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COMPULSION,  
COMPLIANCE, OR  
*EIGENSINN?*  
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THEORIES OF  
POWER IN AN  
EAST GERMAN  
FIELD SITE

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## **Compulsion, Compliance, or *Eigensinn*?**

### **Examining Theories of Power in an East German Field Site<sup>1</sup>**

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#### **Abstract**

A broad conceptual gulf would seem to separate Max Weber's notion of legitimate authority from Alf Lüdtke's notion of *Eigensinn* (which might be described as putting up with political power to the degree that one must, while pursuing one's own ends to the degree that one can). It is possible, however, to bridge this gulf by employing the concept of mass or political clientelism. That is to say, authorities can render compliance with state policies consistent with the pursuit of one's own ends by distributing rewards that provide for the needs of the individuals and families making up the larger population. Alternatively, it may be sufficient to provide these benefits only for certain "strategic groups". In this paper, these general propositions are applied to case study materials drawn from the German Democratic Republic. The citizens of the GDR were willing or unwilling clients of the socialist state, though this was truer of some segments of the population than others. For example, in the Southern Region of Leipzig, a mixed industrial and agricultural area where the author has conducted ethnographic and social historical research, coal miners and farmers were variably affected by state policies, and their responses to these policies differed widely. Variable tendencies to comply with political power, which changed with changing conditions over time, can be understood with reference to both official strategies of legitimization and differences in the way in which privileges and benefits were distributed within the workforce.

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## I. Two Views of Power and Compliance

“In socialism, for the first time in human history, the goals of societal production correspond to the personal interests of all producers, the members of society. This demonstrates conclusively that socialism necessarily represents a higher stage of human development.” (Rainer Arlt 1959: 455; translated by J. Eidson)

The claim cited above regarding the coincidence of societal goals and personal interests in socialist production was made by a leading legal scholar of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1959 – just a few years after the violent suppression of the workers’ uprising of 1953 and on the eve of the forced collectivization of agriculture in 1960 (Weber 2000). The emergence of this statement in a political and economic context characterized by coercion, protest, and other forms of resistance indicates, of course, that it cannot be taken at face value. Nevertheless, the author has touched upon central issues in social theory, if only inadvertently, and his statement may serve as a point of departure in reflecting on the role of power in human society and on the responses of the people who are subject to its exercise.

If societal goals and personal interests are perfectly coincident, then there is no power, since there is no need to compel anyone to contribute to larger projects that are not his or her own. Needless to say, this is a highly unlikely, if not a utopian scenario, and its improbability increases with the growing difference in size between personal networks, on one hand, and the larger institutional settings in which they are embedded – or which they crosscut – on the other. Once this is conceded, several interrelated questions arise. How is it that some projects requiring the coordinated action of many people are dignified with the label “societal” or “collective”, while others are not? Who has the power to establish the boundaries of that ensemble of persons and resources designated as the “society” or the “collectivity”, to determine its goals, and to specify who should play which roles in fulfilling these goals? Finally, how are members of any given population brought to participate in the realization of the goals so defined, even when participation conflicts with their perceptions of their own interests?

In the case to which the legal scholar cited above is referring, the answer to the first two questions is obvious: It is the “Workers’ and Peasants’ State”, the GDR with its presiding officials and socialist party functionaries, which claims the right to define the society that is subject to its governance, to determine policies that are binding for the whole population, and to distribute responsibilities in the implementation of these policies. Occasionally, the state’s attempt to monopolize the right to resolve such issues may be challenged through forms of collective action, as was the case in East Germany in 1953 and again in 1989. Subsequently,

the right to engage in collective action and to claim a share of political power may become anchored in the legal system, as was the case in East Germany in 1990. Even under the rule of law, and with all the normal mechanisms of civil society in place, however, citizens are still subject to policies and regulations that are not necessarily of their own choosing. Therefore, in all polities and in all kinds of economic systems, one must still ask how people are brought to contribute to political or economic programs that do not correspond to their understanding of their own interests. Two logical possibilities suggest themselves immediately: Either people are convinced that they *should* contribute to the realization of such programs, or they are made to understand that they *must* contribute, whether they want to or not.

With the formulation of the alternative between the voluntary or compulsory participation of individuals in political or economic programs, we have landed squarely on the terrain of “bourgeois” sociology, as East German theorists of unalienated labor were wont to call it. Founding father Max Weber drew a fundamental distinction between “power” and “authority”. “Power” refers to the ability of a person or a group of persons to realize programs requiring coordinated action, “even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action” (Weber 1978: 926). “Authority”, on the other hand, is defined as “the probability that specific commands (...) will be obeyed by a given group of persons” (Weber 1978: 212). Weber notes that authority “may be based on the most diverse motives of compliance” but insists that, to achieve sufficient stability, “every such system attempts to establish and cultivate the belief in its legitimacy” (Weber 1978: 212-213). Hence, the attention that this author devotes to the topic of legitimate authority.

Weber’s discussion of the three pure types of legitimate authority (traditional, charismatic, and legal-bureaucratic) and his descriptions of the historical forms that authority has taken are well known and need not be summarized here (see Weber 1978). Instead, I turn immediately to a recent critic. Alf Lüdtke, a leading advocate of the history of everyday life, is skeptical of the clear-cut distinction between power and authority, and he rejects the apparent assumption that the compliance of subordinates with the directives of power holders implies a kind of implicit attribution of legitimacy to power holders. He argues that, after only a brief allusion to “the most diverse motives of compliance”, Weber shifts all too quickly to his elaborate discussion of legitimate authority, thus privileging the idea of legitimacy in a way which accommodates the self-understanding of authorities (Lüdtke 1991: 11-12). What Lüdtke misses in Weber’s analysis is an adequate treatment of two very common bases of compliance that have nothing to do with perceptions of legitimacy, namely, “putting up with [authority] silently” and “obedience which expressly preserves the horror of the threat of death or injury characterizing every form of domination” (Lüdtke 1991: 12).

