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978-0-521-86651-4 - Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic

Andrew I. Port

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## Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic

Why did the German Democratic Republic last for so long – longer, in fact, than the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich combined? This book looks at various political, social, and economic conflicts at the grass roots of the GDR in an attempt to answer this question and account for regime stability. A local study, it examines opposition and discontent in Saalfeld, an important industrial and agricultural district. Based on previously inaccessible primary sources as well as on interviews with local residents, the book offers a novel explanation for the durability of the regime by looking at how authorities tried to achieve harmony and consensus through negotiation and compromise. At the same time, it shows how official policies created deep-seated social cleavages that promoted stability by hindering East Germans from presenting a united front to authorities when mounting opposition or pressing for change. All of this provides an indirect answer to perhaps the major question of the postwar period: Why did the Cold War last as long as it did?

Andrew I. Port is an assistant professor of History at Wayne State University in Detroit. He earned a Ph.D. in history from Harvard University and a B.A. in history from Yale University. He has published articles in *Social History* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, as well as chapters in several edited volumes.

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ANDREW I. PORT

*Wayne State University*



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*...so sind die Vorgänge und die Geschichte eines Dorfes und die eines Reiches im Wesentlichen dieselben; und man kann am Einen wie am Anderen die Menschheit studieren und kennen lernen.*

... the events and history of a village and of a kingdom are essentially the same; and we can study and learn to know humanity just as well in the one as in the other.

–Arthur Schopenhauer

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## Acknowledgments

This book began the night the Berlin Wall fell. I had graduated from college several months earlier and moved to West Berlin to study history at the Free University, and I was spending the evening chatting with friends in a café when the news suddenly broke on the radio. That very night, and over the next two years, I traveled as often as I could to the eastern half of Germany, where I tried to learn from East Germans as much as possible about what their lives had been like under “real-existing socialism.” This personal experience largely explains why I decided to attend graduate school and become a trained historian, and why I later chose to write a dissertation on the history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The following study is a substantially revised version of that dissertation, which I wrote at Harvard University under the superb direction of Charles Maier, David Blackbourn, and – on loan, so to speak, from the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, Germany – Lutz Niethammer. Their own work and ways of thinking about history have long served as an inspiration and model, and I thank them wholeheartedly for their many years of support and guidance.

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skilled stewardship of Marc Kruman, the Department of History has provided a nurturing environment that made completion of this study possible.

Some of the material in this book has previously appeared elsewhere. Chapter 2 is a revised version of “When Workers Rumbled: The Wismut Upheaval of August 1951 in East Germany,” *Social History* 22 (1997): 145–73. Sections of Chapters 5 and 7 were originally published in “The ‘Grumble *Gesellschaft*’: Industrial Defiance and Worker Protest in Early East Germany,” in Peter Hübner and Klaus Tenfelde, eds., *Arbeiter in der SBZ–DDR* (Klartext: Essen, 1999), 787–810.<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the publishers, Taylor and Francis (<http://www.tandf.co.uk>) and Ludger Claßen of the Klartext Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, respectively, for their kind permission to use that material here. I am also grateful to Gerhard Werner, the former director of the Stadtmuseum in Saalfeld, for permission to use his map of the district; Claudia Streitberger, who also works at the museum, helped me find and obtain permission to use photographs of Saalfeld from the postwar period. Wilfried Peper kindly granted me access to the Maxhütte Archiv in Unterwellenborn, and Katrin Beger of the Thüringisches Staatsarchiv Rudolstadt went out of her way to assist me in locating an abundance of useful material. The other archivists in the former East German archives also merit mention: Many of them taught me more about the way in which the GDR functioned than any document I came across.

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid any possible confusion: Several sections of this article also appeared – in somewhat altered form and without quotation or acknowledgment – in Corey Ross, *Constructing Socialism at the Grass Roots: The Transformation of East Germany, 1945–1965* (Houndsmill, UK, 2000), 7, 95–7, 99–100, 167. According to an e-mail that I received from Ross on February 26, 2004, the approximately one dozen disturbing parallels in wording and content were the unintentional result of “naiveté” and “carelessness.”

