

That was the GDR: the Other Germany. Das Alltagsleben in der DDR kennenlernen (KI.10)

Nach Ideen von Manuel Köhler, Würzburg



Trabis – the symbol of the GDR

Welches System steuerte das wirtschaftliche, gesellschaftliche und politische Leben in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik? Wie sicherte die SED ihre Alleinherrschaft? Und wie sah der Widerstand gegen die Staatsführung aus?

Anhand von schriftlichen und bildlichen Quellen, informativen Sachtexten sowie Internetrecherchen beschäftigen sich die Schüler mit dem Alltagsleben in der DDR. Sie erarbeiten sich wichtige Einblicke in die Arbeits- und Lebensbedingungen der Menschen sowie in die manipulativen Methoden der Staatsführung.

Klassenstufe: 10

Dauer: 4 Stunden

Bereich: Deutschland nach 1945, DDR

Kompetenzen:

- die Funktionsweisen des Kommunismus, des Sozialismus und der Planwirtschaft erläutern
- die Bedeutung der Stasi als Instrument der staatlichen Machtsicherung erkennen
- Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen der Menschen in der DDR beschreiben
- die Bedeutung der Methoden staatlicher Beeinflussung erklären
- Formen des Widerstandes gegenüber dem Staat nennen
- in Grundzügen die Ursachen für das Scheitern der DDR erläutern

Verlaufsübersicht zur Reihe

1. Stunde: How did the political system of the GDR function?

2./3. Stunde: How was everyday life in the GDR?

4. Stunde: Why did the GDR fail?

Verlaufsübersicht zu den Stunden

1. Stunde: How did the political system of the GDR function?

Material	Verlauf
M 1	The beginning of the end – the 40th birthday of the GDR / Beschreiben und Deuten einer historischen Fotoaufnahme; Internetrecherche
M 2	The political system of the GDR / Erarbeiten kurzer Sachtexte; Beantworten von Fragen zum Text
M 3	Life in the GDR – state-controlled economy / Betrachten und Analysieren einer historischen Fotoaufnahme; Erarbeiten eines Sachtextes
M 4	Consolidation of power by the SED (Socialist Uniform Party) – the Stasi (State Security Police) / Erarbeiten eines Sachtextes; Recherchieren im Internet; Beantworten von Fragen zum Text

2./3. Stunde: How was everyday life in the GDR?

Material	Verlauf
M 5	To each his own flat – the Plattenbauten (prefabricated-slab buildings) / Analysieren einer historischen Fotoaufnahme; Recherchieren im Internet
M 6	The state take care of you – work and holidays / Erarbeiten von Sachtexten; Analysieren der Fotoaufnahmen; Erstellen eines Lernplakats in Partnerarbeit
M 7	Indoctrination from early on – day care and Kindergarten / Analysieren eines Sachtextes und einer historischen Fotoaufnahme und Beantworten von Fragen zum Text in Gruppenarbeit; Präsentieren der Ergebnisse
M 8	Indoctrination from early on – school / Analysieren eines Sachtextes und Beantworten von Fragen zum Text in Gruppenarbeit; Präsentieren der Ergebnisse
M 9	Indoctrination from early on – leisure time / Analysieren eines Sachtextes und historischer Fotoaufnahmen, Recherchieren im Internet, Beantworten von Fragen zum Text in Gruppenarbeit; Präsentieren der Ergebnisse

4. Stunde: Why did the GDR fail?

Material	Verlauf
M 10	Was there any resistance against state measures? / Analysieren eines Fotos und einiger Gedichtzeilen; Erarbeiten eines Sachtextes; Erstellen eines Tafelbildes
M 11	Why did the GDR fail? – A non-fictional text / Analysieren eines Sachtextes; Beantworten von Fragen zum Text; Ergänzen des Tafelbildes
M 12	Why did the GDR fail? – Historical sources and Internet research / Analysieren von Bild- und Textquellen; Recherchieren im Internet; Ergänzen des Tafelbildes

