

Norbert Muhlen

# East Germany's 'PLANNED MEN'

NOT LONG AGO the Minister of Foreign Trade of the Communist government of East Germany, Georg Handtke, declared that it may take twenty-five or thirty years "for us to produce the German *Planmenschen* — planned men — after the Soviet pattern.

In the first seven years of their rule in East Germany, the Soviets have achieved the first stage of their goal. Midway in the production of "planned men — after the Soviet pattern," they have succeeded in transforming the East Germans into a strange, contradictory, ambivalent people. Their success was demonstrated for the first time in the summer of 1951 when millions of East

German girls and boys were shipped to East Berlin to participate in the "World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace."

The parades, games, and demonstrations seemed on the surface a repetition of Hitler's yesterday. But there was a new, even more frightening overtone, which, rather than pointing back to the recent past, pointed forward to the nightmarish future George Orwell depicted in his last book, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In one of the spectacles, several thousand young workers from an East German steel mill, all dressed in baggy gowns of different dull colors, assembled on a gridiron and arranged themselves to portray a giant steel-working machine. Then the wheels and cogs of the machine, each a small group of young men and women, began moving with technical accuracy, first slowly and then quicker and quicker, until you forgot completely that human be-

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*Norbert Muhlen, well-known correspondent and German specialist, is at present working on a book, Two New Worlds in Germany, to be published early next year by the Henry Regnery Company, from which this article has been abstracted.*

ings performed the complicated act. The guests of honor, German Communist leaders and Soviet generals, applauded with a happy grin as the human machine moved and worked in exact imitation of a real, factory machine.

In another presentation of what was called People's Culture, thousands of school children in bathing suits arranged themselves to form a giant head. It was the head of a man with a familiar mustache, pipe, and epaulets, whose name was continually shouted by the loudspeaker and echoed by the children transformed into his likeness: "To the greatest friend of the world's children, the great Joseph Vissarionovitch Stalin, *hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!*"

Each of the countless units of the parade "for peace and against the Western warmongers," as they marched along Berlin's former main boulevard, Unter den Linden, was preceded by an immense poster bearing the portrait of some great Bolshevik — most often, of course, Stalin himself. There were thousands of these posters, some so gigantic that the youngsters carrying them broke down under the weight. But that was not all. Every member of the thousands of units held high above his head a smaller reproduction of the same Communist leader whose portrait preceded the group. Thus it seemed that the paraders had ceased to exist individually and had been molded into an octopus

with a thousand heads. They were nothing but floats conveying the exalted rulers forward.

YET THROUGH ALL the long hours of the big parade I could not detect a sign of passion on the marchers' faces — neither happiness nor hatred, never a laugh, rarely a smile, almost no cheerful or jocular remark from one to another. When, between marches, they walked in little groups through the bombed-out streets of East Berlin, they just walked side by side in utter silence, searching for nothing. Their faces all wore the same expression; all showed the same premature feeling of ruin and of emptiness. But despite this general, almost painful lack of enthusiasm and animation, they marched according to plan, in passive obedience to their rulers. For this reason the Festival was considered a success.

What was missing to make these submissive youngsters full-fledged Soviet men was an active, deep-felt faith. Of the three totalitarian virtues — "believe, obey, fight," as Mussolini's fascism had once proclaimed — they knew only two; they would obey and fight, but they could not believe.

"You know," a leading German Communist intellectual confided to me, "we never expected that these kids from the People's Democracies could be real 'Soviet men.' The next generation, perhaps, but not

this one. They are ruined by the war and the first postwar years, and by their bourgeois background and their reactionary ideology. It takes longer to create 'Soviet men.' For the time being, though, they serve our purpose. Whether they like it or not, they march in step."

