

DIETRICH MÜHLBERG

Was a workers' culture socially predominant in the GDR?

This article examines the question of whether the working class culture – in the 19th and 20th century, a sub- and counter-culture to bourgeois culture – had become the predominant culture of the GDR. The GDR, according to the most popular argumentation, was never influenced by the workers' culture. On the other hand, East Germany considers itself, even today, to be the »country of the common people«. The workers' culture has been repeatedly referred to as a way of life and thought in debates on the causes of the breakdown of the socialist system. This author discusses these different points of view and investigates the extent to which cultural egalitarianism could have been one of the causes for the historical failure of the socialist society.

PETER FÖRSTER

The Doubly Disappointed Generation

The article summarizes the findings of the »Saxonian Longitudinal Study«, a long-term study that began in 1987 and has traced the development of young people in East-Germany up to 2002. The main focus of the study is on young people's attitudes toward political changes in the country and German unity. The findings show that while young people are generally positive toward these changes, there is simultaneously a growing criticism and feeling of alienation towards the political system of the Federal Republic. The study also exposes the growing doubts concerning the prospects of sustainability of the prevailing social system and its abilities to solve the existential problems of humanity.

ULLA PLENER

Schumacher 1949-1952: Provoking a confrontation with the GDR – at the expense of German unity

Contrary to literature praising Kurt Schumacher's principled anticommunism and his vehement commitment to German unity, this author points out that one of overlooked causes for Schumacher's failure in the struggle for German unity, was his strict rejection of the second German post-1945 alternative – the GDR – because of his anticommunism and Russiophobia.

ERNST WURL

The Public Historical Debate and the Left – Tendencies and Problems

In the 90s, an unprecedented popular interest developed around the historical debate taking place in the Federal Republic of Germany. Two tendencies dominated: 1) a discovery of self, the question of German identity and 2) the historical verdict against the state and society of the German Democratic Republic as a whole. Both of these issues continue to play different roles in the historical debate of the German Left. The PDS, for example, is hardly present in the first tendency. But all the more vocally present in the discussion around the history of the GDR, and the SED, thereby exhausting itself in an infinite preoccupation with self.

ERIK LEHNERT

Imperialism and World Unity: Spengler's and Jaspers' Concepts of Globalization

Within the historical and philosophical reflections of Oswald Spengler and Karl Jaspers during the 1930's and 40's, the problem of the division of powers in the world played a decisive role. Today we find ourselves in a situation of worldwide consolidation and standardization that could lead to a »clash of civilizations« or the »end of history«. Through the detachment of the significant time lapse, these texts could help sharpen our view of contemporary themes and conditions. Spengler saw western culture as having attained its final stage of development, to be followed by a global conflict between the rich and the poor. Jaspers is more hopeful: he imagined the possibility of a world federation, while recognizing the risk of a world-dominating imperium. It is amazing, from a contemporary perspective, to see how applicable the statements of both Spengler and Jaspers are.

ANDREAS HEYER

Georg Kerner. From the revolutionary to the physician

Georg Kerner was one of the most interesting persons of the French Revolution. He plays an active role in this period of time, but he was also one of the most influential Critics of the »Terreur«. He was disappointed by the course of the French Revolution and also by the end of the Revolution through Napoleon. He left France and went to Hamburg, where he works as a physician. His books and his acts were the monuments of his life.