Materialübersicht

Overview (Fo) Photos: Life in the GDR (zu M 1, M 5 und M 9)

1. Stunde: **How did the political system of the GDR function?**

M 1	(Ab)	The beginning of the end – the 40 th birthday of the GDR
M 2	(Tx)	The political system of the GDR
M 3	(Tx)	Life in the GDR – state-controlled economy
M 4	(Tx)	Consolidation of power by the SED – the <i>Stasi</i>

2./3. Stunde: **How was everyday life in the GDR?**

M 5	(Bi/Tx)	To each his own flat – the <i>Plattenbauten</i>
M 6	(Bi/Tx)	The state takes care of you – work and holidays
M 7	(Tx)	Indoctrination from early on – day care and Kindergarten
M 8	(Tx)	Indoctrination from early on – school
M 9	(Bi/Tx)	Indoctrination from early on – leisure time

4. Stunde: **Why did the GDR fail?**

M 10	(Tx)	Was there any resistance against state measures?
M 11	(Tx)	Why did the GDR fail?
M 12	(Bi/Tx)	Why did the GDR fail? – Historical sources and Internet research

Lernerfolgskontrolle

M 13	(Ab)	Test your knowledge! – Word search on everyday life in the GDR
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Ab: Arbeitsblatt; **Bi:** Bildimpuls; **Fo:** Farbfolie; **Tx:** Text

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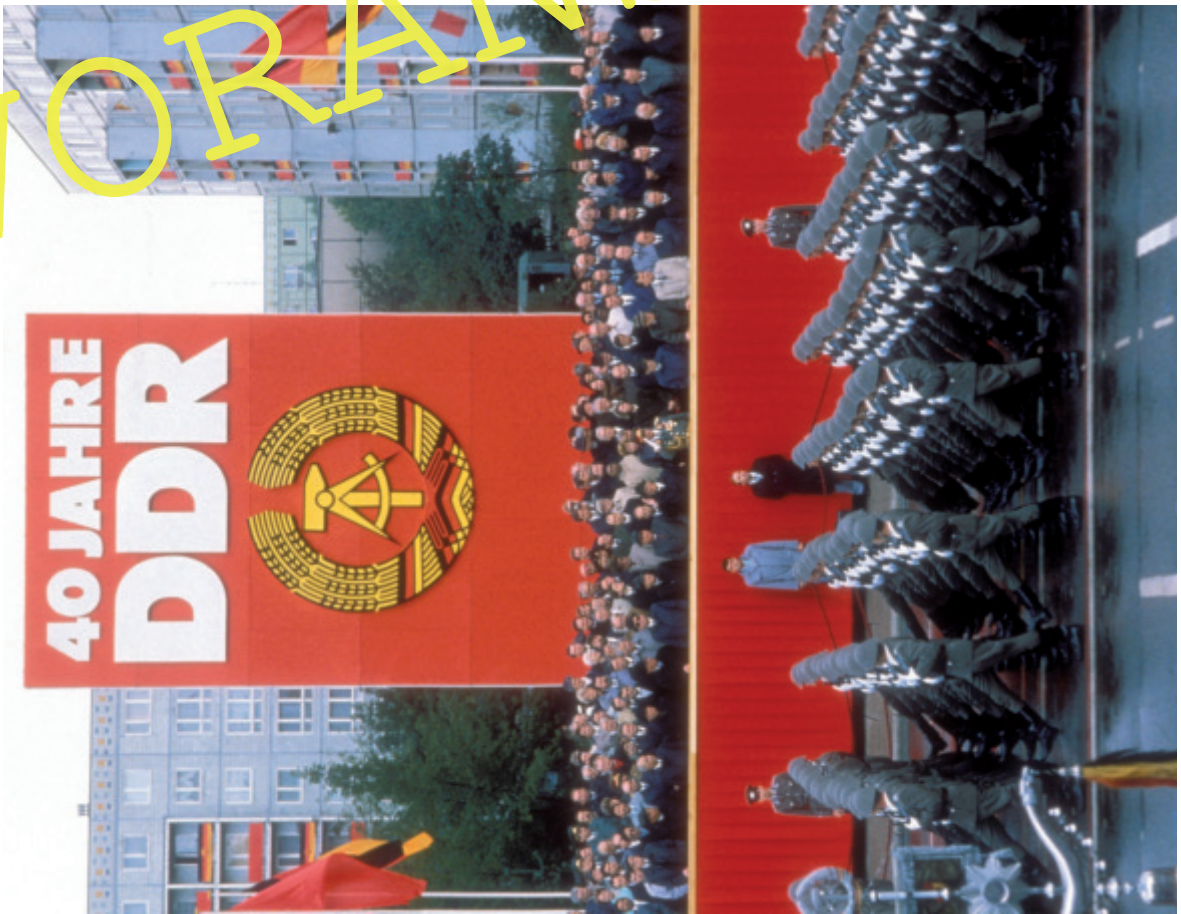