It is notorious, incidentally, that at the Youth Festival Soviet functionaries and hand-picked foreigners were given excellent meals, good hotel rooms, private cars or buses while the youth from East Germany and other satellite nations had to live on a few slices of bread and gumdrops a day, sleep in billets of the worst concentration camp style, and stand in line for hours before their triumphal parade. It was disturbing to see Soviet German boys in their Free Youth uniforms staring with resigned envy through the window of the state-run luxury restaurant *Intourist* where young Soviet Russian soccer players were merrily wining and dining.

While the majority of the young delegates to the East Berlin Festival functioned as a passively obedient mass, those few who had the opportunity to express themselves as individuals rejected the mass of which they had become part. Actually the majority of the East German youngsters over fifteen or sixteen rejected the collective into which they had fallen, and despised the appeals and ideas of Stalin and his German satraps. Of this strange split person-

ality under totalitarian rule, not even George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* seemed aware, let alone the Western strategists of "psychological warfare."

WHAT THIS CAPTURED youth was really thinking became known only after some of them came to West Berlin. The Communist organization failed to keep them from making this expedition, although street crossings were barricaded, police cordons drawn at strategic spots, potential transgressors warned of what dangers awaited them in West Berlin (the boys would be poisoned by the "American Secret Service," so the rumors went; the girls would be raped by the *Ami GI's*). Still, one out of four managed to get through.

The Allenbach Poll of German Public Opinion posted interviewers in West Berlin to question a sample of 501 East German Festival visitors. In answer to the question: "What is the main difference in the condition of East and West Germany?" 60 per cent said that there was in the East "totalitarian life." As the main hardship of totalitarian life, 7 per cent named "lack of freedom," 28 per cent, "force and fear," 46 per cent, "the general politicalization (*Politisierung*) of life," by which they meant the pervasion of their lives by politics in general, totalitarian Communism in particular. A somewhat smaller fraction — 38 per cent of the questioned East

German youth — mentioned the material hardships of life under Soviet occupation: of these, 20 per cent objected to the economic system of Communism as such; 16 per cent, to shortages and the poor quality of the goods on the market; and 5 per cent, to Soviet reparations or dismantlement. Only 8 per cent held or gave no opinion, and only 5 per cent preferred the situation in the East to that of the West.

**T**HE EDUCATION of the Soviet man begins before his birth. According to a general order of the East German Office of Public Health, large pictures of Stalin and Wilhelm Pieck (head of the East German government) hang in every maternity ward “in such a way that every patient can see them and know that she is protected in her pains.”

As he grows up, the young East German soon learns to cut off all ties binding him to his parents. In every city and town of East Germany “Family Counseling Services” have been opened; their task is explained in their publicity: “If you have difficulties with your family on political or social questions, or if your parents need to be enlightened on the problems of the day, visit us.” The Family Counselors are members of the secret police and party faithfuls. Their job is to support Communist-educated children against parental authority, to threaten the parents if they oppose the Communist educa-

tion of their children. From this the children are to learn that the state is superior to the family.

Positive indoctrination begins at the earliest age. Kindergartens are “collective social institutions” built and run after the pattern of large factories. Recently, East Berlin opened its fourteen-floor skyscraper “children’s paradise” where working mothers could leave their children to be cared for by Communist youth builders. They make sure that the three- and four-year-old children were energetically shaped along the Soviet pattern.

All during the year in the kindergarten, they receive political lectures, mainly elaborating on the virtues of obedience to the Soviet leaders; they play “productive games,” such as shooting at targets in the likeness of Chancellor Adenauer and Uncle Sam; and they learn the little prayers to the great Stalin which they must say before going to sleep.

At the age of six the machinery to Sovietize its little subjects begins full blast. As of 1952, grammar schools in East Germany are exact replicas of those in the Soviet Union.

Based on the experiences and prescriptions of the Soviet Union, teaching is alike all over the country: it combines the three R’s with indoctrination in the current political slogans and aims of the regime, and with dissemination of the general

ideological slogans and word plays which convince the pupil that he has to learn and to memorize exactly what is presented to him by his superiors — the teachers and the government. Doubt or reluctance to go along with this program is frowned on as the sinister sin of “formalism”; “concern with non-approved theories, be it only in order better to repudiate them”; the sordid “crime of objectivism.” Not to accept a Soviet doctrine such as, say, Mitchurine’s and Lysenko’s theory of genetics, or materialist atheism, exclusively and without the admission of possible errors, constitutes “a regress to the most dangerous reaction.”