Drawing inspiration from authors such as E.P. Thompson, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu, Lüdtke has sought to formulate an alternative explanation for the apparently compliant behavior of suppressed people. In his study of the role of the police and the military in maintaining public order in early nineteenth century Prussia, he argues, with reference to archival materials which had previously been neglected, that violence and the threat of violence were the most important factors in securing the compliance – or simply controlling the behavior – of the growing urban populations “in the period of transition to industrial capitalism” (Lüdtke 1979: 175; see also Lüdtke 1989).

“For those concerned, state domination is not a question of ‘legitimation’ of power (as M. Weber insisted), nor of stabilizing the social relations of production, but rather one of the bitter experience of physical violence and repression, meaning for them brutality and injustice. This experience may generate the sense of being powerless, stimulating ‘compliance with order’ or apathy, ... [to] which the label ‘attribution of legitimation’ (M. Weber) merely extends the perspective of the dominant” (Lüdtke 1979: 177-178).

In subsequent studies, Lüdtke (1993, 1997) turned his attention especially to industrial workers in Imperial Germany, in the National Socialist state, and in the GDR. In these contexts, he has emphasized the structural limits on workers’ behavior but also their ability to establish spheres of action within which at least a modicum of autonomy was possible. His point is that even behavior appearing to be compliant or obedient may have an altogether different character, which is not immediately obvious. The key concepts in these studies of industrial workers are *Aneignung*, or appropriation, and *Eigensinn* – which may be translated as stubbornness, purposefulness, or, more generally, adherence to one’s own agenda. This latter term, it should be noted, is the one which Hegel uses in the famous passage of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* in order to describe the attitude of the servant to the master (Hegel 1986: 145-155). For both Hegel and Lüdtke, *Eigensinn* signifies a “neither nor” stance, a kind of middle ground between compliance and non-compliance or accommodation and resistance, which, however, contains within it the potential for transformation, at least under the appropriate circumstances.

A more careful reading of Weber suggests that Lüdtke does not do justice to his treatment of forms of domination that do not depend on perceptions of legitimacy (Weber 1958b, 1978; see also Pakulski 1986). Furthermore, Lüdtke’s critique of Weber’s concept of legitimacy underplays its characteristic ambivalence. By specifying the alternative bases of legitimacy, Weber clearly gives to understand that perceptions of legitimacy are never self-evident and always susceptible to challenge from a number of different perspectives, which vary

according to the social origins, habits, experiences, and interests of actors. In fact, Lüdtkke himself provides an argument for retaining the concept of legitimacy, while perhaps using it more carefully, when he observes that victims of state violence view authorities as unjust. This is only possible with reference to a concept of justice, which may serve as a criterion for judging the legitimacy or illegitimacy of any given state agent, agency, or action. Nevertheless, with the concept of *Eigensinn*, which serves as a kind of polar opposite to the general category of legitimacy, Lüdtkke does provide us with a useful tool for isolating aspects of compliant behavior that often go unnoticed. In this sense, it is a welcome addition to our conceptual repertory for reflecting on power and compliance under particular historical circumstances.

With these means at hand, I turn now to case study materials drawn from the GDR, the so-called “Workers’ and Peasants’ State”. Focusing on one region with a mixed industrial and agricultural economy, I compare and contrast the workforces in these two sectors, with special attention to their relationship to the socialist party-state and their variable tendencies to comply with, resist, or otherwise react to its directives.

## **II. The Southern Region of Leipzig – a Site of Power**

The *Südraum Leipzig*, or the Southern Region of Leipzig, is an area of about 70 square kilometers in northwest Saxony, a historical province in the territory that has, since the division of Germany following World War II, been called East Germany. Geographically, this remarkably flat landscape may be viewed as the southernmost extension of the Northern European plain. Previously, it was characterized by small, meandering rivers, meadows, and wetlands. Over the last 150 years, however, the entire region has been continually reshaped, not only in its social, political, and demographic makeup but even in physical structure.

Until the late nineteenth century, the Southern Region was an agricultural hinterland between the cities of Leipzig and Altenburg. Because of laws of land tenure that were introduced into the Principality of Saxony in the early modern period, it was, until the second half of the twentieth century, characterized by small to medium-sized farms, most of which were between five and twenty hectares in size (Blaschke 1965). With the liberal reform of property relations, the economy, and taxation in the post-Napoleonic era, many of these farms became family businesses catering to the growing urban markets of the region (Gross 1968). Then, however, with the development of new technologies, low-grade lignite, or brown coal, which was available in abundance under the earth’s surface, could finally be exploited. The Southern Region became part of the emerging Central German Mining District, which is one

of the three major lignite mining districts in all of Germany (Kretschmar 1998). Since that time, the economy of the Southern Region has included both agriculture and heavy industry.

Even a very brief review of regional developments over the last 150 years is enough to show that both agriculture and industry have been subject to dramatic shifts in policy in five distinct German states. In the area of agricultural production, there has been an alternation between liberal and socialist policies of land tenure, from the liberal reforms of the mid-nineteenth century to the socialist policies of land reform and collectivization after World War II and the reprivatization of agricultural production after 1990 (Gross 1968; Bauerkämper 2002; Eidson and Milligan 2003). Industrial policy has also been characterized by a shift from capitalism to socialism and back to capitalism, but there have been significant continuities as well. Even in the two capitalist phases, the state has played a major role in industrial development. The initial investments in coal mines were made by joint stock companies, but following World War I the most important, the *Aktiengesellschaft Sächsische Werke* (ASW), was run by the state government of Saxony (Bischoff 1997). Then, during the National Socialist era, a state agency called the *Braunkohle-Benzin AG* (BRABAG), or the Brown Coal and Petroleum Company, coordinated the participation of large private corporations in further industrial development. In the Soviet Occupational Zone (1945-1949) and the GDR (1949-1990), the state nationalized heavy industries completely; but even after 1990 state and federal government continued to play an important role, providing multinational corporations with funds which have far exceeded private investment (Dunte 2000).