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VORANSICHT

Photos: Life in the GDR



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M 4 Consolidation¹ of power by the SED – the *Stasi* (State Security Police)

Despite all contrary affirmations² by the people in charge³, the German Democratic Republic was a dictatorship. Political power was not separated into several branches that were controlled by a parliament, an independent constitutional court⁴ or a free press. All power came from the leading elite of the SED. The *Stasi*, the State Security Police, played a major role to ensure the party's power.

The *Stasi* was considered the “shield and sword“ of the party. Its goal was to stop any behaviour of individuals that could be dangerous for the state. Anyone who criticised or merely publicly doubted the government, the socialist ideology or the *SED*, could expect to be tracked and monitored by the *Stasi*.

The methods of the *Stasi* were criminal and violated human and personal rights: control of mail, interception⁵ of telephone calls, house searches⁶, threats and intimidations⁷. With these measures that were unrestrictedly⁸ approved by the state, the *Stasi* members tracked down critics of the system. The state severely punished⁹ any kind of criticism. Occupational bans¹⁰ and imprisonment were the order of the day.

Whoever planned and tried to cross the border to the west illegally was imprisoned for republic escape¹¹ for many years. However, anyone who helped the *Stasi* by denouncing others was rewarded with a bigger flat or a job promotion. At the end of the 1980s, about 300,000 people officially or unofficially worked for the *Stasi* as informers.



Did you know ...

... that the death penalty existed in the GDR? Until 1981, it was probably enforced 164 times. Sex offenders and murderers were executed, but also persons who were convicted of espionage. For example, *Stasi* Commanding Officer Werner Teske was shot in 1981, because he tried to defect to the west with secret documents.

Annotations

1 **consolidation**: Festigung – 2 **affirmation**: hier: Behauptung – 3 **people in charge**: hier: die Machthaber – 4 **independent constitutional court**: das unabhängige Verfassungsgericht – 5 **interception**: hier: das Abhören – 6 **house search**: die Hausdurchsuchung – 7 **intimidation**: Einschüchterung – 8 **unrestricted**: uneingeschränkt – 9 **severely punished**: schwer bestraft – 10 **occupational ban**: Berufsverbot – 11 **republic escape**: Republikflucht

Tasks

1. Read the text carefully.
2. Name the task of the *Stasi*.
3. Describe how the *Stasi* implemented its task.

Extra task:

4. Go to www.wn.de. In the search bar, type „Zeitzeuge berichtet über Stasi-Willkür“. Read this article carefully. By considering the fate of the dissenter mentioned in the article, illustrate how powerful and criminal the *Stasi* was.

M 7 Indoctrination from early on – day care¹ and Kindergarten

In socialism, women, just like men, should work in order to make their contribution to a family income and to the growth of the economy. Thus, it was the task of the state to offer sufficient day care and places in a kindergarten for its offspring². In this way, the state could have significant influence on education. Until the end of the GDR, the state could provide almost all children with a substantial care.