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Nuremberg, Germany, July 2006

## Abbreviations

ABI	Arbeiter–und-Bauern–Inspektionen
ABV	Abschnittsbevollmächtigte
ACDP	Archiv für Christlich–Demokratische Politik in der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., Sankt Augustin
ADL	Archiv des Deutschen Liberalismus in der Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, Gummersbach
AdsD	Archiv der sozialen Demokratie in der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn
AfS	<i>Archiv für Sozialgeschichte</i>
AGL	Abteilungsgewerkschaftsleitung
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
APO	Abteilungsparteiorganisation
APuZ	<i>Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte</i>
AWG	Arbeiterwohnungsbaugenossenschaften
BACZ	Betriebsarchiv Carl Zeiss
BA-P	Bundesarchiv, Abteilung Potsdam
BDVP	Bezirksbehörde der Deutschen Volkspolizei
Ber.	Bericht
Bez.	Bezirk
BG	Betriebsgruppe
BGL	Betriebsgewerkschaftsleitung
BKV	Betriebskollektivvertrag
BL	Bezirksleitung
BM	Bürgermeister
BPKK	Bezirksparteikontrollkommission
BPL	Betriebsparteileitung
BPO	Betriebsparteiorganisation
BStU ASt-G	Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR, Außenstelle Gera

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*Abbreviations*

BV	Belegschaftsversammlung, Betriebsversammlung
CDU	Christlich–Demokratische Union Deutschlands
DA	<i>Deutschland Archiv</i>
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik
DFD	Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands
EOS	Erweiterte Oberschule
FDGB	Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend
GDR	German Democratic Republic
Gen.	Genosse
Gew.	Gewerkschaft
GG	<i>Geschichte und Gesellschaft</i>
GO	Grundorganisation
GST	Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik
HaNaGe	Handel-Nahrung-Genuss
HO	Handelsorganisation
IB	Informationsbericht
IG	Industriegewerkschaft
ILWCH	<i>International Labor and Working-Class History</i>
IM	Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter
JHK	<i>Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung</i>
KD	Kreisdienststelle
KG	Kommanditgesellschaft
KL	Kreisleitung
KOM	Kraftomnibus
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
KPKK	Kreisparteikontrollkommission
Kr.	Kreis
KR	Kreisrat
KrA-S	Kreisarchiv Saalfeld
KV	Kreisverwaltung, Kreisvorstand
KVP	Kasernierte Volkspolizei
LDPD	Liberal–Demokratische Partei Deutschlands
LEB	Landeseigene Betriebe
LPG	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft
LPKK	Landesparteikontrollkommission
LS	Leitungssitzung
LV	Landesverwaltung
Maxh.	Maxhütte
MB	Maschinen-Betrieb
MEW	Mitteldeutsches Elektromotorenwerk
Mitgl.	Mitglied
MTS	Maschinen–Traktoren–Station
MV	Mitgliederversammlung
MxA-U	Maxhütte Archiv Unterwellenborn

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n.d.	no date
NDPD	National–Demokratische Partei Deutschlands
Niederschr.	Niederschrift
NÖS	Neues Ökonomisches System
n.p.	no place
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
NVA	Nationale Volksarmee
PB	Produktionsberatung
PO	Parteiorganisation
Prot.	Protokoll
PV	Produktionsversammlung
SAG	Sowjetische Aktiengesellschaft
SAPMO-BA	Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv Berlin
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
Sekr.	Sekretariat
Sitz.	Sitzung
Slf	Saalfeld
SMAD	Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SStA-C	Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Chemnitz
StA-S	Stadtarchiv Saalfeld
SV	Sozialversicherung
TAN	Technisch begründete Arbeitsnorm
ThHStA-W	Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar
ThStA-R	Thüringisches Staatsarchiv Rudolstadt
Thür.	Thüringen
TSW	Thüringer Schokoladenwerk
UACZ	Unternehmensarchiv der Carl Zeiss Jena GmbH
VdgB	Verein der gegenseitigen Bauernhilfe
VEB	Volkseigener Betrieb
VfZ	<i>Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte</i>
VPKA	Volkspolizeikreisamt
WA	Wohnungsamt
Wema	Werkzeugmaschinenfabrik
WL	Werkleiter, Werkleitung
ZAWG	Zentralarbeiterwohnungsbaugenossenschaft
ZfG	<i>Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft</i>
ZPKK	Zentralparteikontrollkommission

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The original German titles have been provided for all documents cited in the footnotes, which use the British dating system. If the document had no title, a short descriptive phrase is provided in English. Many of the document folders from the Maxhütte factory archive had no call number at the time they were consulted. The names and dates written on the covers of those folders have been provided instead.

Those wanting further documentation and examples in support of the individual points made in this book should consult the original dissertation upon which it is based: “Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic: A Study in Accommodation and Working-Class Fragmentation, 1945–1971” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2000).

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