Whether the state acted alone or together with corporate capital, for most of the twentieth century the result was largely the same: the progressive expansion of the carbo-chemical industries (coal mines, power plants, and chemical refineries).<sup>3</sup> After 1900, this required the periodic recruitment of new labor migrants, the development of new residential complexes, the construction of new power plants and chemical facilities, the opening of new surface mines, the evacuation and destruction of many villages, and the canalization of rivers. It changed the face of the landscape and led to levels of environmental pollution which had reached dangerous proportions by the late twentieth century.

Clearly, this case study provides ample material for reflection on the role of political and economic power in human history and social life. For the purposes of this paper, however, I shall focus on how the people involved in the two main sectors of the economy, industry and agriculture, have experienced these developments and how they have responded to the

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<sup>3</sup> After 1990, all but a few carbo-chemical facilities, including surface mines, were closed; but those remaining in operation, after being modernized, have retained their dominant position in the regional economy (Bilkenroth and Snyder 1998; Brümmer 2002; Roesler and Semmelmann 2002).

exercise of power in the form of industrial and agrarian policy. My two primary examples are the build-up and reduction of the workforce in the carbo-chemical industries and the collectivization and subsequent privatization of agricultural production. Special attention will be paid to differences in the degree to which workers and farmers complied with the corresponding policies and to possible explanations for these differences.

*The Build-up and Reduction of the Workforce in Coal Mining and Related Industries*

Coal was one of the keys to the industrial boom in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany, during which time Leipzig emerged as an important industrial center. Both capital and the state had an interest in developing coal mining and the carbo-chemical industries, which had already been linked to the war economy by the First World War (Kretschmer 1998: 143-149). The instrumentalization of carbo-chemical products for military purposes was even more extreme after 1933, as the National Socialist state regulated the production of energy, industrial products, and synthetic fuels for its own purposes. As noted, BRABAG, or the Coal and Petroleum Company, was founded at this time. This was a state-sponsored industrial concern, which was responsible for the expansion of carbo-chemical industries in Germany, in cooperation with large private firms such as the *Deutsche Erdöl AG* (DEA) and *IG Farben* (Hofmann 1995: 92-97).

During this time, the carbo-chemical plants in Böhlen and in Espenhain, two towns within the Southern Region, were expanded dramatically. This required a larger labor force, and during the National Socialist era over 10,000 new workers were recruited, not from the Social Democratic milieu in Leipzig but mainly from the Vogtland and the Erzgebirge, mountainous areas along the Saxon border with Czechoslovakia and Bavaria. The sociologist Michael Hofmann describes the social milieu from which the new workers were drawn as one “without tradition”, by which he means that it had no connection to the social and cultural life of the organized workers’ movement, which had its regional center in the nearby city of Leipzig.<sup>4</sup>

During the National Socialist era, those employed in the mines and carbo-chemical plants of the Southern Region included engineers and skilled workers, but the great majority of the workers were unskilled. Nevertheless, all employees and laborers received relatively high salaries and good benefits. Hofmann characterizes this as a case of “paternalistic clientelism”

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<sup>4</sup> In this section, I rely on Hofmann (1995), whose work on the carbo-chemical workers of Espenhain, in the Southern Region of Leipzig, is based on archival research and on extensive life history and oral history interviews conducted in 1991 and 1992. On the social milieus of these workers, see Hofmann (1995: 94). On Leipzig’s role as one of the national centers for the Social Democratic movement in Germany, see Adam (2000).

on the part of state (Hofmann 1995: 95, 121). The coal miners and carbo-chemical workers were a “strategic group” in the eyes of policy makers, who acquired their loyalty by granting them privileges (see Pakulski 1986: 50). Sixty percent of its members belonged to the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP).

Following the Second World War, the carbo-chemical industry in the Southern Region was nationalized by the Soviet authorities and the emerging socialist state, but policies vis-à-vis the workforce remained remarkably consistent. The elite group of engineers and skilled workers was subjected to political reeducation, while the mass of workers were paid well and provided with housing, garden plots, sport facilities, and cultural centers. As in the National Socialist regime, the socialists sought to establish a loyal clientele in industries with strategic importance. Party membership, this time in the Socialist Unity Party (which was formed by merging the Communist and Social Democratic parties in 1946) was correspondingly high (Hofmann 1995: 96-114).

East Germany has brown coal in abundance, but this is its only significant energy resource. Otherwise, it is dependent upon the import of oil and natural gas, and during the so-called Cold War, the GDR imported these resources from the Soviet Union. Among “brothers”, as the allied socialist or communist states referred to each other, prices were low at first; but, as a consequence of the international oil crisis of the 1970s, oil and natural gas from the Soviet Union became more expensive for the GDR and other Soviet Bloc countries (Schroeder 1998: 269-270).

In the last decade and a half of the socialist era, the economy of the GDR declined and new investments in the carbo-chemical industry were insufficient. This led to a worsening of conditions and growing dissatisfaction in the workforce. The poor economic performance in the latter years of the GDR, together with unchecked industrial pollution, contributed in no small measure to the legitimacy crisis that ended with the fall of the socialist government (Hofmann 1995: 114-128).

After 1990, when the East German economy was opened to global pressures, most industries collapsed. In the Southern Region of Leipzig, the number of jobs in the carbo-chemical industries fell from 30,000 to 3,000 by 1993 (Hofmann 1995: 91; cf. Fobe et al. 1999: 41). Together with the representatives of West German labor unions, the former leaders of the East German concerns took an active role in finding new investors in the carbo-chemical industries and in persuading state and federal government to back their plan. Their goal was to stop deindustrialization and save jobs, but their measures directly affected only a small fraction of those employed in these industries, including especially the engineers and skilled workers. Most unskilled workers lost their jobs, went into early retirement, or entered

into retraining programs. Many younger workers left the region entirely, moving to Hamburg or to southern Germany in search of jobs. There was a “graying” of the region and a retreat into private life, for example, into the world of private bungalows and gardens, which are centers for gatherings of families and intimate circles of friends (Hofmann 1995: 128-135). Nevertheless, there is still widespread support for the new industrial policy, despite the dearth of jobs. Retired carbo-chemical workers benefit from the relatively high pensions for which they are eligible, thanks in part to the intervention of the West German labor union for the coal mining, chemical, and energy industries, which also maintains a presence in the region and organizes an annual round of social and political gatherings.

