

The Children of Antifascism

Exploring Young Historians Clubs in the GDR

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In 1982, a ninth grader named Anna from Eberswalde-Finow composed an essay in which she recounted one of the most influential moments in her life. One might have expected a description of a triumphant victory at a swim meet or gymnastics competition. Instead, Anna described a day four years earlier when she was formally inducted into a special club at her school. The initiation ceremony took place at an historical site laden with a disturbing legacy, the former concentration camp of Ravensbrück. Anna remembered the moment when she became a card-carrying member of the young military historians:

The leader of our collective approached me and gave me my identity card and the sign of the club. My eyes filled with tears of joy and my heart began to beat ever louder. I was very happy to be a member of a club which looks at the life and works of antifascist resistance fighters.¹

The tell-tale signs of group membership are readily visible in Anna's essay, an identity card, a special club signal, and initiation ceremony. Yet, how can one explain group membership in a youth organization dedicated to the memory of antifascist resistance fighters?

The club that Anna joined was a specialized form of a young historians club (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Junge Historiker*), a voluntary youth group that emerged as a primary forum for spreading the state-sanctioned memory of the antifascist struggle among receptive school children. Not all young historians' projects dealt with antifascism, but this theme dominated all other historical topics especially at conferences and competitions.² Modeled in part on history clubs already in existence in Poland³ and the Soviet Union, groups in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from 1949 to 1989 developed

Catherine Plum

their own unique features. The hybrid form of young historians clubs found in East Germany were positioned between schools rooted in native traditions and the official communist youth organizations which borrowed heavily from their Soviet counterparts.

Few researchers have investigated the history and activities of these youth organizations which were established at schools, youth centers and some museums and summer camps. While there is some scholarship already available on antifascist commemoration as part of the official youth organizations and the *Jugendweihe* coming-of-age ceremony,⁴ the voluntary young historians clubs offer a revealing window into the prevalence and relative depth of youth interest in the regime's favored heroes—Soviet antifascists and the German communist activists who were said to have saved Germany's honor during the Nazi period and World War II. The antifascist theme is a useful analytical tool for researching students who not only accepted socialist values and historical interpretations but advanced them in their own right in their leisure time. This article focuses on the history of young historians clubs from their origins in the 1950s through their highpoint in the 1970s and early 1980s and the final years under communist rule. At the end, I address an increase in skepticism among youth in truths proclaimed by the regime, which corresponds with a moderate decrease in the number of active young historians clubs towards the end of the regime.

The 1999 fictional comedy *Sonnenallee* presents two East German teenagers growing up in the 1970s who are not members of a young historians club and who fail to respect and uphold antifascist principles and other socialist values. With their own bodily fluids, the two teenage boys desecrate the “antifascist wall” that divided East and West Berlin. To these youth, the wall is a physical barrier to the music and entertainment venues of the West that mean much more to them than the socialist values preached to them in school. Most students, however, lived a less colorful and confrontational existence, demonstrating a more selective questioning of the lived socialist experience and the Marxist-Leninist view of the past, present, and future. Studies of political antifascism tend to assume a much broader rejection of antifascism among school-age youth and GDR citizens in general than was actually the case historically.⁵ Across the decades of communist rule, most students found state-sponsored antifascism to be a neces-

The Children of Antifascism

sary and important theme, even if they viewed forms of commemoration and education as increasingly repetitive and formulaic. This article explores succeeding generations of GDR youth out of which young historians clubs formed. Factors such as age, generation, political persuasion and adult mentorship affected youth interest in becoming a member of a club. In the first decade of the GDR, the goal of building socialism in an antifascist state inspired many young people of different ages. By the 1980s, teens especially were increasingly caught in a web of mixed views and emotions, skeptical about truth in media and impatient with the slow progress of the socialist promise. Nevertheless they generally possessed a sense of GDR national identity and a shared history not so very different from the state-sanctioned interpretation of history found in textbooks.

Young historians clubs in East Germany provide both a comparison and a counterpoint to antifascist commemoration and education in West Germany. East German students experienced both a formal, textbook-driven antifascist education and antifascist youth culture much earlier than their West German counterparts. Soon after East Germany was founded, communist leaders appropriated the story of communist resistance against National Socialism to legitimate their new government and to establish a sense of continuity between the new socialist regime and the recent past. The creation of an historical continuity and a new sense of national identity were crucial in light of East Germany's artificial borders and the rapid establishment of new political institutions competing with the West German model. The Federal Republic also presented itself as an antifascist state, but it primarily focused on military, Christian, and humanitarian resistance against National Socialism. In-depth coverage of the Nazi period and antifascist resistance was not widespread in textbooks and classroom lessons until the 1980s in the West. Similarities between East and West come to light with respect to educators' involvement with local history projects. Some of the first West German teachers to actively investigate the local history of National Socialism began to figuratively and sometimes literally dig up the past in the late 1970s and early 1980s through local history and civics groups in cities such as Konstanz and West Berlin.⁶ East German pedagogues emphasized the utility of investigating local history at an early stage, such that the rise in local historical associations in

Catherine Plum

West Germany corresponds with the highpoint of the young historians movement as East German teachers and volunteers coordinated an increasing number of clubs in the 1970s. In West Germany the history workshop (*Geschichtswerkstatt*) movement was primarily confined to teachers and high school students alongside other amateur and professional historians,⁷ whereas the young historians clubs in East Germany usually consisted of younger students in the middle school years. A West German equivalent of a young historians movement is not readily apparent because there were too few clubs available for younger students.

The Foundation of Young Historians Clubs with Adult Sponsorship

Educators and students established some of the first young historians clubs and related organizations in the early 1950s. During this early stage, clubs developed under multiple names, such as the young tourists and local history researchers (*Heimatforscher*). With time most clubs of this sort called themselves the young historians Clubs. The young historians were officially promoted through a 1952 directive of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED), with the goal of improving the study of history.⁸ By 1956, there were 816 registered young historians clubs at the 9,806 elementary and middle schools and ninety pioneer houses in the GDR.⁹ By the late 1980s, approximately one in every three schools in the districts of Magdeburg and Leipzig had an active Young historians club according to the communist youth organization, the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ).¹⁰ Young historians clubs were more prevalent in some of the fifteen administrative districts in the GDR than others. One explanation for early regional differences in the growth of young historians clubs lies in the extent to which district administrators pushed for their foundation, monitored their activities and suggested activities. School administrators in the district of Potsdam, for example, attempted to exert a considerable amount of pressure on schools under their jurisdiction. In a letter sent to local school administrators in December 1952, a district supervisor made the suggestion that

teachers at the school recruit the best students and pioneers from other clubs to join the young historians. He also advised schools to coordinate the work plans of all school clubs with the plan for the young historians club.¹¹ The district of Potsdam witnessed an early attempt to found fairly elitist clubs that would set the agenda and focus of the entire school. Ultimately, few young historians clubs carried an elitist status. Clubs sprang up at schools and other institutions with the timely convergence of an organized and creative adult mentor and interested students. Students involved in the club tended to be in grades five through eight, although there were some clubs for students in the higher grades as well. The clubs based at schools typically met about three times a month.¹²