“Recently I listened to the radio,” so a boy of fifteen began his composition on the subject “Our Government in Defense of World Peace,” “and I heard Adenauer and other warmongers. From their criminal nonsense I saw again that only our government defends peace.” “Very bad,” said the teacher. “This is objectivism and surrender to the class enemy. You should not have listened to the West, but written instead why our government objectively defends peace.”

“If we have a bottle marked ‘cyanide,’” said East Berlin’s Municipal Education Director Ernst Wildangel, “everybody believes us, and nobody wants first to taste and make sure it’s really cyanide, or he would be dead. But as concerns the

products of Western thought, everybody wants to taste them first, and after a person has done so, it’s too late; he is lost.” This great crime of “objectivism,” a capitalist trick to poison the minds of the Soviet men in the making, be it only by a Western newspaper or broadcast or a book, is considered the contradiction to “true objectivity” which can be found only in the words and works of Marxism and Leninism, as interpreted by Stalin and his satraps.

The theory and practice of “objectivism” is indeed the very core of the Soviet man, the transmission belt between physical, intellectual, and spiritual terror, the basic lever by which the raw material in the production of the totalitarian mass is to be made or broken. Hand in hand with education to automatic deafness in response to non-totalitarian voices is education to automatic submission under the totalitarian rulers.

**R**USSIAN is the only foreign language obligatory for the schools of East Germany. The Russian-language teacher “has to be supported ideologically by all the other teachers,” a directive of the Ministry commands. Another directive excludes automatically from high school any grade school graduate with bad marks in the Russian language. All other teaching has been equally “politicized”: biology, German history, knowledge of nature

(including biology, zoology, chemistry), geography and gymnastics. But the chief subject of all is *Gegenwartskunde* — the knowledge of current history, consisting altogether of fourteen carefully prepared topics, such as “the American aggression in Korea,” “Stalin, the leader of the world peace front,” “the Five-Year-Plan as the road to plenty and peace,” etc. This subject must be taught twice a week.

On special holidays, celebrated in all the schools of East Germany, political events are highlighted by speeches of students, teachers, and party functionaries. In 1951, these celebrations included a Day of Peace, a Day of the Resistance Fighters Against Imperialism, a Foundation Day of the German Democratic (Soviet) Republic, a World Youth Day, an October Revolution Day, a Day of Foundation of the Young Pioneers, the birthdays of President Wilhelm Pieck and of Stalin, an International Women’s Day, May Day, the Day of Liberation (changed in 1952 to Day of Defense), and Day of the Child, in addition to regular school celebrations such as Graduation Day and Commencement Day.

One regular task of East German students is to compile weekly “wall newspapers” made up of newspaper clippings and articles they wrote advertising the achievements of their youth groups, taking a stand on political questions, and criticising fellow students or teachers. Another

classroom project is “Stalin corners,” with Stalin’s picture and a new quotation from his collected works each week, decorated with flags, flowers, and ornaments made by the pupils. There are nationwide competitions for the “most beautiful Stalin corner worthy of our beloved leader, the great Stalin.”

THE UNIVERSITIES of Soviet Germany — they are in East Berlin, Jena, Halle, Greifswald, Rostock, and Leipzig, and look back to proud centuries-old academic histories — have been turned into Soviet agencies as regimented as the primary and secondary schools. Professors who do not belong to the S.E.D. (Socialist Unity Party) or at least to several of the party auxiliaries, are forced out, with the exception of a small number of experts in special fields who are still retained pro tem. The Associate Minister in charge of college and university training, Wolfgang Harich, has himself never attended a college or a university; a “victim of fascism,” he served after the war as drama critic for a West Berlin newspaper and then switched to the Soviet official newspaper in East Berlin. When he was appointed Associate Minister at thirty-one, he said that his job was to “develop the universities into the military academies of the class war.”