### *The Collectivization and Privatization of Agricultural Production*

The GDR was known as the *Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat*, that is, the Workers’ and Peasants’ State; but, in some ways at least, the relationship of the socialist state to the former was less problematic than its relationship to the latter. Since industrial workers had already been deprived of the means of production in the course of the development of capitalism, the state simply replaced capital as the owner of the factories, which were then called *Volkseigene Betriebe* (VEB), or people’s enterprises. In contrast to the capitalists of the earlier era, the socialist state offered full employment, along with reasonably generous welfare benefits; but it had difficulties in supplying industries with the necessary materials and in providing workers with adequate housing, sufficient consumer goods, and high salaries – with the exception of selected “strategic” industries, which received special treatment, at least for limited periods of time (Hofmann 1995: 121). At the conclusion of World War II, however, the agricultural means of production were still in the hands of the estate owners and farmers, who first had to be deprived of their property, before the state could build up a loyal following among agricultural workers. The “Cooperative Plan of Lenin”, to which socialist policy makers referred so frequently, required, first, the expropriation of the large estates and, then, the formation of different kinds of agricultural cooperatives, which required an ever increasing centralization of land management, farming inventory, production, and decision making.<sup>5</sup> The goal of agricultural policy was not only to produce foodstuffs but also to break the power of different classes of landowners. The desired result was the creation of a new

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<sup>5</sup> For an East German rendition of the Cooperative Plan of Lenin, see Arlt (1959). Until recently, both East and West German writers have tended to interpret the postwar land reform (1945 to 1948) as a precursor to collectivization (1952 to 1960 and beyond), but Dix (2002) and others have challenged this view. My comments on East German agriculture are based primarily on fieldwork and archival research in the Southern Region of Leipzig, conducted intermittently from 1994 to 1998 and intensively in 2001 and 2002. For publications to date, see Eidson (1998, 2001, 2003) and Eidson and Milligan (2003).

class of agricultural laborers which was integrated into the socialist economy in much the same way as was the class of industrial laborers. The fact that the state needed the expertise of farmers (who were usually also landowners) in order to ensure the success of the collectivized agricultural enterprises complicated the picture further.

The realization of both the economic and social aspects of agricultural policy occurred in stages (Bauerkämper 2002; Eidson and Milligan 2003). In the land reform of 1945, all agricultural enterprises with over 100 hectares were seized by the provisional government, which was under the direct supervision of the Soviet military administration. Two thirds of this land was redistributed in small plots to so-called “new farmers”, that is, war refugees and rural laborers who became the first beneficiaries of socialist agricultural policies. Then, in 1952, the party state announced its decision to begin with the collectivization of agricultural production, that is, with the pooling of land and farming inventory in agricultural cooperatives. The first cooperatives farms were founded in 1952 and 1953, often by rural laborers and failed “new farmers”, using fields from the land reform and from abandoned farms. Private farms continued to exist alongside the new socialist enterprises for seven more years. Finally, in 1960, all farmers were forced to join one of the socialist cooperative farms, either through economic pressures, through harassment, or through the exercise of violence.

Farmers who had remained independent up until 1960 had the option of joining one of the already existing “type III” cooperatives, which were fully collectivized, or of founding new cooperatives. Usually, the farmers chose to found new “type I” cooperatives, in which only crop production was done collectively, while animal husbandry, which was quite lucrative, continued to be private. From the viewpoint of state officials and party functionaries, the type I cooperative was a compromise solution. It allowed them induce all farmers to join one cooperative or another but at the cost of delaying their plan to promote the fully collectivized type III cooperative farms. By withholding machinery, fertilizer, and fodder, state agents applied pressure to the type I cooperatives and caused them to merge with the existing type III cooperatives – a process which was largely completed by the mid-1970s. With their incorporation into the type III cooperatives, the farmers (who had already relinquished their land) lost control over their remaining farming inventory, though they retained the right to pursue small-scale domestic production with a half hectare of land and a limited number of animals.

In East Germany, as in many other countries in the Soviet Bloc, farmers confronted with collectivization often preferred to abandon agriculture or to put in their hours at the cooperative farm, while concentrating on the “family minifundia” to which they were legally entitled (Szelényi 1988: 23; see also Eckart 1983). It is less well known, however, that from

the 1960s to the mid-1970s even the type III cooperatives sometimes became sanctuaries of farmers whose aims were to surpass established delivery quotas so that they could sell their surplus products for higher prices and distribute the extra earnings among their members (Eidson and Milligan 2003; see also Kuntsche 1993: 206; Nehrig 2000: 216). This entrepreneurial orientation, which seemed to indicate continuity with the farmers' old habits, was one of the reasons for eliminating the type III farms in the next phase of socialist agricultural policy. Planners supposed that, with the progressive industrialization and specialization of agricultural production, a new agricultural workforce would emerge which was comparable to the industrial proletariat, the revolutionary class.

The new drive toward industrialization meant merging the cooperative farms of neighboring villages and, simultaneously, splitting them into specialized enterprises for crop production and animal husbandry. Together, the two types of specialized cooperatives formed large "units of cooperation". Since, however, they satisfied quotas independently of one another and kept separate accounts, which were monitored by state agents, they had difficulty in making clandestine transfers of fodder to the farm animals – which was one trick that the members of type III cooperatives has used in order to increase earnings from the sale of surplus milk (Eidson 1998: 106).