Adult youth group leaders were essential for the foundation of young historians clubs and the growth and expansion of their activities. In the mid 1950s most of the leaders were in fact history teachers who volunteered to organize and run the club.¹³ In later decades, teachers continued to play a significant leadership role. Statistics from the districts of Berlin and Frankfurt from 1970 confirm that some 70 to 80 percent of club leaders were teachers.¹⁴ Indeed, the success of a young historians club depended to a large extent on the personality, inspiration and foresight of the adult advisor. Reflecting on the thirteen-year history of a young military historians club, a group leader made the following statement about the role of the advisor:

The most important thing is that the club leader really radiates in his duties with the students, because only then can he continually motivate and excite members of the club, helping them to find the pleasure of their research projects, the joy of learning and an interest in creative pursuits.¹⁵

In the same document, the veteran club leader also noted that the adult advisor should never forget that he is interacting with children, who after working hard at school desire to have fun and enjoy laughter.¹⁶

While leaders of young historians clubs shared a common interest in inspiring student interest in historical topics, they differed markedly in their design of projects and their assessment of club members' abilities, all of which affected the success of the group. Many group leaders questioned whether the primary intent of the club should be to collect artifacts from the past or conduct research. In a letter to the Ministry of Education composed in 1953, a leader of a young

Catherine Plum

historians club in Schwerin district notes that one should be very careful about using the word “research” (*forschen*) with respect to the activities of children. According to the youth group leader in Parchim, children cannot really learn anything that is not already known to the local residents.¹⁷ In contrast to this viewpoint, in a written statement prepared in 1955, a history teacher at an elementary school near Dresden outlines the parameters of this debate and maintains that students in fact can pursue worthwhile research projects. Indeed, he argues that if the club leader fails to believe in students’ abilities to conduct research, then the club’s restricted activities will not be very interesting to students.¹⁸

Club Activities and Student Initiative

Under the guidance of adult mentors, young historians clubs in East Germany became involved in a variety of research projects that were typically connected to the history of antifascism. This focus on antifascism and other aspects of the working class’ historic struggle was pushed repeatedly by administrators after teachers in the early 1950s selected some historical themes outside of the master narrative.¹⁹ Groups that explored antifascist themes often focused on the history of local resistance figures or the troop movements of the Soviet army in their area. Students’ research could lead them to city or district archives to conduct research or inspire them to interview historical eye witnesses. In the 1950s, plans for the work of young historians and similar groups included the task of creating school, town, or village chronicles that explored the history of the schools or the locale from their foundation through the present day.²⁰ These chronicles normally included a section on the school or the local community under National Socialism and, thus, advanced antifascist themes. Additionally, an early guide for the work of young historians clubs suggests that in conjunction with the official youth organizations, the clubs should take care of cemeteries and memorials for fallen Soviet soldiers and foreign slave laborers who perished during the Third Reich.²¹ In some cases, students played a role in seeking out and interviewing former resistance fighters or Soviet war veterans either in person or via correspondence. For example, in the mid

1970s members of the young historians club associated with the Young Pioneer House Berlin-Treptow wrote to Soviet military personnel who helped with the construction of the Treptower Park memorial and to some of the surviving family members of men buried at that site. In an interview, a former member of the club maintained that personal interactions with historical eyewitnesses were the most rewarding part of the research—far more important than the concrete factual information obtained.²²

In addition to designing oral history projects, many young historians clubs also participated in school campaigns to take on honorary namesakes. In selecting predominantly the names of antifascist resisters, East German schools were similar to their counterparts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which were also taking on the names of noteworthy figures from the history of the working classes. In conjunction with the namesake campaign, schools frequently constructed a tradition room, cabinet, or corner to showcase images, documents, and research related to the school's namesake and his or her cause. History teachers and students involved in the club often provided the creative energy and labor for such displays. By 1975, some 176 schools in Berlin had tradition rooms or cabinets of some sort.²³ In addition to images of the namesake and fellow resisters, exhibits commonly featured research projects, school chronicles, a register of student award recipients, certificates of school-wide achievements, correspondence with family members of the namesake, and the symbols and flags of the communist youth organizations. Busts created by professional artists along with student artwork and handmade displays combined to form a distinctive visual and tangible manifestation of the youth antifascist movement.

Whether young historians clubs researched their school namesake or channeled their energy into another project, the groups varied with respect to the degree of student control over the club's research focus. Typically, the adult leader would suggest a research topic. These volunteers often had a strong knowledge of local history and historical sites, as well as archives students could utilize. For example, the young historians club of the Young Pioneer House Berlin-Treptow was originally founded by the father of a student at a local school. An historian by trade, the father suggested that children in his daughter's class research the history of the Soviet monument in Treptower Park

Catherine Plum

in order to fulfill the mission (*Pionierauftrag*) that the Thälmann Pioneer Organization issued for the year 1974-75. Students were somewhat skeptical at first, but soon became quite interested in the research project. With time, these students formed a formal club that remained an active group for years.²⁴ In an earlier case in the late 1960s, students at the Diesterweg Polytechnical School in Burgstädt were quite divided on what sort of a history project they wanted to undertake. Some were interested in historical excavations, while others wanted to study the history of their town in its founding years. In this particular case, the club leader took command and informed students that it was the duty of club members to study the local history of the workers' movement. After some discussion, the leader's influence was decisive and the club ended up focusing on the lives of local "activists-of-the-first hour," communists and often antifascist fighters who helped to restore order and stability in Soviet-occupied territory right after the end of World War II.²⁵ While the research focus of a young historians club may have coincided with the Pioneer or FDJ theme for the year or originated with an adult advisor or local party leader,²⁶ a 1972 article in *Geschichte und Staatsbürgerkunde* emphasized that students needed to have the feeling at every meeting that their ideas and their plans were being implemented.²⁷

Stories preserved from a number of young historians clubs suggest that some highly committed students served as role models for their classmates and enhanced the antifascist education of their peers in their own right. Education administrators viewed young historians as quasi-educators and teachers' assistants as early as the 1950s, anticipating that young historians clubs would find and create educational materials useful in the history classroom. This idea may have been popular early on because of the paucity of educational materials. Students did in fact serve as quasi-educators when they gave tours of the history museums they created or tours of local historical sites. For instance, in the late 1950s young historians at the Friedrich Schiller School in Ronneberg constructed a museum in the school's basement that eventually occupied eight rooms. Students catalogued all objects on display and even monitored the temperature and humidity level. Young historian members then gave tours to their fellow classmates.²⁸ The young historians group in Ronneberg was just one of several clubs that offered tours of a school

museum, a local museum, or their local environs for other students and local residents.²⁹

To be truly effective in their schools, young historians clubs needed to command the respect and attention of their peers. Some clubs succeeded in this endeavor and others did not. In the case of the young historians club associated with the Young Pioneers House Berlin-Treptow discussed above, a few students initially snickered at the idea of participating in a club that focused on history. Nevertheless, twelve students sharing a similar political perspective and interest in history came together to form the club. Not all students were at the top of their class academically—the group was mixed rather than elitist. Within a few years club members could point to articles published about their research efforts and a book published by their advisor with their assistance.³⁰ Yet, some administrators concerned about the success of young historians clubs complained that all too often students were not aware of the research projects that fellow pupils pursued.³¹ The example of the club from Berlin-Treptow suggests that there were cases where fellow students could not help but to hear about the research efforts of the young historians. Moreover, when young historians clubs constructed tradition rooms and corners, their research efforts took on a physical presence in schools. In many respects, young historians clubs competed well with other academic extracurricular activities, such as competitions in math and Russian language skills. One can well imagine that if the club leader was popular with students, the club may have been looked upon favorably by students not directly involved in the club itself.

