer dagewesen waren. Die Parolen verwandelten sich rapide. Aus "Weg mit der Regierung!" wurde "Hängt sie!", und der Bürgersteig übernahm die Regie.²⁹

Although Brecht supports the agent theory, he is careful to differentiate between provocateurs from the West and DDR workers who were airing their legitimate grievances. Brecht had made the same distinction in an article in the Neues Deutschland, in which he warned against putting workers and provocateurs on the same

²⁸ Bertolt Brecht 695.

²⁹ Brecht 696.

plane, as this would damage the chances of restoring the trust of the workforce in the party.³⁰

Other eyewitness accounts also distinguish between workers and agents. Erich Loest reported incidents, in which a mere handful of those amongst the demonstrators, quite obviously "Bubis" from West Berlin, tried to incite workers to join in their violence.³¹ Loest continues that many of the West Berlin youths were later stopped by workers, a view reflected in the literary treatments of the rising as is the violence in which party members are beaten up and HO ("Handlungsorganisation", the state retail outlet) shops looted.

Reinowski finds virtually all of his provocateurs in West Berlin and they are paid criminals, who have been bought off with cigarettes amongst other things, which is in agreement with the findings of the interrogation of Werner Kalkowski, who was arrested on 17 June for his part in the rising.³² The only people from the DDR are Rolf, who used to live on the Bleibergstraße, but now lives in West Berlin, and a young man who mysteriously misplaced the funds from his FDJ group. Rolf's group is to go to East Berlin to infiltrate the demonstrations and incite violence, just as Kalkowski admitted his group was to:

³⁰ "Für Faschisten darf es keine Gnade geben!" Neues Deutschland 23 June 1953: 4.

³¹ Erich Loest, "Mit Provokateuren wird nicht diskutiert!" Neues Deutschland, 21 June 1953: 4.

³² "Mitteilung unserer Untersuchungsorgane über die Vernehmung des westberliner Provokateurs Kalkowski," Neues Deutschland 20 June 1953: 1.

Diesen Streik müsse man zu einem Aufstand machen....Wir erhielten den Auftrag, die Regierungsgebäude einzuschlagen, Brände zu legen, Läden zu plündern, Volkspolizisten umzulegen und überhaupt, auch mit der Waffe, gegen die Organe vorzugehen.³³

Reinowski's agents have the same task as those reported on. That the organs of state and party members were attacked is corroborated by Heym, who shows Witte to be attacked. He also shows a HO shop to be looted, something also reported by Fritz Schenk who adds that private shops nearby escaped unharmed.³⁴

When Rolf's group enters East Berlin, it is successful in tricking many workers into joining the strike, but it also meets stiff opposition from workers loyal to the DDR. Rolf has the misfortune to agitate at the building site where Max, his fiancée's father, works and is recognised and taken prisoner. Those who did join the provocateurs realise their mistake when their demands become more political and the violence starts. Uwe Berger emphasises the violent aspect of the rising having the mob from the West crying for blood. The leaders push women and children to the front whilst trying to force the police to fire on them. When this happens, Strobels, a policeman, can only think of his father who was murdered by the Nazis. By giving this insight into his thoughts, the narrator links the rising to fascism.

Fritz Selbmann deals with one particular incident during the rising, the demonstration before the "Haus der Ministerien" in East

³³ "Mitteilung unserer Untersuchungsorgane".

³⁴ Fritz Schenk, Mein doppeltes Vaterland. Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse eines geborenen Sozialdemokraten (Würzburg: Naumann, 1981) 68.