Every student must take sixteen hours of “political science” every week, with the main courses the

History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviki), Theory of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, and Applied Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist Theory, the latter an indoctrination course in the political issues of the day. (Prescribed subject matters at present are the war in Korea, the rebellion of the colonial powers, German unity and Western peace-mongers, and the decay of the Western world under the rule of monopoly capitalism.) Special Communist commissioners grill university students before every term; those who turn out to be "ideologically intolerable" are sent to the local labor exchange to be drafted for the people's police or some labor project, such as the uranium mines of Saalfeld where students are permitted to prove their "earnest will to contribute to Socialist reconstruction."

"Whatever the field of study, our main subject is the fight for the Marxist dialectical materialist school of thought against the claptrap of the decadent West, such as so-called idealistic philosophy," the State Secretary for Higher Education has proclaimed.

Fifteen hundred "progressive textbooks and primers" in seventeen million volumes — most of them translations of Soviet works — were printed and distributed in 1951, according to the Five-Year Plan. A professor of theology in Leipzig was dismissed from his post because he told his students: "There are several

theories about the creation of the world: one is the fundamentalist belief in the genesis as described in the Bible, a second the Christian doctrine that God is the creator of all life, and the third is the Soviet theory of materialism." This was "objectivism."

THE FUTURE SOVIET MAN is educated to think and act as his rulers want him to think and act — neither to see, nor hear, nor believe what they do not want him to see, hear, believe. It is the first undertaking of such a thoroughgoing nature in German history. Though Nazi education was certainly totalitarian, it was never so expert as the Soviet system. Furthermore, at its peak it flourished no longer than five years — too short a time to affect the majority of German youth irreparably.

"He who owns the youth owns the future," is a favorite slogan in Soviet Germany. (This slogan goes back to the Third Reich, which in turn inherited it from the Communist leader, Karl Liebknecht, whom the Nazis murdered in 1919.) In its great campaign of conquest aimed at the generations born under the Nazi dictatorship and, since the war, under the dictatorship that has taken its place in East Germany, the new totalitarians have made some progress. Uniformed, disciplined group life with its marching and singing, of which there is as

much in the Free Youth of Stalin's Germany as there was in the Hitler Youth, has a fatal appeal to a number of disoriented boys and girls. It compensates them for their feeling of loneliness and gives them at least an ersatz comradeship in a community. It also gives to the less sceptical minded among them a faith and a hope, an enthusiasm and self-abnegation, a sense of release and solidarity. That many young people search for a meaning of existence larger than mere self-interest, and wish to belong to and do something for a community is fully and skillfully exploited by the Communist rulers.

In the name of Adolf Hennecke, a former coal miner who, after one record shift, was made a director in the Ministry of Production, and who became Soviet Germany's counterpart of Soviet Russia's Stakhanov, young workers have been driven to achieve incredible working performances "in the interest of Socialist reconstruction" — for example, sorting 20,000 cigarettes a day, as did the blonde and pretty seventeen-year-old Communist shock-worker Marga, whose picture decorated for weeks the front pages of the Communist press. Previously even the most experienced workers had never sorted more than 14,000 cigarettes a day. Sixteen-year-old Communist brigade worker Reinhold won his laurels by installing twenty radio tubes per hour. These young heroes are accorded such glamorous titles as

"Hero of Labor," "Distinguished Worker" — they may even receive the National Prize of the Republic, meted out each year to a selected few East Germans.

**T**O WIN the wholehearted support of the young, however, the rulers resort to the whip and the carrot. For a young East German not to give himself up completely to the dictatorship is, certainly, to overshadow his future life with great dangers and hardships. He will most likely not be admitted to higher schools or specialized training, probably never be able to earn an adequate living. On the other hand, if he gives his all to the regime, he can look forward perhaps to great rewards. In this way the Soviet German rulers have gained the overt allegiance of a majority and the inner allegiance of a very small minority.