Storytellers, the Master Narrative and Alternative Narratives

From the early stages of a project through its completion, club members' experiences depended to a great extent on the adults who guided them as club leaders, historical eyewitnesses, museum workers and archivists. To evoke and analyze young people's experiences, it is important to pose several questions regarding the worldview and relative independence of these adult role models and the content and character of the narratives they crafted. To what

Catherine Plum

extent did adults require that young historians restrict their research projects to themes related to the historic struggle of the working classes? In exploring the topic of antifascism, were there times when marginalized themes such as Jewish persecution and resistance came to the surface?

Since most of the group leaders were history teachers, institutions with young historians clubs employed a select population that overwhelmingly believed in the regime and its master historical narratives following a linear Marxist-Leninist paradigm. In the 1950s, history teachers included recently hired teachers (*Neulehrer*) and individuals who had survived the purge conducted during the Soviet occupation period or who had been reinstated. The *Neulehrer*, tending to be young and politically reliable, were chosen more for their political convictions than their qualifications. Novice teachers at first, the *Neulehrer* had the party to thank for their positions and they were structurally dependent upon the SED.³² History teachers were often party members.³³ Also in future years, students who typically went into the field of history were individuals who overwhelmingly accepted and internalized the master narratives promoted by the regime and found in history textbooks. A former history teacher, leader of a young historians club and professor of history education, Wendelin Szalai explained his own worldview in the following manner:

I naturally accepted the “truth-monopoly” of socialist ideology within GDR/SED socialism ... due to comfort and out of cowardice and perhaps fear. At the same time ... self-praise and self satisfaction worked together more or less according to the following basic pattern: We belong to the victors of history ... Increasingly we know and control the laws governing social development. We refute other views as fallacy or false history. We are more antifascist and peace-loving than the FRG.

Szalai notes further that it was not until the mid 1980s at the earliest that he let himself begin to openly question socialist interpretations of history and the principal structures and mechanisms of the GDR system.³⁴

Similar to journalists, filmmakers, and some artists, teachers consciously and often unconsciously practiced self-censorship or “censorship without censors.”³⁵ They generally followed curriculum plans even though they were infrequently observed, and when they

designed special class projects or young historians club activities, they typically focused on topics the regime wholeheartedly approved. Thus, it would have been highly exceptional for a club leader to have designed a special research project per say on the participation of the working class in the National Socialist movement.³⁶

Leaders of young historians clubs in schools were under the supervision of school administrators and not the Pioneer leader or the FDJ secretary.³⁷ In contrast, the FDJ did control club leaders who worked directly at Pioneer houses. Evidence suggests that club leaders at schools in areas like Zittau and Potsdam had to submit work plans for each school year in the 1950s.³⁸ Additionally, visual displays of the students' research projects revealed the subject matter and results of the students' efforts. Nonetheless, in their routine activities, there was little oversight for teachers and other volunteers advising young historians clubs. As a result of a Ministry of Education directive, beginning in 1970 extracurricular clubs focusing on the social sciences, art, culture, and technology were supposed to follow set guidelines for each school year (*Rahmenprogramme*), including young historians clubs. Yet, according to Szalai, club leaders used the flexible framework of the official programs to continue to prioritize topics of interest to the advisors and their students: "successful young historians clubs, particularly those that were long-lasting and stable, generally worked on 'unpolitical' projects parallel to the restricted research themes."³⁹ The apolitical projects corresponded more to the special interests of the club leader and members. Results of these efforts are hardly found in central newspapers and periodicals, but can be found in local publications.⁴⁰ Club supervision still remained quite lax. In one area of East Berlin and perhaps elsewhere, in the early 1970s, a new post was created to clarify which school administrator at the school was in charge of extracurricular activities. The new assistant principal for extracurricular activities continued teaching, but with a lighter load.⁴¹ This decision suggests that there was previously a lack of clarification regarding exactly who was supposed to monitor extracurricular organizations, implying a lack of oversight.

Club leaders at schools could probably wander a little from elements within the official antifascist narrative and the history of class struggle more generally, but they overwhelmingly accepted the official

Catherine Plum

narratives and, in the case of antifascism, often lacked detailed knowledge of alternative narratives. Young teachers increasingly lacked personal memories of World War II and possessed limited knowledge of marginalized stories and alternative narratives, such as the experiences of noncommunist victims and resistance fighters. For example, former GDR history teacher Hanna Marburger maintains that her limited view of history growing up in the GDR made it very difficult for her to figuratively “think outside of the box” and introduce themes beyond the official narrative. As a student in the 1970s and a teacher in the 1980s, Marburger rarely questioned the official portrait of history. One exception stems from an experience in the mid 1970s as a student at a teachers’ college. She and several classmates stumbled upon a reference to undisclosed clauses of the Hitler-Stalin pact at a university library. The pertinent documents were classified as belonging to a special collection with limited access. When the students inquired about how to request the documents, they were told that the files had simply been lost. After 1989, Marburger felt cheated as a student and teacher because of the many historical half-truths that she had been told. Moreover, she realized that the suburb of Berlin in which she taught, Marzahn, had been the site of a concentration camp during the Nazi period where Sinti and Roma were interned before being shipped to Auschwitz. During the GDR, she simply could not share this dramatic aspect of local history with her students because of her lack of knowledge, a consequence of the marginalization of Sinti and Roma victims of Nazi persecution in official public memory.⁴²

Club leaders and members often designed projects that utilized local resources, including local historical sites, museums, and local veterans of the antifascist struggle. By the early 1960s, students profited increasingly from refounded or newly established historical sites, ranging from local monuments and museums dedicated to antifascist resistance fighters to the national Museum for German History and the three national antifascist memorial sites, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and Ravensbrück. While the Museum for German History provided a model for small local museums and offered consulting services, it did not control the local museums that students visited.⁴³ Young historians were most likely to turn to local museums and archives in their work. The tendency to research local history was

prevalent throughout the history of the clubs. Hence, while one can detect periods in which professional historians placed greater or lesser emphasis on local or regional history, including a rekindled interest in the history of the traditional German Länder in the 1980s, there was a strong level of continuity in the decisions of young historians clubs to focus on local history. Through topics distributed through the *Rahmenprogramme* or from the FDJ, young historians were frequently steered towards topics that corresponded with larger historical and historiographical trends, such as a focus on GDR national identity and solidarity with fellow socialist nations in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, even when groups were assigned topics to research, they also pursued projects of their own choosing.