Many of the farmers who had acquiesced to collectivization and contributed to the success of the cooperative farms felt cheated when the policies of industrialization and specialization caused the demise of the type III cooperatives. As one farmer in my field site told me, "The whole cooperative farm was more or less torn apart (...) When crop production was separated from animal husbandry, they started going in different directions" (Eidson 1998: 107). This development entailed the expansion of management and an increase in the authority of managers, to the detriment of "intra-cooperative democracy", as practiced in the membership assemblies of the cooperative farms (Langenhan 2001). Those sons and daughters of local farming families who had been sent away to study agronomy were integrated into the cooperative farm management, while the bulk of members and employees were largely excluded from decision making but were consoled with regular working conditions, adequate pay, and favorable benefits, on one hand, and with the possibility for extra earnings through small-scale private production, on the other (Eidson 1998; Schier 2001). As a result, farmers felt themselves to be privileged, alienated, or discriminated against, depending upon their variable roles in and attitudes toward the cooperative farm and the larger unit of cooperation.

Given the variable ways in which farmers resisted or assimilated to socialist agricultural policies, it is not surprising that responses to the privatization policies of the 1990s were more heterogeneous and conflict-laden than they were among workers in the carbo-chemical

industries. The Agricultural Adjustment Act, which was passed by the East German legislature in mid-1990 and adopted into the law of the German Federal Republic later that same year, required that land owners and workers be compensated for the contributions that they had made to the assets of the cooperative farms, beginning in 1953. Landowners were gratified to regain control of their property and to receive at least some compensation for the loss of its use, but they differed in their attitudes toward the legal successors to the cooperative farms. Attitudes toward the successor enterprises depended upon a number of factors, including one's age, one's experiences under socialism, and one's degree of participation in the socialist cooperative (Eidson and Milligan 2003: 85-88). Those who were still resentful of losing their property rights often chose to remove their land from the successors to the cooperative farms and to lease it to the few farmers who were willing to start up new private enterprises. Others, including especially those who had come to accept the socialist cooperative, especially in the form of the type III farm, left their land and even their monetary assets in the successor enterprises. In this way, they still had some (usually very modest) interest income, and they also had the sense that their "life work" had not been entirely in vain, insofar as something remained of the cooperative farm that they had helped to build up. Of course, the survival of the legal successors to the socialist cooperatives – large cooperatives or corporations under federal law – was bought at the price of a reduction in forces of 90% or more. To cite a typical example, one agricultural conglomerate (consisting of two specialized cooperatives) in the Southern Region of Leipzig had employed 400 people in the closing years of the GDR, but today its successor has less than 40 employees. Usually, the non-native agricultural workers, whom the socialist state had cultivated as its special clientele, took their share of the assets and left the region entirely after 1990.<sup>6</sup>

### **III. Clients, Constituents, and the Ongoing Negotiation of the Social Contract**

How are we to understand the varying degrees to which industrial workers and cooperative farmers complied with political power in the GDR? The central concepts of Weber and

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<sup>6</sup> There is ample evidence supporting the generalization that socialist policy favored landless members or employees of the cooperative farms, especially those who shifted from urban to rural labor. The explicit goals of socialist policy-makers included "overcoming the differences among cooperative farmers that originated in earlier modes of production" (Arlt 1959: 51). Therefore, in the early years of collective agriculture, many various privileges compensated landless members for their real or supposed disadvantages vis-à-vis landowning members (Arlt 1959: 47-49; see also Eidson 1998). The formation of new inter-village relations of "cooperation", beginning in the 1970s, had even stronger leveling effects, which were achieved by increasing centralization and, simultaneously, favoring mobile and landless members or employees (for a literary treatment of this process, see Körner 1988: 133.136). For general discussions of the intentional leveling of social differences during the 40 year history of East German agricultural policy, see Schier (2001: 282-285) and Bauerkämper (2002: 499-503).

Lüdtke, namely, legitimate authority and *Eigensinn*, are indispensable for these purposes, but, in and of themselves, they are insufficient. Rather, they must be supplemented by a third concept, or a set of related concepts, which create a link between participation in the projects of the powerful, on one hand, and following one's own agenda, on the other. This set of concepts includes minimally clientelism and interest group politics, which may be specified with reference to what Pakulski (1986: 56) calls "less well known aspects of Weber's analysis" or to the anthropological literature on exchange or, more specifically, redistribution.

First of all, it is important to concede that it is possible to be a sincere advocate either of communism or "actually existing socialism", on one hand, or of parliamentary democracy and the "free market", on the other. In fact, the evidence is overwhelming that belief in the fundamental legitimacy of a certain political and economic order makes it possible for believers to rationalize a whole series of apparent violations of the values upon which their convictions may be presumed to rest. Self-conscious belief and active loyalty may, in fact, be quite widespread, corresponding to the integration of broad segments of the population through programs such as the educational system, government employment, military service, and welfare, on one hand, and corporate employment and various kinds of health, retirement, and investment plans, on the other.

Nevertheless, the unfailing need of power holders to present themselves as rightful authorities indicates that loyalty is probably never unconditional or unlimited, at least not for the entire population. Thus, state governments, political parties, large corporations – in fact, all large organizations that must, for one reason or another, take public opinion into account – pursue strategies of legitimization. For both parliamentary democracies and socialist governments, we know the characteristic forms only too well: electoral campaigns, free elections, free media, press conferences, and "spin control", in the first case; and party congresses, political festivals, and invocations of the heroic struggle, its great heroes, its great achievements, and its future grandeur in the second.