Everything was done together

From early on, the state taught its values. Educational work in day cares and kindergartens was in line with the community. Individuality, creativity and independence were not desired. Children had to subordinate themselves.

Eating, sleeping, playing and sports were all done together, at the same time. The daily routine was exactly fixed in time. Children in day cares were looked after all day and thus brought up as defined by the state. Many institutions were open up to 10 hours. The state took care of all expenses, parents paid nothing.



The everyday walk with the day care.

© Ina Go/Ulrich Hässler

Annotation

1 **day care:** Kindertagesstätte

Did you know ...

... that all day cares in the GDR were equipped and furnished with the same materials and toys? The socialist method of education envisaged that all children were to be brought up according to fixed plans down to the last detail in terms of equality and community.

Tasks

1. Look at the picture carefully and read the text.
2. Explain the basic goals the GDR pursued by offering full-time day cares.
3. Describe the methods of education in the state-run day cares in the GDR.
4. Give reasons why former citizens of the GDR consider the day cares as positive today.

M 10 Was there any resistance against state measures?

Since the founding of the GDR, the state had never left any doubt that the socialist system was installed and carried out even with arbitrariness¹ and suppression. As a result, people left their country in droves². The GDR regime put a stop to this stream of fleeing people by building the Berlin wall and the inner German border installations. Some subsequently³ profited from this system. Others retreated into private life, into a secure "niche" and came to terms⁴ with themselves. Only a few offered resistance despite the threat of Stasi surveillance as well as the subsequent professional and social discrimination.

Songwriter and opposition member

Criticism, disputes and protest rallies are essential marks of a democracy. Other opinions are allowed and may be expressed in public. However, in the GDR there was the *SED* as the only party in power, others were excluded or even prohibited. Thus, no political opposition in form of parties existed.

- 5 Yet, there were people, mostly artists, who openly criticised the system. One of the most famous is the singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann. In his songs, he openly questioned the socialist system. Again and again, the regime issued⁵ temporary stage bans⁶ against him. In addition, before publication, he had to submit all his songs to a state-run inspection authority⁷. Many of his songs failed this censorship⁸ and were prohibited. Nevertheless, Biermann performed without permission again and again.
- 10 At some point, the state had to react to this ongoing provocation. In November 1976, Biermann travelled to a concert in the FRG. Just like top athletes, some artists were allowed to travel abroad for professional reasons under strict conditions. In his absence, the GDR leadership decided to denationalise⁹ him. Biermann was not allowed to return to his family in the GDR. In this way, the regime believed they could get rid of¹⁰ members of the opposition.

Ach Freund, geht es nicht auch dir so?
(1969)

Ich kann nur lieben,
was ich die Freiheit habe,
auch zu verlassen:
dieses Land
diese Stadt
diese Frau
dieses Leben [...]

„Mit Marx und Engelszungen. Gedichte – Balladen – Lieder“, Berlin 1968.

Source: https://bildungsserver.berlin-brandenburg.de/fileadmin/havemann/docs/material/49_M.pdf

Annotations

1 **arbitrariness**: Willkür – 2 **in droves**: in Scharen – 3 **subsequently**: in der Folge – 4 **to come to terms**: sich arrangieren, abfinden – 5 **to issue**: herausgeben – 6 **stage ban**: Auftrittsverbot – 7 **state-run inspection authority**: staatliche Kontrollbehörde – 8 **censorship**: Zensur – 9 **to denationalise**: ausbürgern – 10 **to get rid of**: loswerden

Tasks

1. Read the Text and the first verse of Biermann's poem and describe how opposition in the GDR was possible.
2. Explain what Wolf Biermann criticises quite openly in his poem.
3. With a partner, discuss whether the expatriation really ended the opposition. Use Wolf Biermann as an example. Justify your opinions.