Alongside club leaders and museum staff members, historical eyewitnesses often helped to shape the way club members viewed the past. Members of young historians clubs frequently interviewed local veterans of the antifascist struggle. Through their discussions with veterans, young people sometimes encountered variations of the antifascist narrative and marginalized stories. Some antifascist veterans presented themselves as average men and women, rather than as the heroes so frequently portrayed in youth literature. In a recent publication, historian Josie McLellan argues that many of the veterans of the International Brigades in East Germany took on the role of “reluctant heroes,” uncomfortable with the way in which the official narrative co-opted their stories and heroized their deeds.⁴⁵ In many cases, antifascist veterans possessed a realistic sense of their contributions and sought to give their listeners a sense of the challenges involved in resistance work, as activists sought to resist the regime while at the same time appear as if they were obedient students, workers, parents, and soldiers. For example, antifascist veteran Kurt Langendorf described his teenage years in Nazi Germany as being strictly divided—at school he was a diligent student while at home his family offered assistance to resistance activists. Langendorf captured the attention of his youthful listeners by recounting how he assembled an illegal radio out of many parts and listened to illicit broadcasts. Many antifascist veterans believed that young people were a good judge of character and could best identify with and would be most moved by stories of average people in extraordinary circumstances. According to Langendorf some teachers mimicked pub-

Catherine Plum

lished literature on resistance fighters presenting them as heroes, whereas others presented him to their pupils as an average person. There were, of course, some antifascist veterans who enjoyed the attention they received and who embellished their stories. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that antifascist veterans narrated their own stories as they saw fit. While veterans were frequently SED members and supporters of the regime, their stories were not carbon copies of the dominant image of resistance fighters as young males, engaging in heroic armed resistance. Langendorf was not the only veteran who opposed the heroization of resistance fighters. At conferences established by the FDJ and the Committee of Antifascist Resistance Fighters in the late 1970s and early 1980s, other veterans voiced their concerns about the development of antifascist personality cults.⁴⁶

In contrast to the official narrative, discussions with antifascist veterans and student questions could also reveal information about informants, including communist informants who provided information to the Nazis often under duress. While such details were not normally emphasized in presentations,⁴⁷ I suspect that some of this information came out nonetheless in open and frank meetings with students. In my own discussions with antifascist veterans such information often surfaced without prompting.⁴⁸

In addition to the story of communist resistance, some antifascist veterans could share with students information about other victims of National Socialism, including Jewish victims with whom they had come in contact in concentration camps at the end of World War II. Young historian clubs could technically consider this topic. Theoretically, clubs could read the *Diary of Anne Frank* and view a documentary on her life that was available to teachers.⁴⁹ Furthermore, a number of schools and communist youth groups applied to name themselves after Anne Frank. Schools with young historians clubs would have helped to research their namesake.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, there was less information and literature available on Jewish victims than on communist antifascist veterans, reflecting the regime's preference for an emphasis on active resistance rather than passive victimhood. In any case, clubs outside of major cities like Berlin and Dresden would have had a difficult time finding Holocaust survivors who could meet with their students.⁵¹ With respect to Jewish resistance fighters, there was relatively little knowledge about this topic.

One major exception would be the Berlin-based resistance group coordinated under the leadership of Herbert Baum. Baum and some of his co-resistors were Jewish, but they also shared leftist political sympathies. A school in Berlin-Friedrichshain did select Baum as its namesake in the early 1970s. In a discussion among teachers, one advantage identified with this name was the fact that the school could invite former members of the resistance group to their school. At least three individuals involved with the group had been not only resistance fighters, but also survivors of the Auschwitz concentration camp.⁵² As an alternative narrative, the Jewish Holocaust experience became a more widely discussed topic in the media and in student history textbooks towards the very end of the regime, as Erich Honecker began to support a rapprochement with the state of Israel and with the small minority of GDR citizens who considered themselves Jewish. The Holocaust is a theme young historians clubs could have considered, but topics and projects distributed through the *Rahmenprogramme* and FDJ campaigns were restricted to those aspects of German history considered to be part of acceptable traditions—historical figures, events, and movements specifically tied to the struggle of the working classes.

The Highpoint of Young Historians Clubs

While the prevalence of clubs waxed and waned depending on student interest and adult mentorship, the 1970s and the early 1980s can be considered the highpoint of young historians clubs. The climax of the movement coincides with the coming to power of an authentic resistance fighter in the form of the new leader, Erich Honecker.⁵³ During Honecker's tenure, the valorization of a multitude of communist resistance figures contributed to his legitimacy and growing personality cult. Together, the youth antifascist movement and the young historians peaked on a number of different levels in this period. First, some districts experienced a noticeable upswing in the number of organizations at schools and Pioneer houses. In the district of Leipzig, for example, the number of young historians clubs increased from 185 in 1976 to 338 in the school year 1980-1981.⁵⁴ In terms of actual numbers of members, during the school year 1980-

Catherine Plum

1981, there were approximately 4,200 young historians in the district of Leipzig and 5,400 in the district of Halle before the prevalence of the clubs declined slightly in the late 1980s.⁵⁵ The foundation of new or reactivated young historians clubs is tied to the increase in the number of schools seeking an honorary namesake, given that clubs were often established to assist with these campaigns. Second, this period saw an expansion of young historians youth conferences including a large international convention held in 1975. The Ministry of Education also used the Eighth Pedagogical Congress of the GDR in 1978 to infuse new energy into extracurricular activities, including young historians clubs.⁵⁶ Finally the publicity of these events and other club activities serves as another index of the strong promotion of the clubs during this period.

At the beginning of the 1970s, youth leaders already had some experience with hosting provincial young historians conferences. Indeed, by the mid 1950s the districts of Rostock, Karl-Marx-Stadt and Dresden all had sponsored young Heimat researchers or young historians meetings combined with regional festivals (*Heimatfeste*).⁵⁷ Gera sponsored its first district Young Historians Olympics in 1956,⁵⁸ and beginning in the late 1960s, the district of Halle began to offer young historians Olympics once a year as well.⁵⁹

Building on this tradition, the FDJ held the International Young Historians Conference in Potsdam in 1975 to honor the thirtieth anniversary of the liberation of Eastern Europe. The Central Committee of the FDJ and the East German Politburo each set guidelines for this conference, which suggests that the event was considered to be very important for educational purposes and as a publicity spectacle for the anniversary.⁶⁰ Through their conferences, the FDJ exerted a level of influence over clubs located at schools, which were otherwise outside of their jurisdiction. SED leaders from the district of Potsdam and local party members volunteered their services for event planning and execution. The conference provided a symbolic conclusion to a more general Pioneer campaign (*Pionierauftrag*), entitled "Follow the Path of the Red Star," a reference to the Soviet army's path at the end of World War II.⁶¹ Participants in the conference included 5,000 pioneers from different districts of the GDR and 750 students from foreign countries, primarily fellow socialist nations.⁶² The conference theme and its international scope reflected

the strong focus under Honecker's regime of placing events in German history within a broader international context and promoting solidarity with fellow socialist nations.