Ideological exercises for legitimating particular political systems or particular power holders are subject to skepticism and criticism, both from without and within. The citizens of the GDR, not to mention those of other socialist states, were all familiar with the empty phrases and pathetic gestures, and corresponding feelings of frustration seem to have become more widespread in the late 1980s. While the GDR was still in place, West German radio and television programs, which could be received in most of East Germany and which contradicted official pronouncements implicitly and explicitly, appeared to have "spoken (...) truth to power", to borrow a phrase from James Scott (1990: 8). For Scott (1990: 221), transactions of this sort contribute to the "social production of charisma". After 1990,

however, the messages that previously served to expose the fraud of GDR propaganda became disenchanted, at least to some degree, and many East Germans are now impatient with the omnipresence of “public relations” and share with some West Germans the widespread cynicism and apathy regarding politics that is summarized with the term *Politikverdrossenheit*, or political malaise.

Boredom and cynicism in the face of political propaganda and related phenomena point to the limits of purely ideological means for fostering perceptions of legitimacy and feelings of loyalty. What other means are available for achieving this end? The reference to the relationship between “societal goals” and “personal interests” at the outset of this paper provides a clue. Leaving aside the utopian dream of a perfect coincidence between these two aspects of social life, compliance with power may still be facilitated if participation in larger political and economic programs can be made to harmonize with actors’ attempts to lead fulfilling lives at a human scale. Such attempts may include feelings of satisfaction at having contributed to a worthy cause, for example, through loyalty or opposition to the state, but the phrase “life at a human scale” is meant to refer especially to the pursuit of personal goals of reproduction within relatively small-scale social networks, including finding work and securing an income, founding a family, establishing some kind of dwelling, providing for children and grandchildren, pursuing one’s avocation, and so on.

In the simplest possible formulation, one might say that the state can foster the harmony of “societal goals” and “personal interests” by distributing rewards that provide for the social, cultural, and material needs of the individuals and families making up the larger population. Alternatively, it may be sufficient to provide these benefits only for certain “strategic groups” (Pakulski 1986: 50). This point is fundamental to Weber’s analysis of larger trends in political history. “To maintain a dominion by force”, he maintains, the power holder typically seeks to monopolize the “means of administration” and, subsequently, to ensure the obedience of staff members by distributing material goods among them (Weber 1958b: 81). Similarly, Sahlins, in his comparative analysis of political development in the various indigenous cultures of the Pacific, describes the chief’s “redistribution of the fund of power” (that is, of “excess product”) to his coterie as “the supreme art of (...) politics” (Sahlins 1968: 171).<sup>7</sup> Under the rubric of “mass clientelism” or “political clientelism”, this general approach was pursued by anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists in the context of a broad interdisciplinary program, beginning in the mid-1970s (Graziano 1975; Schmidt et al. 1977); but the participants in this program later followed separate paths, often moving away from their own empirical materials in pursuit of larger syntheses (e.g., Wolf 1982, 1999; Scott 1985, 1990,

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<sup>7</sup> Sahlins (1968) borrowed the phrase “fund of power” from Malinowski (1970: 59).

1998). Now, after the attempted syntheses of the 1980s and the subsequent squabbles over their epistemological bases (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fox 1991), there is much to recommend a return to empirical case studies, which are framed in terms that allow both the descent into micro-politics and the ascent to higher levels of integration or conflict (e.g., Kalb et al. 1996).

In the Southern Region of Leipzig – a province within the GDR, which has been described as an *Arbeitsgesellschaft*, or a society that was organized largely through the workplace (Kohli 1994) – the most palpable example of compliance was the case of the industrial workers in the carbo-chemical industry at the time when they were helping to “construct socialism” and also benefiting from the generosity of the state. This close compliance was facilitated by the fact that the industrial workforce was made up largely of migrants, who had no ties to the region outside of their workplace and who achieved solidarity in their mutual privilege (Hofmann 1995: 92-97).<sup>8</sup> At the end of a long period of rebuilding and with the onset of the enduring economic crisis in the mid-1970s, there was a gradual disengagement of this workforce from programs for production in the sense intended by state authorities (Hofmann 1995: 114-128; Weber 2000: 90-95). Working conditions worsened and the gap between state goals and personal interests widened, as workers were left with little choice but to put in their hours on the job, while exploiting the resources of the workplace for private purposes – for example, in their own homes and gardens, which corresponded to the proverbial “niches” of East German society (Gaus 1983).

In contrast to the workers in the carbo-chemical industries, many of the cooperative farmers rarely emerged from the stage that was characterized by *Eigensinn*, or appropriation and the pursuit of one’s own agenda. Rather than contributing to the “construction of socialism” – a phrase which, in the agrarian sector, meant depriving small holders of their land – they pursued their own entrepreneurial interests as independent farmers, as members of the partially collectivized type I cooperatives, or in the miniature domestic operations which were allowed by law (Eidson 1998; Schier 2001). Even in the fully collectivized type III cooperatives, they sometimes fulfilled their quotas only as a kind of side effect of pursuing their entrepreneurial interests under new circumstances (Eidson and Milligan 2003). From the viewpoint of state agents, the farmers were a more intractable population, since they maintained their local residences, social networks, and received modes of economic behavior, at least to some degree (see Scott 1998: 309-319). The final attempt to subdue this portion of

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<sup>8</sup> In the terms of a recent work by Scott (1998: 183-184), the carbo-chemical facilities of the Southern Region of Leipzig represent a “state space”, characterized by “sedentarization, concentration, and radical simplification”, conditions which make it more “legible” for state authorities.

the population and transform its members into either cooperative farm managers or rural proletarians, that is, to reduce it to dependence on the state, took the form of the regional centralization and functional differentiation of agricultural production, which made informal money making-activities within the cooperative farm much more difficult. It is unclear, however, what would have happened in the long run, since there is every indication that the resistance to the separation of crop production and animal husbandry continued unabated and began to have effects in the form of policy reversals in the 1980s (Reichelt 1992).

In the cases cited, then, compliance with power would seem to depend upon the degree to which state policies allow people to realize projects that they claim as their own. Workers in a “strategic” industry experienced conditions that met or exceeded their expectations, at least for a period of time, thus allowing them to gain satisfaction both in the workplace and in their private lives. Farmers, on the other hand, were often at cross-purposes with the state and felt compelled to seek ways of subverting official policies. No doubt this contrast is somewhat overdrawn, especially with regard to later decades, when conditions deteriorated in the carboc-chemical industries and when many farmers came to terms with developments under socialism. Nevertheless, the general principle regarding the interdependence of compliance with power, on one hand, and the ability to realize personal goals remains valid.