Berlin. Selbmann is ideally placed to comment on this demonstration, as he was the only member of the government to address it. However, considering his position, it would be fairly safe to assume that he too will support the SED. In his account the incident is viewed by Heinz Lorenzen who sees two separate demonstrations; one from the Stalinallee and one from West Berlin:

Was hier zusammenströmte und vom Westen kam, das hatte mit den Bauarbeitern von der Stalinallee nichts oder doch nicht viel zu tun. Es waren fast nur junge Burschen, Halbstarke in Lederjacken, Rowdys und Schläger der "Deutschen Jugend" und der "Jungen Union", ein paar Studenten dazwischen, und hin und wieder ein streng blickender älterer Mann, der zwar in unauffälligem Zivil steckte, dem man aber das "Deutsche Kreuz in Gold" von weitem ansah.³⁵

The building workers' demonstration had been infiltrated by men who looked genuine, "die aber eigenartigerweise völlig neue weiße Maureranzüge trugen".³⁶ These provocateurs are recognised as such by the workers when they try to shout down the minister. Provocateurs succeed in addressing the crowd and are able to gain support from genuine workers, just as in Die Versuchung, but most of the workers eventually just go home, the potential threat not being as harmful as for Reinowski.

Das Vertrauen has been much criticised for its portrayal of the 17 June and not least for its depiction of those who took part in the rising. Andreas W. Mytze has conducted a very useful survey

³⁵ Selbmann 137.

³⁶ Selbmann 137.

of some of the West German articles dealing with this work³⁷. Mytze quotes Ranicki's review in which he claims Seghers showed those who rebelled to be "Agenten, Idioten und stinkende Individuen."³⁸ Although there are some agents at work in Kossin, it would be wrong to classify the strikers as either of the latter, Seghers having gone to great lengths to show how they have been alienated by the party, thereby giving them a definite motivation for their actions.

The agents included by Seghers include two former Wehrmacht soldiers and a returned "Republikflüchtiger", but they play relatively minor roles. The most important agent activity concerns the involvement of Weber, a member of the West Berlin SPD. A valued brigadier at Kossin, Weber is taken to West Berlin shortly before the uprising to receive his instructions for the coming troubles. Back in Kossin he agitates amongst his fellow workers talking about the right to strike, thereby manipulating his colleagues' dissatisfaction and gaining influence with them. He can also identify those who can be relied on: "für zuverlässig hielt Weber jeden, der sich beharrlich stemmte gegen den neuen Staat."³⁹ Seghers' portrayal of the involvement of the SPD is not only in agreement with the SED's version of the rising but also questions the legitimacy of its claim to be an "Arbeiterpartei".

³⁷ Andreas W. Mytze, "Von der negativen Faszination. Das westdeutsche Seghers-Bild," Text und Kritik 38 (1973) 20-30.

³⁸ Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Bankrott einer Erzählerin," Lauter Verisse (Munich: Piper, 1970) 139.

³⁹ Seghers 217.

Heym also asserts that the SPD was involved in the rising. Indeed, he assigns it a leading role in the plot against the DDR and quotes from its paper, Neues Vorwärts, to support his claim:

Eine besondere Rolle im Widerstandskampf gegen das kommunistische Regime ist dem Ostbüro der SPD zugefallen...Erst wenn das kommunistische Regime der Sowjetzone durch andere politisch wirksam gewordene Faktoren gestürzt werden kann, erst dann wird sich das Ausmaß und der Sinn der illegalen Widerstandsarbeit der Sozialdemokratischen Partei in der Sowjetzone erweisen und bestätigen. Auf diesen Tag wird systematisch hingearbeitet....⁴⁰

The strike at VEB Merkur is organised by Gadebusch, one of the workforce, and Herr Quelle, apparently an SPD official. Quelle believes that only an organisation such as the SPD can topple the SED and this is what he is working for:

Die Herrschaften von der CIA und die Gehlen-Leute und die Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit, und wie sie alle hießen, mit ihrer Geheimdienstspielerei, und hier mal was sabotieren und dort mal ein Flugblattballon, die entschieden einen Dreck. Eine Arbeiterpartei und ein Arbeiterstaat konnten gestürzt werden nur von Arbeitern, von organisierten Arbeitern.⁴¹

Although Heym agrees with the SED's theory that the SPD was involved in the rising, he seems to be questioning the extent to which the western secret services were involved. According to Heym, they did little more than commit individual acts of terror, whereas it was left to the SPD to organise a consolidated insurrection. There is also the implication, much more damaging for the SED, that the uprising came from the working class, not the secret services.