Rivaling an Olympics ceremony in its length, the four-hour opening ceremony of the Young Historians Conference set the tone for the events that followed. A group of twelve and thirteen year-olds from various East German districts served as the masters of ceremony for the event. Additionally a variety of dignitaries gave speeches.⁶³ First Secretary of the SED Erich Honecker and Politburo member Paul Verner welcomed the participants.⁶⁴ Other speakers included a Soviet general and veteran of the "Great Patriotic War" and the head of the International Buchenwald Committee, Dr. Walter Bartell.⁶⁵ Representative antifascist resisters and their family members attended the event, including Irma Gabel-Thälmann, the daughter of the martyred communist leader Ernst Thälmann, and the daughter of former GDR President and resistance figure Wilhelm Pieck.⁶⁶ The presence of well-known politicians, antifascist veterans, and their families attested to the importance placed upon youth antifascist education. Different youth representatives presented information about their research projects, which related to the three themes for the conference. The themes included the troop movements of the Soviet army, the development of socialism after the victory over fascism, and the accomplishments of the Pioneers in fulfilling the legacy of their role models.⁶⁷ Later in the day, the young historians celebrated at a banquet held in Sanssouci's New Palace in the famous Mussel Room, the Marble Gallery, and the palace vestibule.⁶⁸ In fact, the banquet at the New Palace was not the first time that FDJ, leaders used former royal palaces to provide young people with memorable educational and recreational experiences.

During the conference, young historians had opportunities to visit tourist sites and take part in commemorative ceremonies and discussions. Over 1,000 young people visited the memorial site and army museum at Cecilienhof Palace, the site where the World War II allies signed the famous Potsdam Agreement that laid the foundation for the postwar European settlement.⁶⁹ During the two-day affair, conference leaders also invited the young historians to five additional commemorative ceremonies at a Soviet cemetery and local memorial sites.⁷⁰ Additionally, approximately 120 select Young Historians

Catherine Plum

had the opportunity to meet with historians and antifascist veterans in small groups.⁷¹

The closing ceremony of the conference and the Pioneer festival that followed attest to the amount of time and attention that went into this event. During the closing ceremony Helga Labs, the head of the Pioneer Organization, announced the new Pioneer mission (*Pionierauftrag*) for the next school year.⁷² The Pioneer festival that followed for conference participants and local youth combined a socialist message with children's activities that one might find at a fair. According to the event planners, the pioneers were supposed to learn that the Soviet army and antifascists made possible the foundation of socialism in the GDR, which guarantees children the ability to live, learn, and play. The festival appears to have promoted the history and memory of Soviet soldiers and antifascist fighters through art work at an international art bazaar and a military/political center for children aged ten and older. Thus, the Pioneer Festival combined political doctrines with traditional children's fair activities, such as art booths, puppet shows, and obstacle courses.⁷³

This conference presented FDJ authorities and club leaders with an opportunity to promote public knowledge and interest in the research activities of young historians clubs. While club leaders in earlier decades were sometimes aware of the publicity potential behind their activities,⁷⁴ the 1970s saw attempts to increase public awareness of these organizations. In the case of the 1975 conference in Potsdam, the FDJ directly issued multiple detailed press releases to facilitate media coverage in the manner of their choosing.⁷⁵

Individual clubs attracted media attention in multiple forms and for a variety of different antifascist activities. For example, a young military historians group located at a school in Eberswalde-Finow developed an exhibit on the history of the Red Army's advance in their locale and the assistance Soviet soldiers offered.⁷⁶ In the early 1980s, this group also published information about their activities in periodicals such as *Neues Deutschland*, the SED party newspaper, the *Deutsche Lehrerzeitung* (*The German Teachers' Newspaper*) and periodicals for youth.⁷⁷ A young historians club at the Diesterweg Polytechnical School in Burgstädt drew attention to itself through its relationship with *Radio Dresden* and *Radio Moscow*. The club claimed that the Soviet radio station publicized the activities of their group

during fifty-seven different broadcasts between 1969 and 1976.⁷⁸ The national Museum for German History also brought attention to the work of numerous highly active Young Historians clubs in 1977, when it featured a special exhibit detailing the research results of the clubs working on the theme, “The Realization of Red October” for the sixtieth anniversary of the October Revolution.⁷⁹

Young Historians Clubs in the Final Years of the SED Regime

After an increase in activity and publicity there was a marginal decline in the number of young historians clubs in the mid to late 1980s. Club success was always dependent upon the alignment of both a volunteer leader and motivated students. The level of energy and excitement found in antifascist activities varied from school to school and also from one generation of school classes to another. Nevertheless, one can draw some broad conclusions about generational change in the antifascist youth movement, to which the young historians belonged. Whereas many young people in the 1950s exhibited an energetic enthusiasm for the antifascist youth movement, successive generations and teenagers in the 1980s in particular were generally less inspired and more credulous of state socialist ideology and political movements as they grew older.⁸⁰ There were still successful young historians clubs in the 1980s, but teachers felt they were in greater competition for their students’ attention. Former GDR history teacher Hannelore Mehring remembers trying to found a club in the late 1980s, but she simply could not bring together enough interested students to realize the ambition.⁸¹

A number of factors contributed to the decline of young historians and the antifascist youth movement. First, as time and the physical landscape continued to recede from the period of the 1930s and 1940s, students increasingly developed other interests and viewed the fascist era as part of the distant past. In the first two or three decades of the GDR, young people were familiar with the names of locally and nationally recognized veterans of resistance because of the prominent political positions that many of these individuals held.⁸² Towards the end of the GDR, most of the veterans were

Catherine Plum

retired or had passed away. As the Nazi period receded more and more into the past, the number of teachers with personal knowledge of these years also declined.⁸³ At the same time, the variety of reading materials, music and pastime pursuits increased markedly from a negligible number in the 1950s to the more prosperous period of the 1970s. In the 1980s, demand and interest in Western music and media grew to an even greater extent, as well as youth interest in computers and other forms of technology.⁸⁴ Although the SED refused to reform on a political level, it tentatively tolerated a more pluralistic youth culture in the late 1970s and 1980s, including an expanded number of youth clubs outside the purview of the FDJ, and government-sponsored rock scene.⁸⁵ The Heipzig Institute for Youth Research conducted studies that confirm this assessment. Researchers found that over the course of the 1980s, the influence of Western cultural models on East German youth was increasingly pronounced just as young people's identification with socialist values and norms decreased, especially among working-class youth.⁸⁶ Antifascist veteran Fred Löwenberg recalled in an interview that students' knowledge of the economic problems and the unmet consumer demand translated into more critical questions in the mid-1980s, which he had to face when he spoke to young people.⁸⁷ Students grew more credulous of all state-generated news and scholarship, including the SED's depiction of history. By the fall of 1989, the activities of the communist youth organizations and other student associations were slowing down as young people and their families observed or participated in the growing protest movement sweeping the nation.

Conclusion

Reflecting upon the activities of German youth in the 1970s and 1980s on both sides of the Berlin Wall, two distinct "generations of 1968" come into view. In East Germany, the 1970s and early 1980s witnessed a highpoint of young historian activism and additional efforts to get a wider net of students involved in antifascist activities. On the other side of the iron curtain, older students and civic groups became interested in figuratively digging up a different ver-

sion of the past. Young people in West Germany questioned their parents, grandparents, and local authority figures about their voting patterns in the early 1930s, their role in World War II, and their knowledge of the Holocaust. In contrast, East German youth largely assumed that their families retained no culpability or guilt for the events of World War II, mirroring the East German state's tendency to blame the Nazi elite rather than average Germans.⁸⁸ Representing this mindset, Jana Hensel, an East German student in the 1980s, made the following statement in her recently published memoir: "Our grandparents, our parents, the neighbors—they were all antifascists ... when I imagined World War II as a child, it was as if everyone had somehow been a member of the White Rose or had met secretly in back courtyards and basements to organize resistance and print pamphlets."⁸⁹ Hensel was forced to confront the inaccuracy of this viewpoint when she later spent time with friends from western Germany who knew about their relatives' connections to the Nazi party. Hensel needed this experience to realize that GDR youth were also "grandchildren of the Third Reich."⁹⁰ Just as West German observers all too often failed to acknowledge the efforts of communist antifascist resisters, a fair number of East German educators and their students overly heroized the efforts and impact of communist resisters, ignoring the complicity and role played by average Germans, including the working class. Thus, some young historian club members remained rooted in a one-dimensional understanding of resistance, whereas other groups with strong contacts to antifascist veterans obtained a more realistic sense of resistance from oral history interviews that could both support and qualify the official antifascist narrative.