There is no doubt that among sincere East German Communists those under twenty-five outnumber any other group. Most East Germans estimate the ratio of "true Communists" in the total population at a little less than five per cent; but the estimates of this ratio among the young people is generally higher.

If the Communists have won most of their following among the youth, it is also from the youth that there has come most of the active opposition to Soviet Germany. In the high schools and universities, particularly, acts of resistance against the

occupying dictatorship have been committed on a wide and continuing scale. It started in 1948 when Wolfgang Natonek, then twenty-nine years old, a student of philosophy at the University of Leipzig, survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, became the first post-Hitler president of the Leipzig students' council. He promptly opposed the Communist claim to total control of East Germany. He was arrested and disappeared in a concentration camp.

In the next three years, over three hundred high school and university students were arrested for opposing the makers of the Soviet man and sentenced to an average of twenty-five years at hard labor.

**A**MONG THEM, a boy of eighteen named Hermann Joseph Flade was sentenced to death because he refused to become a Soviet man. Flade was born in the Bavarian town of Würzburg on May 22, 1932, eight months before Hitler came to power. Both his parents died, and he was adopted by a couple in Olbernhau, an industrial town in the East German Erz Mountains. When he was ten years old, he was drafted into the Hitler Youth. After two years, at the age of twelve, he left this Nazi group, which he had come to despise. A year later Soviet forces occupied the region where he lived. When they established their East German dictatorship, "he refused," as Communist authorities later re-

ported, "to be a member of the Communist Free German Youth succeeding the Hitler Youth; he preferred to renounce the financial aid granted its members to pay their way through school, and chose to earn it by menial work." To pay his high school tuition he worked in the Soviet-owned uranium mines in Saxony along with politically convicted slave laborers and other "volunteers," many of them boys of fifteen or sixteen who had likewise refused to join Communist organizations.

Flade's Communist teachers testified that he was "very intelligent, with good intellectual abilities," and "much more serious than his classmates. He was quiet, withdrawn, and never talked much to anybody." But, they added, "he was a fanatical Catholic and tried to prove with all his means that Catholicism teaches the right doctrines." Evidently an individualist, "he did not attend the Catholic youth meetings."

Flade was scheduled to graduate from his *Oberschule* in 1951. During the night of October 15, 1950, he made his way cautiously through the dark, deserted streets of Olbernhau, a bulging briefcase under his arm. Every few minutes he stopped at a house door, a fence, a lamp post, carefully looked around to make sure that not a soul was approaching. Then he took a crudely printed leaflet from his briefcase and pasted it on the wall. While he was engaged in this work, a man and

woman in the uniform of the *Volks-polizei*, the Communist police force, appeared from one of their numberless hideaways. As usual, they were heavily armed and accompanied by a vicious police dog.

Flade was quickly overwhelmed by the two People's Police, and arrested. Four months later he stood trial before the 22nd (Great) Chamber of the Dresden Criminal Court. It seems that his judges were sure that they had broken down the boy, and that he would surely admit his guilt, and ask the court for forgiveness, in short, act the role of the repentant traitor. So confident were they that they arranged for the whole trial to be transmitted by loudspeakers to the people of the Eastern zone.

The prosecutor read the accusation. Flade had written and printed on a homemade printing set leaflets containing the most treasonable ideas: "The fight of the Americans in Korea is a righteous war"; the Oder-Neisse line which cuts off the Polish-annexed German territories "is an unjust frontier"; the Communist rule in East Germany "is inhuman." This, the prosecutor said, made Flade guilty of the crime against peace, the crime of reviving Nazism, and the crime of espionage for the Anglo-American imperialists, warmongers, and dividers of Germany.

"What have you got to say in your defense?" the judge asked Flade.

Everybody expected that the boy would stammer an admission of his crimes and errors, a plea for mercy, and a denunciation of the people who had corrupted him. Instead, with a clear, firm voice, he said: "Marxism-Leninism is not the truth. God is the truth."