This suggests that compliance with power, even when it is long-lasting, is always provisional, depending upon what might be called the ongoing negotiation of the social contract.<sup>9</sup> Nothing legitimizes like the distribution of “just rewards”, which, I would suggest, actors typically measure in terms of their ability to realize personal projects in the life-cycle of approximately three generations of family members.<sup>10</sup> Correspondingly, nothing delegitimizes like the failure to provide for a group of clients or constituents. Arguably, however, this relationship between perceived legitimacy and the distribution of rewards should not be seen merely as an arrangement based on “tit for tat”. It is probably more fruitful to conceive of it in terms of modulation between two logically distinct possibilities, first, rewards as a by-product of willing contributions to a larger cause and, second, rewards as a

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<sup>9</sup> My argument resembles that of Pakulski (1986: 48), who writes of the “conditional tolerance” of socialist regimes by Eastern European populations, and that of Kopstein (1996: 394), who discusses the East German government’s relationship with workers in terms of a “tacit social contract”. Pakulski’s suggestion that “Soviet-type” regimes lacked legitimacy may be somewhat less applicable to East Germany, because of the lasting effects and the universal condemnation of National Socialist crimes. As “antifascists”, East German socialists could claim to be representatives of a positive national tradition, thus depriving dissidents of the opportunity to mount a nationalist opposition to socialism. See the discussion to this effect in Thompson (1996).

<sup>10</sup> This reference to three generational planning is a hypothesis, which requires further empirical investigation and testing. Three generations correspond roughly to those ancestors and descendants who may still have face-to-face contact with one another.

payment for services which would otherwise be withheld.<sup>11</sup> Of course, neither willing contributions nor quasi-contractual services are a foregone conclusion, as Lüdtke has rightly insisted; but once loyalty has been achieved or sustained through “just rewards”, it is probably quite resilient and capable of surviving their periodic withdrawal. Probably no political regime can survive, however, if it fails indefinitely to provide for the needs of those segments of the population among which it seeks its followers.<sup>12</sup> This formulation allows, of course, for a wide range of variation, since there are many ways of cultivating loyalty among privileged minorities, which then aid in the suppression of the majority.

In accordance with structural-functionalist versions of modernization theory, many social scientists continue to draw a sharp distinction between clientelism and citizenship (Szelenyi 1988: 22) or between “vertical relations of authority and dependence” and “horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation” (Putnam 1993: 88). Clearly, this is legitimate for many purposes. In order to spell out the implications of the comparative analysis presented in this paper, however, it would be necessary to isolate a kind of conceptual middle ground from which models of both clientelism and citizenship or civil society are equally derived. In parliamentary democracies with market economies, material benefits are distributed not only through public policy (the stimulation of economic growth, social welfare programs, interest-group politics, “pork barrel” politics, support for the arts, etc.) but also through the private sector (e.g., salaries and benefits, competitive pricing, sponsoring). In the planned economies of the socialist world, the state has or had a near monopoly on the distribution of material benefits in the form of full employment policies, low consumer prices, a commitment to gender equality, and the tolerance of informal strategies in the face of material shortages. In either case, there are or were established mechanisms for distributing benefits among members of the population and for discriminating among various categories of beneficiaries.

The citizens of the GDR were willing or unwilling clients of the socialist state, even though this was truer of some segments of the population than of others. In the new federal states of united Germany, however, the role of the patron has been rendered plural and particular. Clearly, the federal government has assumed the lion’s share of responsibility, for example, by modernizing transportation, communications, and communal infrastructures, subsidizing

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<sup>11</sup> In other words, rewards accruing to individuals for their contributions to the realization of societal goals may have the character either of gift exchange or of purchase and sale – or of both simultaneously (see Mauss 2000). Another analogy might be drawn to Weber’s discussion of the relationship between hard work and economic success in Calvinism and capitalism, respectively (Weber 1958a). In the first case, hard work is a sign of salvation, and economic success is merely epiphenomenal. In the second case, however, there is a radical turnabout, as economic success becomes the motive for hard work. The ambiguity between these two options and the ease of transformation between them lies at the center of Weber’s analysis.

<sup>12</sup> Compare Conradt’s (1989: 221-225) discussion of the relationship between “system performance” and “system affect” or “diffuse support”, which may lead to the formation of a “reserve of goodwill” among citizens with regard to their government.

private investment, and taking steps to increase the availability of consumer goods. Nevertheless, despite or perhaps because of government privatization policies, private investment has been disappointing and massive public investment has failed to solve the problem of high unemployment. Consequently, there is, among many, a general feeling of malaise, which is punctuated by occasional warnings from East German members of parliament and by campaign promises on the eve of elections (Grix 1999).

Some of the lobbies have been successful in taking care of their own, particularly in the case of the *Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau, Chemie, Energie* (IGBCE), or the Union for the Mining, Chemical, and Energy Industries, which helped to secure relatively high pensions for former workers in the carbo-chemical industry, many of whom went into retirement or early-retirement after 1990. This has only served to strengthen the support of former workers for policies that keep the carbo-chemical industry alive with a mere fraction of the former workforce.

Characteristically, the agricultural lobby is split among those associations which represent the interests of the legal successors to the socialist cooperative farms – which are now cooperatives or corporations under West German law – and those which represent the interests of private farmers. And, in fact, the latter are divided amongst themselves. Until now, the new cooperatives and corporate farms have benefited from the agricultural subsidies of the European Union (EU), but, since 1998, they have been unsettled by the promotion of ecological farming by the current “Green” head of the Federal Ministry for Consumer Protection, Food, and Agriculture. In addition, there is, in anticipation of the expansion of the EU eastward, an ongoing discussion of reforms in agrarian policy, which could lead to the dissolution of the large East German farms with 1,000 to 4,000 hectares of arable land. Ironically, these successors to the socialist cooperatives have been well served by right-of-center Christian Democratic politicians since 1990.