While young people in East Germany lived in a society characterized by physical barriers and political and social repression, they still possessed agency and the choice of how they would spend their free time outside of school and after Pioneer and FDJ activities. Contemporary observers' emphasis on "prescribed" antifascism and state-imposed antifascism in the GDR does not explain the full range of reactions to antifascist education and commemoration, particularly the voluntary decision that some young people made to join a young historians club focusing on an antifascist theme. At the beginning of this article, readers came to know the East German student Anna,

Catherine Plum

who, in the late 1970s, was so excited to become a member of the young military historians club at her school. Anna represents the young antifascist enthusiasts that some political observers would like to believe never existed in the first place, except perhaps in families belonging to the SED. GDR youth cannot be classified as falling into the simple categories of indoctrinated youth or antifascist skeptics. Student attitudes towards the content, commemoration, and practice of antifascism are far more complex, similar to the constraints and perspectives of antifascist veterans and history educators. Although only a minority of students participated in young historians clubs, these history enthusiasts and a larger number of antifascist supporters and followers constituted a far stronger force than youth nonconformists and critics of antifascism. The young people working on antifascist themes need not have agreed with every aspect of the state-prescribed history of antifascist resistance and commemorative traditions, but they respected the service and sacrifices that communist antifascist veterans made. Ultimately, historical eyewitnesses narrated their stories to young historians and other students in ways that both supported and qualified the official narrative. Similarly, teachers exercised some flexibility in their choice and design of research projects in a system characterized by limited freedom.

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Notes

1. "Anhang 1: Abschrift eines Schulaufsatzes," "Die Tätigkeit der Arbeitsgemeinschaft 'Junge Militärgeschichtler' eine Möglichkeit zur Herausbildung wertvoller sozialistischer Charaktereigenschaften bei Kindern und Jugendlichen," 28 January 1982, Stiftung der Arbeiterparteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (henceforth, SAPMO-BArch) DY 57/K73/6, 2. I have chosen to use a pseudonym in place of the student's name.
2. Wendelin Szalai, "Über Probleme und weiterführender Ansätze meiner Forschungen zu Arbeitsgemeinschaften Junger Historiker in der DDR," in *Offenes Geschichtslernen in einer geschlossenen Gesellschaft? Von den 'Arbeitsgemeinschaften Junger Historiker' als einem ambivalenten Bestandteil historischer Bildung in der DDR*, eds., Winfried Ripp and Wendelin Szalai (Berlin, 1995), 124.
3. According to Adam Suchonski, young historians clubs were first founded in Poland after a failed 1864 uprising. See Adam Suchonski, "Die Arbeit der 'jungen Historiker' in Polen bis 1989," in Ripp and Szalai (see note 2), 157.
4. On antifascism and the official communist youth organizations see, Alan Nothnagle, *Building the East Germany Myth: Historical Mythology and Youth Propaganda in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1989* (Ann Arbor, 1999) and the author's doctoral thesis, "Antifascism and the Historical Identity of East German Youth, 1961-1989" (Ph.D. diss. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005). The *Jugendweihe* or literally "youth oath" was a coming-of-age ceremony for fourteen year-olds in East Germany that was controlled by the state. Gregory Wegner has authored articles on the antifascist component of the *Jugendweihe* programs, including "In the Shadow of the Third Reich: The Jugendstunde and the Legitimation of Anti-Fascist Heroes for East German Youth," *German Studies Review* 19 (February 1996): 127-146.
5. Consider contributions in the anthology *Der missbrauchte Antifaschismus: DDR-Staatsdoktrin und Lebenslüge der deutschen Linken* (Freiburg, 2002), as well as Annette Leo and Peter Reif-Spirek, *Helden, Täter und Verräter: Studien zum DDR-Antifaschismus* (Berlin, 1999) and Annette Leo and Peter Reif-Spirek, eds., *Vielstimmiges Schweigen: Neuen Studien zum DDR-Antifaschismus* (Berlin, 2001).
6. Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of Germany Memory, 1870-1990* (Berkeley, 2000), 226-227, 238.
7. Ibid.
8. Szalai (See note 2), 103.
9. Berlin Abteilung Außerschulische Erziehung, Ministerium für Volksbildung, "Vorschlag zur Stärkung der bestehenden und zur Bildung neuer Klubs Junge Historiker," Berlin, 18 May 1956, 1, SAPMO-BArch DR2/5423, 8.
10. FDJ Bezirksleitung (Bereich A/P), "Analyse zur Traditionsarbeit in der Bezirksorganisation Magdeburg," 24 February 1988, SAPMO-BArch DY 24/113681, 3; "Hinweise für die Auswertung der Zentralleitungstagung vom 4.2.1988 in den Bezirkskomitees," 15, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K71/4.
11. "Brief vom Rat des Bezirkes Potsdam, Abteilung Volkbildung–Außerschulische Erziehung an den Rat des Kreises–Abteilung Volkbildung–Außerschulische Erziehung," Potsdam, 8 December 1952, 1-2, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/5744, 85-6.
12. Consider for example the work plan of a young historians club in Olbersdorf from the mid-1950s, "Arbeitsplan der Arbeitsgemeinschaft 'Junge Historiker'