⁴⁰ Heym, Fünf Tage 90.

⁴¹ Heym, Fünf Tage 94.

In his diaries, Alfred Kantorowicz also believes the rising to have come from the East German working class:

Provokation? Mag sein, daß auch Provokateure den Zeitpunkt genutzt haben, doch was für eine armselige Ausrede, sich weiszumachen, ein paar Tangobubis vermöchten einen Arbeiteraufstand auszulösen.⁴²

This is the greatest deviation in the portrayls of the June rising between Heym and the others. Heym does include evidence to support the SED's agent theory, but still demonstrates the main moving force behind the rising to have been the workers themselves.

However, according to Robert Havemann, Heym's original version of his novel, Der Tag X was quite different:

Stefan Heym sollte der Partei dafür dankbar sein, daß "Der Tag X" nie erschienen ist. Heym übernimmt nämlich die grundfalsche offizielle Lesart, wonach der "17. Juni" ein von den westlichen Geheimdiensten organisiertes konterrevolutionäres Unternehmen war. Heym zeichnet zwar ein treffendes Bild der stalinistischen Parteibürokratie und beleuchtet die ökonomischen Hintergründe der Unzufriedenheit der Arbeiter in den volkseigenen Industriewerken. Die Erscheinungen werden dann aber von einer Gruppe von Spezialisten der CIA in raffinierter Weise für die Vorbereitung der Konterrevolution ausgenutzt. Ausgekochte Agenten gewinnen einfältige sozialdemokratische Arbeiter und Gewerkschafter, mit deren Hilfe die Belegschaft eines Großbetriebes aufgehetzt wird. planmäßig wird der Tag X in Szene gesetzt.⁴³

Havemann's appraisal of Der Tag X, from which Fünf Tage im Juni evolved, helps to explain the at times confusing and contradictory picture of the rising Heym presents. In the twenty years between the novel's inception and its publication, many scenes were

⁴² Alfred Kantorowicz, Deutsches Tagebuch, vol.2. (Berlin: Klaus Guhl, 1979) 366.

⁴³ Robert Havemann, Fragen, Antworten, Fragen. Aus der Biographie eines deutschen Marxisten (Munich: Piper, 1970) 142-143.

rewritten, others were merely transferred from the unpublished work to the final version. The result being many scenes supporting the SED, others contradicting it.

The scenes involving Kallmann, the strike leader, are set apart from those dealing with agents and Heym gives Kallmann definite motivations for his actions; he is not merely the dupe of the SPD. Heym uses a leitmotif to demonstrate the kind of worker Kallmann is; he has been a model worker all his life. By retreating behind Witte, the narrator can indirectly comment on this aspect of Kallmann's character:

Was da vor ihm saß, gesund, kräftig, mit fähiger Hand, das hatte tatsächlich unter dem Kaiser gearbeitet, unter der Republik, und unter Hitler -- statt die Gesellschaftsordnung zu beseitigen, deren Ausdruck alle drei gewesen waren.⁴⁴

Kallmann is prepared to work under any government, even the SED, as long as he can earn a decent wage. However, with the rise in norms he can no longer do so and is as dissatisfied as his colleagues.

Kallmann is not an opponent of socialism, but believes that socialism will come, "wenn eines Tages genug Arbeitergroschen und Arbeiterstimmen"⁴⁵ have been collected. This is another leitmotif in the work and one which Pernkopf believes to show Kallmann's idea of socialism as being "kleinbürgerlicher Natur"⁴⁶. With his dissatisfaction and attitude towards socialism, Kallmann is the ideal man to lead the strike. His apparent personal bitterness for

⁴⁴ Heym, Fünf Tage 39.

⁴⁵ Heym, Fünf Tage 44.