In the realm of local politics, which, in the Southern Region is dominated by the former members of the managerial classes of the carbo-chemical industries and the agricultural cooperatives, the emphasis has been on the renovation of housing and the modernization of utilities and the transportation infrastructure. These are very popular measures, though the distribution of costs is controversial, especially in the case of the water supply. In general, area voters have, since 1990, preferred to elect Christian Democrats, who have a reputation for economic competence, to communal offices, while sending a mixture of Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and Democratic Socialists (members of the party that succeeded the Socialist Unity Party) to the state and federal legislatures, where entitlements are at stake.

Many settlements in the Southern Region of Leipzig have benefited either directly or indirectly from the arrival of a new set of economic patrons, namely, the multinational corporations that have invested in the coal mines, power plants, and the carbo-chemical complex in and around Böhlen-Lippendorf. This site represents one of the largest concentrated industrial investments in the state of Saxony, and it was supported by state and federal governments with financial assistance exceeding private contributions (Dunte 2000). The local managers and public relations officers of the coal mining, energy, and chemical companies are known personalities, who sometimes speak at ceremonial public functions and are often pictured in local newspapers shaking hands with the mayor of this or that town or village. What is more, the companies in question regularly distribute leaflets which assure members of the local population that their production practices meet the top standards of environmental protection. The “catch” is that this huge investment by private industry, the state government, and the federal government has not come close to replacing the jobs that were lost in the early 1990s. In the modern mining, power, and chemical facilities, only a few thousand now do the work that used to employ tens of thousands. There are, of course, critics who question whether the industrial policy of the Saxon government has resulted in the maximum benefit to the region, but the evidence suggests that most residents approve of the fact that there is some continuity in the industries which shaped the region and to which many of them devoted their lives. One index of the attitudes of the inhabitants of the region is the response to the situation in Heuersdorf, a village which is scheduled to be torn down in the wake of an expanding coal mine.<sup>13</sup> Participants in the campaign to save Heuersdorf include the local pastor, the 50% of the villagers who have not yet sold their homes to the coal mining company, and a few environmental activists from Leipzig and other urban centers. Most area residents – many of whom have already been resettled because of surface mining – have little sympathy for Heuersdorf, and some see the campaign to save the village as a ploy to jack up the price of real estate.

Since the Southern Region of Leipzig is one of the parts of Germany where unemployment is the highest (officially circa 20%), it is fair to say that the pluralistic and fragmentary forms of patronage or interest group politics which the population now enjoys are inadequate. Many of the younger, more highly qualified people have left the region entirely, usually for West Germany, where they often find work. A rather noisy minority of young men and women in, for example, the former mining center of Borna have drawn their own consequences and

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<sup>13</sup> Heuersdorf is supposed to be the last or one of the last villages in the vicinity of Leipzig that disappears because of surface mining. Since the 1920s, mining has caused the full or partial destruction of over 70 villages in this area (Kabisch and Berkner 1996: 131).

associated themselves with rightwing movements. Others are following their own agendas as much as possible, while adopting a “wait and see” attitude toward authority.

#### **IV. Power and Ambivalence**

In the exercise of power, the ability to determine the bounds of the collectivity, to define the rights and duties of its members, and to allocate tasks among them is at least “half of the battle”. Therefore, in political systems that are more or less pluralistic – insofar as they admit various forms of individual initiative and collective action in the broad middle-range between the state and its citizens – much of what counts as politics is devoted precisely to such issues. If, however, opportunities for individual initiative and collective action are limited, as in the case of one-party states such as the GDR, then securing the participation of the various members of the population in the realization of state-level projects often presents special problems.

Speaking schematically, one can distinguish two options: Members of the population may be convinced that state-level projects are in their own interest, or they may be forced or induced to participate in their realization, at least minimally, even if they view them as unrelated or diametrically opposed to their own interests.

Perhaps most examples drawn from life in society may be located somewhere along a continuum stretching between these two extremes, which may be characterized briefly in terms of the perceived legitimacy of power (as authority) and the *Eigensinn* of those who are resigned to putting up with power to the degree that they must, while pursuing their own ends as well as they can. The mid-point along this continuum is a realm of creative ambivalence corresponding to Weber’s (1978: 246) concept of the “routinization of charisma”, the coincidence of ideal and material interests. The ambivalence characterizing this realm should probably be viewed not as the exception to the rule but as the normal state of affairs, from which all “pure types” are equally derived. This is the realm occupied by human beings, who are thrown into the world together and who inherit or acquire ties, interests, networks, ideals, ambitions, opportunities, and relations of enmity, all of which are characterized by differing degrees of inertia and plasticity and which, therefore, shift to varying degrees with changing circumstances. This ambivalence may be reduced or clarified in conjunction with inducements which power holders offer to those whose participation is required for the realization of their projects. When such inducements are organized systematically and benefit various sectors of the population differentially, we may speak either of political clientelism or simply of more or less privileged constituencies.

In this paper, I have, however, argued that such inducements have a double quality: They may be understood as supplemental to willing compliance – in a word, to loyalty – *or* as constitutive of it, at least potentially. If this is so, then compliance or noncompliance with power should, ultimately, be seen as the result of ends/means calculations based on constantly or at least frequently shifting variables, none of which qualify as being fully independent of others or entirely dependent on others. In particular instances, of course, people’s responses to the exercise of power may seem to be based on either “Publick Benefits” or “Private Vices”, on *Wertrationalität* or *Zweckrationalität*, or on culture or practical reason; but, most generally, they are based on neither nor and on both the one and the other.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The oppositions that I am attempting to mediate come from Bernard de Mandeville (as quoted in Dumont 1977: 63), Weber (1976), and Sahlins (1976).

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