Catherine Plum

- Grundschule Olbersdorf 1953/1954–Jonsdorf 1. Oktober 1953–30 Juni 1954,” 1-7, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/5423, 191-197.
13. History teacher from a *Grundschule* in the Dresden area, “Anregungen und Erfahrungen zur Verbesserung der Arbeit der AGs Junge Historiker,” 10, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/5423, 50.
 14. Ministerium für Volksbildung Hauptschulinspektion, “Kontrolle der Festlegungen aus der Konsultation des Staatssekretärs mit den Bezirkschulräten der Bezirke Berlin und Frankfurt/Oder am 28.7.1970 in Berlin,” 26 October 1970, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/A2006.
 15. Arbeitsgemeinschaftsleiter from Eberswalde-Finow, “Die Tätigkeit der Arbeitsgemeinschaft ‘Junge Militärgeschichtler’ eine Möglichkeit zur Herausbildung wertvoller sozialistischer Charaktereigenschaften bei Kindern und Jugendlichen,” ca. 1984, 20, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K73/6.
 16. *Ibid.*, 5.
 17. Letter from the Young Historians leader at a school in Schwerin district to the Ministry of People’s Education, 1 August 1953, 1, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/5423, 200.
 18. Teacher from a school near Dresden, “Anregungen und Erfahrungen zur Verbesserung der Arbeit der AGs Junge Historiker,” 1955, 3-4, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/5423, 48-49.
 19. Berlin Abteilung Außerschulische Erziehung, Ministerium für Volksbildung, “Vorschlag zur Stärkung der bestehenden und zur Bildung neuer Klubs Junge Historiker,” Berlin, 18 May 1956, 1, SAPMO-BArch DR2/5423, 8.
 20. “Rahmenplan (Entwurf) für die wissenschaftliche Lehr- und Forschungsarbeit der außerschulischen Arbeitsgemeinschaften ‘Junge Natur- und Heimatforscher’ in Zusammenarbeit mit den Arbeitsgemeinschaften ‘Natur und Heimat’ des Kulturbundes zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands im Bezirk Halle, Sachsen-Anhalt,” 2, attached to a letter from the Department of Education in Halle to the head of the Department of Extracurricular Activities at the Ministry of Education in Berlin, 10 October 1952, 2, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/5745, 39.
 21. *Richtlinien für die Arbeitsgemeinschaften ‘Junger Historiker’* (Berlin, ca. 1955), 17, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/5423, 29.
 22. Interview with Heinz Mühlenbacher, conducted by the author, Berlin, 14 December 2001. Tape-recorded copies of all interviews used in this article are in the possession of the author. Based upon the interview subjects’ preferences, pseudonyms are used for most former GDR teachers and students interviewed for this project.
 23. Bezirksvorsitzender der Pionierorganisation and Sekretär der Bezirksleitung der FDJ, “Vorlagen Nummer 43/75 für die Sekretariatssitzung am 28. Januar 1975 Politische Einschätzung zum Halbjahresbericht der Pionierorganisation ‘Ernst Thälmann,’” SAPMO-BArch DY 25/2449.
 24. Arbeitsgemeinschaft “Junge Historiker” des Hauses der Jungen Pioniere Berlin-Treptow and Horst Köpstein, *Das Treptower Ehrenmal: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1980), 11; Mühlenbacher interview (see note 22).
 25. Statement made by a student at the 1972 KAW scholarly conference for the socialist education of the young generation held 8/9 April 1972, “Berichte der Arbeitsgruppen Sonntag 9.4.72,” 17, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K20/2.
 26. Marianne Wulff, “Über die außerunterrichtliche Arbeit in Jävenitz,” *Geschichte und Staatsbürgerkunde* 7 (1972): 613.

27. Karl Schröter, "Die Erforschung der Traditionen der deutsch-sowjetischen Freundschaft in Burgstädt," *Geschichtsunterricht und Staatsbürgerkunde* 10 (1972): 930.
28. Oberstudienrat at the Friedrich Schiller POS Ronneberg, "Entwurf über Hinweise bzw. Empfehlungen zur Arbeit 'Junge Historiker,'" 28 December 1963, 4-7, 11, SAPMO-BArch DY 25/681.
29. Interview with Helmut Milke, conducted by the author, Berlin, 18 August 2001.
30. Mühlenbacher interview (see note 22).
31. See for example "Bezirk Suhl: Einschätzung der Wirksamkeit des Geschichtsunterrichts bei der patriotischen und internationalistischen Erziehung der Schüler, vor allem der Klassen 8-10, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Auftrages zum 30. Jahrestag der Gründung der DDR," 52, ca. 1979 SAPMO-BArch DR2/A8378.
32. Dorothee Wierling, "The Hitler Youth Generation in the GDR," in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed., Konrad Jarausch (New York, 1999), 313.
33. Wendelin Szalai, "Arbeitsgemeinschaften Junger Historiker' ein ambivalenter Bestandteil historischer Bildung in der DDR," in Ripp and Szalai (see note 2), 27.
34. Szalai (see note 2), 140.
35. Ibid, 123. For a definition and explanation of the concept of "censorship without censors" as it applies to East German journalists, see Simone Barck, Christoph Classen and Thomas Heimann, "The Fettered Media: Controlling Public Debate," in Jarausch (see note 32), 214. Barck, Classen and Heimann have taken this concept from Gunter Holzweißig, *Zensur ohne Zensor: Die SED-Informationsdiktatur* (Bonn, 1997). Other scholars researching schools in Soviet-bloc nations have also noted the phenomenon of self-censorship. See for example Jan Gross' discussion of teachers' practice of self-policing in areas of Poland taken over by the Soviet Union in 1941 in *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton, 2002), 130.
36. Szalai (see note 2), 123.
37. *Pionierleiter* were the representatives of the Pioneer Organization at schools. The Pioneer Organization was the official communist youth group for children in grades one through eight who were called young pioneers and Thälmann pioneers after the antifascist martyr Ernst Thälmann. The Pioneer Organization was essentially controlled by the FDJ, the communist youth organization for young people aged fourteen to twenty-five.
38. Documents from the Berlin Federal Archives suggest that in Kreis Zittau, young historians club leaders signed formal contracts to lead the Young Historians clubs in 1953. They were compensated with DM 25 per month for their efforts. Contracts can be found in the following file: SAPMO-BArch DR2/5423, 180-197. For work plans required in Potsdam see "Brief vom Rat des Bezirkes Potsdam Abt. Volksbildung–Außerschulische Erziehung an den Rat des Kreises–Abt. Volksbildung–Außerschulische Erziehung," Potsdam, 8 December 1952, 2 SAPMO-BArch DR2/ 5744, 86.
39. Beginning in September 1983 the *Rahmenprogramme* for grades nine through twelve were called *Fakultive Kursen nach Rahmenprogramm*. Szalai (see note 33), 28-29.
40. Szalai (see note 2), 125.
41. Interview with Heike Meyer, conducted by the author, Berlin, 27 August 2001.

Catherine Plum

42. Interview with Hanna Marburger, conducted by the author, Berlin, 30 September 2001.
43. Interview with Michael Horn, conducted by the author, Berlin, 12 December 2001. Horn was employed at the museum for approximately fifteen years between the mid 1970s and 1990 and worked in the department for Gedenkstätte.
44. H. Glenn Penny, "The Museum für Deutsche Geschichte and German National Identity," *Central European History* 28 (1995): 362.
45. Josie McLellan, *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades 1945-1989* (Oxford, 2004).
46. Speech given at a conference in Leipzig in 1981 entitled: "Junge Historiker bewahren das Vermächtnis des antifaschistischen Widerstandskampfes: Gemeinsamer Erfahrungsaustausch der Zentralleitung der Antifaschistischen Widerstandskämpfer, des Ministeriums für Volksbildung und des Zentralrates der Freien Deutschen Jugend über die Wirksamkeit der Arbeitsgemeinschaften 'Junge Historiker,'" 10, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K18/1.
47. Interview with Kurt Langendorf, conducted by the author, Berlin, 19 September 2001.
48. Interviews with Fred Löwenberg, conducted by the author, Berlin, 10 December 2001; and Irmgard Klaus, Karow, 27 September 2001 and 4 October 2001.
49. "Anne Frank," *Deutsche Lehrerzeitung* 11 (13 March 1959): 8.
50. Schools and Pioneer and FDJ groups named after Anne Frank could be found in Suhl, Rostock, Fürstenwalde, Ramsdorf, Halberstadt (Magdeburg), and Ballenstedt (Halle), to name a few examples. Partial lists of the names of schools and their *Pionierfreundschaften* and *FDJ Grundorganisationen* from the 1970s can be found in the following FDJ files at the Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR at the Bundesarchiv Berlin DY 24/14.007-14.010. Even if a school or youth organization troop had selected the name Anne Frank, they might still devote their school tradition room in part to the history of antifascist resistance. For example, the tradition corner at the Anne-Frank Sprachheilschule Meiningen included information that students gathered concerning communist antifascist resistance fighters as a letter from the school to the KAW Zentralleitung suggests, 13 January 1981, 1-2, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K111/10.
51. Some of the few remaining Jewish residents of the GDR left the country during a period of heightened antisemitism in the early 1950s during which Jewish institutions were temporarily closed. See Robin Ostow, "From the Cold War Through the *Wende*: History, Belonging, and the Self in East German Jewry," *Oral History Review* 21/2 (1993): 60.
52. Milke interview (see note 29).
53. Alan Nothnagle, "Historical Myth-Building in the GDR," *Central European History* (1993): 91-113, 100.
54. Speech given at a conference in Leipzig in 1981 (see note 46), 8, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K18/1.
55. Ibid.
56. "Hinweise für die Auswertung der Zentralleitungstagung vom 4.2.1988 in den Bezirkskomitees," 15, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K71/4.
57. "Entwurf: Grundskizze für ein zentrales Treffen der jungen Heimatforscher 1957," 8 August 1956, 1, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/5423, 1.

The Children of Antifascism

58. Letter from the Haus der Jungen Pioniere 'Philip Müller' Posneck to the Education Ministry's Abteilung Außerschulische Erziehung; "Betr: Auswertung der Olympiade der Jungen Historiker am 16. und 17.1956," 1, SAPMO-BArch DR 2/5423, 5.
59. Speech given at a conference in Leipzig in 1981 (see note 46), 10, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K18/1.
60. "Abschlußbericht internationalen 'Treffen junger Historiker,' Potsdam, am 19. und 20. Juli 1975," 4, SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11.097.
61. *Ibid.*, 2.
62. *Ibid.*, 1.
63. *Ibid.*, 15.
64. "Rede zur Auszeichnungsveranstaltung in Auswertung des internationalen 'Treffens junger Historiker' Potsdam am 25.7.1975," 2, SAPMO-BArch DY 25/2.441.
65. "Abschlußbericht internationalen 'Treffen junger Historiker,' Potsdam, am 19. und 20. Juli 1975," 7, SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11.097.
66. *Ibid.*, 14.
67. Office of Helga Labs, Vorsitzende der Pionierorganisation und Sekretärin des Zentralrates der FDJ, "Verbandinternes Material: Direktive Nr. 1 zur politischen und organisatorischen Vorbereitung des internationalen 'Treffen Junger Historiker' am 19. und 20. Juli in Potsdam," Berlin, 17 March 1975, 1, SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11.097.
68. "Presseinformation Nr. 10/1975 Potsdam 16.7.1975 'Internationales Treffen junger Historiker' Pionierarbeit anlässlich des internationalen 'Treffens junger Historiker,'" 2, SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11.097.
69. "Besuch der historischen Gedenkstätte Cecilienhof am 19.7.1975 für die Pioniere der Bezirksdelegationen (Patzow)," 3-7, SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11.098.
70. Zentralrat der FDJ Abteilung Junge Pioniere, "Direktive II zur politischen und organisatorischen Vorbereitung des Internationalen Treffens 'Junger Historiker' am 19. und 20.7.1975 in Potsdam," 2, SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11.098.
71. "Historiker der DDR als Gäste und Gesprächspartner am 19.7.1975 in Potsdam," 2-3, SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11.097.
72. "Presseinformation Nr. 4/1975 Potsdam 14.7.1975 'Internationales Treffen Junge Historiker' Abschlußveranstaltung anlässlich des 'Treffens Junger Historiker' in Potsdam," 1, SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11.097.
73. Zentrales Organisationsbüro Internationales 'Treffens Junge Historiker,' Bereich Grossveranstaltungen, Abteilung Abschlußveranstaltung, "Feinkonzeption für die inhaltliche und organisatorische Gestaltung des internationalen Pionierfestes 'Salut Pobeda,'" 27 May 1975; 1, 11-19, 35; SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11.098.
74. Consider, for example, a document from the early 1960s, "Entwurf über Arbeitshinweise und Empfehlungen für die Tätigkeit von Klubs 'Junger Historiker,'" 14, SAPMO-BArch DY 25/681.
75. Presseinformation Nr. 4/1975 Potsdam 14.7.1975 'Internationales Treffen Junge Historiker,'" and "Presseinformation Nr. 10/1975 Potsdam 16.7.1975 'Internationales Treffen junger Historiker.'"
76. Arbeitsgemeinschaftsleiter at an Oberschule in Eberswalde-Finow, "Die Tätigkeit der Arbeitergemeinschaft 'Junger Militärgeschichtler' eine Möglichkeit zur Herausbildung wertvoller sozialistischer Charaktereigenschaften bei Kindern und Jugendlichen," ca. 1983, 24, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K73/6.
77. *Ibid.*, 29.

Catherine Plum

78. "Die Erforschung, Bewahrung und Pflege revolutionären Traditionen durch die Arbeitsgemeinschaft 'Junge Historiker' der Diesterweg Oberschule Burgstädt," 1976, 9-12, SAPMO-BArch DY 57/K73/6.
79. Pädagogische Abteilung des Museum für Deutsche Geschichte, "Pädagogisch-propagandistische Arbeit zum Oktoberjubiläum," 1, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Pädagogische Abteilung file, "Arbeitsgruppe 'Museumspädagogik, 1970-1989.'"
 80. Interview with Liselotte Reznicek, conducted by the author, Berlin, 25 October 2001. Short of the events of 1989/1990, the decade of the 1950s witnessed the most drama and dynamic change in East German history including the nationalization of industry, collectivization of farms, and the expansion of mass youth movements. Young people experienced a relatively smooth transition exchanging national Socialist tenets for socialist dogma, and many young people were optimistic about socialism's potential. Wierling (see note 32), 314.
 81. Interview with Hannelore Mehring, conducted by the author, Berlin, 9 October 2001.
 82. Langendorf interview (see note 47); Horn interview (see note 43).
 83. Klaus interview (see note 48).
 84. Hinweise für die Auswertung der Zentralleitungstagung vom 4.2.1988 in den Bezirkskomitees," 16, SAPMO BArch DY 57/K71/4, 75; Reznicek interview (see note 80), as well as Meyerhoff, Mitscher, and Mannerheim, interviews.
 85. Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, 2005), 116, 135-137.
 86. Heinz-Hermann Krüger, "'Wie Ernst Thälmann true und kühn ... ' Zur Politisierung des Studien- und Forschungsalltags in der DDR am Beispiel der Pionierleiterausbildung," in Krüger and Winfried Marotzki ed., *Pädagogik und Erziehungsalltag in der DDR: Zwischen Systemvorgaben und Pluralität* (Opladen, 1994), 288.
 87. Löwenberg interview (see note 48).
 88. Marburger interview (see note 42).
 89. Jana Hensel, *Zonen Kinder* (Reinbek, 2004), 108.
 90. *Ibid.*, 110-112.