⁴⁶ Pernkopf 200.

not having done enough for socialism in the past is another contributing factor in his decision to take a stand for liberal, bourgeois social democracy. When his wife praises him for having stood up for his principles by having refused to join the Nazi party, Kallmann becomes angry, as she is trying to make a hero out of him, when he does not regard himself as having been very heroic. All of these factors contribute to Kallmann's disaffection, but the main reason appears to be his disillusionment with the way socialism has developed in the DDR; he does not believe things have developed as they should have done with the advent of socialism, the old class relationships having been modified rather than destroyed; the workforce is still being exploited, but by different people. Indeed, this is a view shared by many of his colleagues. They are not interested in the larger political issues when they air their grievances, but the everyday things that effect them: "man sprach von Alltäglichem".⁴⁷ Those who took part in the rising were for the most part ordinary workers who were dissatisfied with the SED and its handling of the economy.

Witte recognises that the SED has a difficult task in trying to build socialism in the DDR and gives a very apt explanation of the problems it faces:

Die Weltgeschichte hat sich den Spaß erlaubt, von uns zu verlangen, daß wir den Sozialismus in einem Drittel eines geteilten Landes aufbauen, und das mit Menschen, die sich den Sozialismus keineswegs alle gewünscht haben. Wieviel

⁴⁷ Heym, Fünf Tage 29.

von der Abneigung gegen die Partei hat seinen Grund nicht in ihren Fehlern, sondern in ihren Zielen?⁴⁸

Unlike Seghers, Heym does not provide personal reasons for individuals' dislike of the party: instead he gives the much more realistic explanation that there were many ordinary East Germans who just did not want socialism; they were not driven from the party by any kind of personal conflict with it, as they were never allied to it in the first place.

Those who strike at VEB Merkur are for the most part genuinely disaffected workers who believe themselves to be exploited and to be exercising their right to strike:

Wenn aber die Ausbeutung auch noch von Leuten besorgt wird..., von Leuten, die behaupten, sie wären nicht mehr wie wir, und eine Arbeiterregierung, und wenn sie die Schraube dabei so hart anziehen -- dann sollten wir uns doch wenigstens erlauben dürfen, ihnen mitzuteilen, daß uns das nicht paßt, und was uns nicht paßt....⁴⁹

The workers of VEB Merkur are dissatisfied with the high-handedness and hypocrisy of the government. Kallmann no more owns the factory under the SED than he did under the capitalists. The only way they can make their discontent known is to strike⁵⁰. Unlike Seghers, who has Hagen warn that good workers might also turn against the party, Heym shows the majority of the strikers to be nothing other than good workers.

⁴⁸ Heym, Fünf Tage 260.

⁴⁹ Heym, Fünf Tage 31.

⁵⁰ Robert Havemann believes the June uprising was "Ein verzweifelter Versuch, das Streikrecht wiederherzustellen." Havemann 146.

Kallmann is a good worker but not, as Ute Brandes claims, a positive figure. If he had been a positive figure, he would not have submitted to the previous forms of government in Germany. Brandes also states that Kallmann finds his way back to socialism, but this is unclear. After the demonstration has broken up, Kallmann is left alone and walks towards the West carrying a picture of Karl Marx. Once he is in the West, he throws the picture into the canal in what Reinhard Zachau calls "ein Bild von undurchsichtiger Symbolik"⁵¹. Although this can be interpreted as a rejection of Marxism, it is impossible to say for sure just what happens to Kallmann. The only subsequent mention of him is when Witte on a tour of the shop floor notices: "an Kallmanns Drehbank stand keiner"⁵². From this comment, it is only possible to speculate as to whether he has stayed in the West, just not reported for work, or has been arrested which was what he expected to happen to him.

Seghers also deals with the aftermath of the rising. Raddatz attacks her treatment of it, referring to the sentence: "Als die Arbeit wieder lief, wurden noch ein paar verhaftet, teils daheim, teils im Betriebe."⁵³ Raddatz says this sentence is "unverzeihlich in seiner bemäntelnden Lakonie."⁵⁴ Mytze, however, rightfully points out that it is Raddatz' method of quotation that is

⁵¹ Reinhard Zachau, Stefan Heym (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1982) 88.

⁵² Heym, Fünf Tage 259.

⁵³ Seghers 258.

⁵⁴ Mytze 25.

"unverzeihlich", as he quotes out of context. Raddatz omits the following sentence: "Janausch hielt es für ein bodenloses Unrecht, daß er festgenommen wurde."⁵⁵ Janausch and Kallmann both believe they are within their rights to strike, a right guaranteed by the justice minister, Fechner. However, he was later removed from his post, ostensibly for trying to justify a counterrevolutionary putsch as a strike.

Both Seghers and Heym show the rising to have been the result of genuine dissatisfaction amongst the workforce at the party's economic policy, but much more weight is given to this theory by Heym. Heym, whilst not totally rejecting the idea that the rising was the work of agents, gives little weight to the involvement of western secret services, limiting the involvement of agents to the shady Heinz Hofer. Hofer's activities in the DDR are not discussed, he is in the novel merely to give some credence to the idea that agents were at least to some extent involved. For Heym the rising was the result of mounting frustration with the SED. It was not staged by the West, but it was exploited by it. For Seghers, however, the rising is a deliberately staged event. Unlike the other authors, Heym is very careful not to make any connection between "Demonstranten-Gesinde-Nazis"⁵⁶, but keeps the different elements separate. There are points of contact between the various depictions of the rising, but again there is a difference in emphasis.

⁵⁵ Seghers 258.

⁵⁶ Heym, Wege und Umwege 356.

7. Conclusion

In a speech given in 1971, Erich Honecker made the following much discussed and interpreted statement about literature in the DDR:

Wenn man von der festen Position des Sozialismus ausgeht, kann es meines Erachtens auf dem Gebiet von Kunst und Literatur keine Tabus geben. Das betrifft sowohl die Fragen der inhaltlichen Gestaltung als auch des Stils-- kurz gesagt: die Fragen dessen, was man die künstlerische Meisterschaft nennt.

Although this statement seems to imply, as Emmerich puts it, "daß Überzeugte Sozialisten über alles und mit allen künstlerischen Mitteln schreiben durften, die sie vor sich selbst verantworteten- und nicht vor irgendeinen anderen, z.B. parteiamtlichen Instanz"² there are still works, such as Fünf Tage im Juni, that remain unpublished in the DDR.

If Honecker's statement regarding literary freedom is taken at face value, then there can be nothing which DDR authors cannot write about. Indeed the 17 June 1953 has been the subject of many literary interpretations that have been welcomed in the DDR. Therefore, it cannot be the subject matter that is responsible for the non-appearance of Heym's novel; nor can it be the way in which the novel is structured, using documentary evidence, as this has been done by others, most notably Hermlin, whose interpretations have been welcomed. Hence there must be another reason for Fünf Tage im Juni not having been published. This reason has been

¹ Quoted in Wolfgang Emmerich, Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1985) 178.

² Emmerich 178.

provided by Honecker in an earlier speech made in 1965 when he attacked Heym's Tag X novel, "der wegen einer völlig falschen Darstellung der Ereignisse des 17. Juni nicht zugelassen werden konnte."³ From this statement, when it is viewed in conjunction with Honecker's later pronouncement, it would seem that Fünf Tage im Juni has not appeared because of the conclusions it reaches about the rising, not because of the subject matter itself or the techniques used to present it.

Whilst not doubting the historical accuracy of Heym's portrayal of the rising, Schwarz does question its objectivity, calling it "extrem parteilich"⁴, in the sense that Witte, as a vehicle for Heym's ideas is very clearly a socialist, and because a portrayal very sympathetic towards the DDR is presented. However, the portrayal is very unsympathetic towards the party with whom Witte is constantly at odds. It is perhaps Heym's depiction of the party that is the grounds on which it is considered unacceptable by the SED. Heym's depiction of the June rising is broadly supportive of the SED's version of the same events, but the major deviation from the official view comes in his treatment of the party, perhaps the most sensitive area of the whole matter. Seghers also criticises the party, but her criticism is not as severe as that levelled by Heym. Heym also does not accept the party's theory concerning the rising, just as he also rejects the western legend

³ Heym, Wege 309.

⁴ Heym, Wege 356.

of it being a "Volksaufstand", a rejection he repeated in an interview with Karl Corino:

Es ist doch irgendwie ironisch, daß hier in der Bundesrepublik die Staatskrise des benachbarten deutschen Staates zum Nationalfeiertag gemacht wurde. Das beruht natürlich auf der These, daß am 17. Juni ein Volksaufstand stattgefunden hätte. Andererseits ist bei uns in der DDR die These, daß es ein konterrevolutionärer, vom Westen eingefädelter Putschversuch war. Diese Thesen sind inzwischen zu auf Denkmalsockel erhobenen heiligen Kühen geworden. Und beide stimmen nicht, das sage ich sehr offen in diesem Buch.⁵

Heym believes the causes of the rising to be much deeper than those suggested in either East or West Germany⁶. He does not emphasise the influence of the West to the degree that the SED does, but neither does he discount its involvement; instead he includes all the different influences, thereby giving as full a picture of the conflict as possible, whilst not ignoring the more negative aspects.

In the wake of the June uprising, Günther Cwojdrak demanded that DDR writers should portray all "typical" aspects of the event, including the negative occurrences: to ignore any aspect would be to give a false representation of life. However, this honesty would necessarily lead to the portrayal of the conflicts within society, an element which has been emphasised in the literary portrayals of

⁵ Karl Corino, "Fünf Tage im Juni. Interview mit Stefan Heym," Deutschland Archiv 8 (1975) 161-162.

⁶ By refusing to fully accept the legend of either side, Heym can take those aspects of each version he supports and use them to disprove the clichéd picture of the rising presented by others.

the rising. Cwojdrak also warned writers against presenting a too clear cut picture of the events as often happened in the press:

Er wurde sich an der Wahrheit versündigen, wenn er, wie das manchmal in unserer Presse vorkam, aus den Demonstranten lediglich Tagediebe, Nutten und Gewohnheitsverbrecher heraussuchte; es ist klar, daß diese drei Kategorien keinen wesentlichen Teil unserer Bevölkerung verkörpern. Wir wissen, daß der Begriff des Typischen dazu mißbraucht wurde, die gegensätzlichen Elemente in der Wirklichkeit abzuschwächen und negative Erscheinungen zu leugnen.⁷

Cwojdrak's concern that the typical elements be portrayed is a concern for the truth. For him, it is as unacceptable to deny that there is opposition to the SED as it is to misrepresent any such opposition as coming purely from the more undesirable elements in society.

Cwojdrak continues to say that there can be no more works that seek a comfortable alternative to the truth and avoid conflicts. For him there are lessons to be learned from the 17 June: "wenn wir aus den Ereignissen des 17. Juni nichts lernen, werden wir überhaupt nichts lernen."⁸ Perhaps the most radical lesson to be learnt is, "daß wir zukünftig unter keinen Umständen mehr eine administrative 'Regelung' der Literatur dulden sollten, wie sie offensichtlich das Bestreben mancher Ämter war."⁹ This statement foreshadows Honecker's call for a literature with no taboos, but it

⁷ Günther Cwojdrak, "Schreibt die Wahrheit!," Neue Deutsche Literatur 8 (1953) 25-26.

⁸ Cwojdrak 26.

⁹ Cwojdrak 26.

contains a proviso, reaffirming the need for a partisan, "demokratische Literatur."¹⁰

Cwojdrak's essay sums up the criteria for the acceptability of a work of literature; it must be truthful, but also partisan. However, it is unclear just how partisan it must be. Fünf Tage im Juni may have been considered unsuitable because, unlike Das Vertrauen, it reflects Cwojdrak's warning in the "Nachspiel": nothing has been learnt and things progress as they always have done. Heym reaches different conclusions than Seghers, or the others, as he, like them, brings his own personal view point to the events.

Seghers' novel also contradicts the SED's view of the rising in some points, but it supports it in the most important areas. She shows the party to have made mistakes, but it overcomes its failings and, in the figure of Hagen, resolves to improve itself further. Her criticisms of the party are tempered, providing explanations why individuals turn against it and others who remain loyal to the party, against whom the strikers can be compared. The portrayal of the 17 June in Das Vertrauen reaffirms the legitimacy of the state, as it shows how ordinary people defend the DDR in its time of crisis. By defeating the counterrevolution, these people have ensured the direction of the DDR's future development. For Seghers, the future of the DDR is safe; for Heym, however, it is not, as the "Nachspiel" proves.

¹⁰ Cwojdrak 26.

The SED's view of the rising is also supported by Hermlin, albeit in a rather unorthodox fashion. Unlike Berger and Hauptmann, Hermlin presents the rising from the viewpoint of one of the provocateurs, a negative rather than a positive figure. By relying on Weber's chain of thought to present the events, Hermlin avoids the rather obvious depiction of a standard positive hero who will eventually win through. Similarly, the contrast between Selbmann's Anhang den Tag vorher betreffend and Reinowski's Die Versuchung is also quite noticeable. The length of time between their publication means the views given are different. Reinowski's novel follows the official view of the 1950s to the letter, the 17 June being a counterrevolutionary putsch orchestrated by the West. Selbmann, however, does not attribute the rising such a threatening air. By the time Selbmann's account appeared, the international situation, and the internal situation of the DDR itself, had reached a stage of relative stability. There was no longer any need, even in official circles, to portray the beginnings of the DDR as having been quite so difficult, but there was rather the desire to affirm the country's strengths and achievements.

Although it is probably impossible to arrive at an objective view of the events surrounding the 17 June, the literary portrayals of the rising can serve to provide a fuller picture of it. The subjectivity of the authors can help to dispel some of the myths surrounding the rising as they do not always adhere as closely to the history as the historians do. In the two fullest accounts of the rising, Das Vertrauen and Fünf Tage im Juni, portrayals of the

rising are given which are sympathetic to the DDR, but both contradict, to varying degrees, the SED's version. Neither portrayal shows the rising to have been purely a western inspired counterrevolution, but neither denies the involvement of the West to some extent. However, it would be possible to view Heym's portrayal as being the most "objective", as he does not set out to validate either one position or the other, preferring to seek his own alternative position. Nevertheless, the literary portrayals of historical themes can still be viewed as valid historical documents as they, like the history books, just present another way of looking at an historical event.

Stefan Heym's Fünf Tage im Juni has often been criticised for its uneven nature, but it nonetheless presents the most comprehensive view of the rising and is the one work that does not seek to justify either side's particular version of events. However, Stephan Hermlin's Die Kommandeuse totally supports the SED's version of the rising, but it does not suffer from the variations in quality that Heym's novel does. Although there is no correlation between supporting the SED and being a bad work of literature, as Die Kommandeuse proves, it being a very good work, there have been many attempts to prove such a relationship, especially in the case of Das Vertrauen. Nevertheless, it would be quite correct to criticise the clichéd figures and circumstances as portrayed by Hauptmann and Reinowski as detracting from the literary value of the works.

The literary portrayal of any historical event is problematic because of the different interpretations that can be applied to it. The portrayal of historical events in the literature of the DDR is more complex, however, because the author is faced with a situation where the whole literary production of the country is controlled by the state and because there are ideological considerations governing the acceptability of a work when it comes to be published. Although the themes presented in each of the portrayals are fairly standard throughout, each author applies his or her own individual interpretation to them, lending various degrees of emphasis to certain events. The result is that, although they all broadly support the SED's own particular interpretation of the rising, they do so to varying degrees. As the events are transferred to a fictional level, the authors have far more freedom to express their own interpretations of these events, even though they are based firmly in reality, as they are in effect creating a fictional world over which they have total control.

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