THE loudspeakers went dead. The rest of the trial was held behind closed doors. But a transcription of the trial was smuggled out of East Germany. Quietly, without hysteria or hatred, the young defendant explained to his judges why, in five years of watchful silence, he had become more and more antagonistic to the Soviet system. He enumerated "the expropriation of the peasants, the scandalous mistreatment and exploitation of the workers in the uranium mines which he had witnessed, the political dismissal of teachers," and finally — a significant point — "the uncomradely attitude of the Russians toward the Americans to whom they were bound by honor to be deeply grateful for all the help they had received." So he had fallen for the American propaganda? "I learned," he replied calmly, "to believe only ten per cent of what the Communist radio said, while I believed at least fifty per cent of what the Western radio said."

The judges did not succeed in proving that Flade was only a tool in the hands of sinister background forces. What he had done, he in-

sisted, he had done alone; no older or other people, let alone any "Anglo-American agents" or "clerico-fascist schemers," had helped him. In the last five years he had had close relations only with his girl friend, who was now sixteen, and a Catholic priest named Lange from Upper Silesia, with whom he frequently played chess. He had confided to neither of them his decision to print and distribute the leaflets. "Only my parents," he said, "learned, against my will, of my printing the leaflets; I did not discuss with anybody my plan to distribute them . . . I took the decision by myself. I was aware that it might lead to a very heavy punishment. I was con-

vinced that it was right and just to resist the acts of the Soviet government. It took me five years to arrive at the decision that we have to resist the Communists actively and passively."

The Communist court condemned Hermann Joseph Flade to death. After judgment was pronounced, Flade called into the courtroom: "*Die Freiheit ist mir mehr wert als das Leben.*" ("I prefer freedom to life.")

That sentence has become almost a slogan in East Germany these last few months. It is the fighting cry of a firm-hearted minority — so long as freedom exists, they will resist being turned into Soviet men.

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### **The New Soviet Order**

» The fascist oppressors in Germany threw tens of thousands of anti-fascists into prisons and concentration camps. For nothing more than holding a different political opinion, opposing fascism, or being a member or functionary of a workers' movement, people were persecuted and imprisoned. The term "political prisoner" is rightly applied to such victims of fascism.

Today, no one is imprisoned because of the opinions he holds. Anyone attacking our democratic anti-fascist order, or hindering the peaceful reconstruction of our industry, is committing a crime and will be prosecuted for his criminal acts. Prisoners of this kind are not political prisoners but criminals, and the designating of these prisoners as "political prisoners" shall cease.

*The East German Minister of Justice, on an order of the Ministry of Justice.*

# In Our Readers' Opinion

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» I hate like the dickens to complain about anything in THE MERCURY . . . but I could not read Robert Warshow's review of *My Son John* [June, 1952] without seeing red.

*My Son John* was reviewed by all four papers here in Washington and each of them gave it the best panning they could. I came to the conclusion that here was another incident where an anti-Communist picture had been sabotaged in the making. But Senator McCarran invited my husband and me to a private showing of it, and we were simply amazed. It is one of the most forceful anti-Communist pictures I have ever seen. . . . There are weak spots in the picture, but not enough to really bother about.

MRS. CONSTANTINE BROWN  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

» I am amazed to see to what extent the heat of Mr. Warshow's review ["Father and Son — and the FBI," June, 1952] has obscured not only his appreciation of this very valuable and expert bit of art but his understanding of the simple truth the movie reveals.

*My Son John* is the poignant and true depiction of the agony experienced by an American family when they discover by degrees that their son John is a traitor to his country and his religion.

BEATRICE E. RUTLEDGE  
CAMDEN, SOUTH CAROLINA

» *My Son John* was a terrible movie and I thought the review of it in your last [June] issue the best one I've seen.

Mencken's MERCURY is the right place to jump on the idea that independent thinking is un-American, and that the only true patriots are the "boobs."

ANDREW R. EWING  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA