

"FORCED" SECULARITY? ***On the Appropriation of Repressive Secularization***

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ABSTRACT: Analyses of the effects of religion policy in dictatorial regimes face a twofold challenge: On the one hand, they run the danger of losing sight of the historical circumstances behind the attitudes that developed under dictatorial conditions; on the other hand, they tend to deny the existence of any inner plausibility for these due to the conditions of their development. This article addresses the rapid process of de-churching and subjective secularization that began to take hold in the GDR in the mid-1950s. It presents the results of a qualitative study, in which members of 3 family generations were asked about their family histories on the backdrop of the societal and religious changes during the GDR-time. By analyzing the basic lines of conflict in the secularization process as well as the interpretational frames that are used by the respondents, it is shown how they give meaning to their experiences, and in what sense the "imposed" process of secularization could gain subjective plausibility. The term "forced secularity" is used to catch the connection between the dictatorial measures as well as the subjective appropriation of what was going on. It is argued that it is necessary to understand the interplay of both in order to explain the success of dictatorial religion policy.

KEYWORDS: secularization, secularity, secularism, dictatorial regime, scientism, subjective appropriation, religion and politics

INTRODUCTION

Analyses of the effects of religion policy in dictatorial regimes face a twofold challenge: On the one hand, one runs the danger of losing sight of the *historical circumstances behind the* attitudes that developed under dictatorial conditions by focusing solely on the persistence of these attitudes in the long term. As if one could derive from the high level of areligiosity and distance from church among the Eastern German populace – 20 years after the great political changes – that the measures of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) which ran the German Democratic Republic (GDR), only accelerated matters that were already mentally underway and which would have come to pass anyway, sooner or later. In this light, the status of religion in Eastern German is often also viewed as the "future of the West", i.e. the process of de-churching and secularization is viewed as a kind of automatism.

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The other – converse – danger is to deny the existence of any *inner plausibility* for extant attitudes due to the conditions of their development under a dictatorship. As if the decisions made in the GDR and their stabilization through and beyond the political changes had been *solely* forced, and therefore – unlike the development in western Germany – could not at all be viewed in terms of being “authentic, genuine secularization” (Oevermann 2003, 386).

The interplay between the actions and orientations of those involved, on the one hand, and political decisions and ideological programming, on the other, can thus skew to one of the two extremes. Picking up on Margaret Archer’s terminology, one can describe the former as *upwards conflation* (Archer 1996: 46ff.) and the latter as *downwards conflation* (Archer 1996: 25ff.). One of the two is then viewed simply as the *consequence* of the other, and the concrete interplay of the two (personal attitudes and practices vs. politics and ideology) need no longer be investigated.

This article addresses a phenomenon that is undoubtedly to be seen as an *effect* of the GDR dictatorship: the rapid process of de-churching and subjective secularization that began to take hold in the GDR in the mid-1950s (cf. Pollack 1994 and others). While it is uncontroversial that this is closely connected to the repressive measures of the GDR regime, this does make Eastern Germany – long after the collapse of the GDR and on into the present – into a specific cultural “landscape” within Germany in terms of religion. Even compared with other parts of the world, Eastern Germany is prominent if not unique in its high levels of religious non-affiliation and self-confessed atheism. Similar figures can be found in only a few countries such as the Czech Republic, Estonia, and the Netherlands. This leads to the question of how the dominance of areligious attitudes and practices could remain constant through and beyond the end of the regime’s repression, i.e. why the “GDR Experiment”, which failed in so many other ways, in its anti-religion policy must be deemed successful in the long term. Or to put it another way: This leads to the question of the *appropriation* of a process that was set into motion from above.

In the study that I refer to here (Wohlrab-Sahr et al. 2009), we used the term “forced secularity” to describe this tension between the dictatorial context in question and subjective appropriation. In doing so, we made concerted use of the ambiguity that lies in the term “force”. While people can certainly be forced to do something externally, they can also do something in a “forced manner”, driven from within. Neither are we faced only with ‘imposed’ or ‘forced secularization’ (Meulemann 2003; Froese 2004b) as if the secularized outcome were *exclusively* the result of force. Nor is what we find simply “modern secularity”, the roots of which need no longer be investigated². The term “forced secularity” is meant to steer our view toward both the *subjective appropriation of something perpetuated by coercion* and the *subjective foundations of something forced by repressive measures*. In order to explain the success of the SED’s policy of secularization, it is our view that we also need to understand the processes of appropriation and the connected forms of plausibilization.

The secularization process was – with regard to the instruments of implementation – undoubtedly induced through repression, and is in this sense “imposed” secularization. Without repression, it would not have succeeded as rapidly or as thoroughly as was indeed the case. *However*: The secularization process in the GDR was – as we posit here – successful in the long run because it was able to develop an inner plausibility that could be separated out from its context of implementation. This plausibility – I posit – is founded in its links to the fundamentals of the Enlightenment. The development of Eastern Germany was thus part of the basic tenor of European modernity, which is well understood to have included both authoritarian and liber-

²This should not be understood, however, to mean that there is a kind of “secularity”, the development of which is self-explanatory in terms of the quality of modern society. I use “modern secularity” here more as a common-sense term in which the combination of secularity and modernity is taken for granted. Luckmann (1985) has considered this as one of the myths of modern societies.

al aspects. The fact that other Communist countries with comparable ideologies had – whether immediately or in the long term – lesser success with regard to the secularization process (e.g. in Poland or Russia) must also be discussed in relation to the questions of social support (e.g. ties to the relevant milieus) and of the plausibility that ideologies of enlightenment had within their specific contexts, as well as how the dominant religious communities responded to this. In particular contexts, urbanization and Protestantism enter into a specific “enlightenment” connection with scientific worldviews, while more agriculturally oriented lifeworlds and Catholicism may not be equally conducive to such a connection. The oft discussed links between secularization and urbanization, on the one hand, and secularization and confessionality (cf. Martin 1978), on the other, would thus take on yet another emphasis: Under certain conditions there would then be a specific “meaningful” link to the Enlightenment and, at the same time, an extremely selective reference to the traditions of the Enlightenment³. Even in today’s personal statements this link is used to make plausible the secularization process induced by authoritarianism and give it the appearance of a genuine “attitude” even if the actual decisions made – such as leaving the church – could have had other causes. Of course, a comparative analysis of such interactions, as outlined here, would be necessary to understand the connection between secularization processes and references to the Enlightenment tradition better, but this would require further empirical information beyond the scope of this article.

In general, I would like to plead for the determination of secularization processes and connected attitudes in terms of their specific *meaning structure*. An analysis of Eastern German secularity is presented here as an example of such a meaning structure, for which the relationship between scientific rationality and religion, and the manner in which this relationship is communicated in society is of particular significance. This approach aims at moving beyond the reference to “exceptionalisms” that has recently dominated in the field of the sociology of religion (cf. Berger 1999; Davie 2002), and to move toward an analysis of multiple secularities (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2011). An initial orientation can be found here in the concept of “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt 2000), which takes account of the Jacobinistic and dictatorial developments within an analysis of the diversity of modernity.

I believe that references to the level of meanings and to the appropriation of secularization processes can serve to address a likely methodological objection: Do not ex-post questions on events that took place in a dictatorship involve *retroactive rationalizations* that have little to do with the actual processes involved? Methodological caution is undoubtedly appropriate here. The argumentative logic that emerges from one’s current perspective need not correspond with the dynamics from which previous decisions emerged. This means that we need to focus on *arguments and rationalizations* as well as on the *narrated constellations and dynamics* in which specific decisions were embedded. As a basic reservation, however, this objection disregards the logic of appropriation. Agreement and acceptance both indeed require that processes *can be rationalized and made plausible*. Pure arbitrariness excludes appropriation. Thus, a key to understanding the subjective appropriation of the status quo of the dictatorship and the long-term effects thereof lies in understanding this “making of sense”. This of course does not mean that one may conflate the logic of appropriation with factual accounts.

PROJECT: “GENERATIONAL CHANGE AS RELIGIOUS AND WORLDVIEW CHANGE”

The project, the results of which I refer to here, was carried out as “Generational change as change in religiosity and worldviews: The example of Eastern Germany” at the University of Leipzig from 2003 to 2006 and was supported by the DFG.⁴ The project centered on the

³ When Paul Froese speaks of “scientific atheism” becoming “a thing of the past” in Russia (Froese 2004a: 73), for East Germany this only holds true for the official programs, however not for subjective convictions.

⁴ German Research Council. The project was conducted by Uta Karstein, Thomas Schmidt-Lux and Mirko Punken, and the student assistants Anja Frank, Christine Schaumburg, Birgitt Glöckl, Jurit Kärtner, and Katja Schau.

question of how the secularization process in the GDR can be seen from the perspective of the people and families involved, i.e. what experiences and decisions in people's everyday lives document this process. Of particular interest were generationally specific experiences with politics, society, and religion in the GDR and the period following its collapse, and the connected dynamics within the families there (cf. Karstein 2009).

24 families and the same number of individual people were questioned in family interviews and narrative interviews. Representatives of three generations were mostly on hand for the family interviews. Inasmuch as it was possible, the youngest family members had been between 13 and 14 years of age at the end of the GDR so that they still had a vivid memory of the GDR social system. Their grandparents – the oldest generation interviewed – had experienced National Socialism and its demise, and their own lives recommenced during the GDR building period. Some thus identified positively with the Socialist project while others attempted to distance their own personal beliefs and practices from the system or at least to find private and social niches in which they could do so. A majority of the representatives of this generation were still socialized in the church and had to make active decisions concerning their own church membership and religious practice and that of their own children. The remarks of these interviewees most directly reveal the areas of conflict during the GDR period. However, continuities with family traditions critical of religion (e.g. within the workers' movement) could also at times be recognized (cf. McLeod 1986), or a disillusioned reaction critical of religion due to experiences with National Socialism and the war could be identified.

The members of the middle generation, by contrast, had already grown up in the GDR. Church-relevant decisions had often already been made by their parents on their behalf. They did, however, often encounter repressive and disadvantaging attitudes in their schools toward students with church allegiances, and knew what had to be done to obtain privileges. Their accounts document the tug-of-war between the churches and the state over the youth. This can be seen in: (a) the declaration of "non-compatibility" between confirmation and *Jugendweihe* (the GDR state youth dedication ceremony) on the part of the Catholic and at times the Protestant churches; (b) the religious and church-critical attitudes in school classes, the curriculum of which was often framed as "enlightening" even if there was no agreement with Socialism as such; (c) and the ethical-moral culmination of the idea of "Sag mir, wo du stehst" ("tell me where you stand"),⁵ which shades youthful attitudes with a fundamental partisanship.

The representatives of the youngest generation, by contrast, were no longer touched by this direct conflict potential, but instead were socialized into a highly secularized society, often without questioning it. The biographical opening of their adolescence and their politics and worldviews, however, coincided with the collapse of the GDR. Religion can once again be an issue for them to grapple with – beyond any of the former lines of conflict. Our family interviews revealed that this topic often entered into family discourse via this generation, often in the guise of curious speculation. This, however, would rarely lead to a religious "awakening" or even actual adherence. The interviews with this generation thus document a type of *thinking* beyond immanence rather than any type of *faith*.

The interviews with the families began with their family history, revealing the subjective and family experience with the GDR secularization process and their manner of participation in this process. The interviews culminated with a type of group discussion in which the family members grappled with different topics relevant to the relationship between religion and secularity, including the question of what they believed would come after death. Both the narrative and argumentative parts of the interviews revealed what the generations had or did not have in common: The attempt to maintain family unity in the face of the diversity of life opportunities, as well as their divergence in orientation can be seen in their attitudes toward

⁵ As one FDJ (Free Democratic Youth) song text had it.

the social past and today's new society as well as in their attitudes toward religion. "Forced secularity" is a term that can be applied to the two older generations, but no longer to the youngest generation.

SECULARIZATION AS CONFLICT

The secularization discussion of the past 20 years has steered attention towards the fact that secularization processes do not evolve as quasi-automatic modernization developments or processes of functional differentiation, but they are brought about by actors in conflict with other actors. Christian Smith (2003), the American sociologist of religion, goes as far as to say that, for the secularization of the U.S. public sector, one could speak of a "secular revolution" with regard to the functional differentiation of religion on the one hand, and education, the media, science, etc. on the other. This "revolution" would also entail the replacement of the old Protestant elites with secular elites. The secularization process – related here to areas of public function – would thus primarily appear to be a power struggle in which the interests of different social groups are matched and in which old elites are replaced by new ones.

Undoubtedly, what is important in Smith's approach is the empirical turn in asking whose participation led to secularization and who prevailed over whom in this struggle. It seems questionable to me, however, whether this would imply that secularization can be reduced to a struggle between interest groups. This is to be contrasted with the assumption that modernization processes – prominently including functional differentiation – bring about tensions that lead towards the relativization and limitation of the influence of religion on social subsystems (cf. Chaves 1994), irrespective of the degree of personal religiosity among the populace. These tensions can undoubtedly be accentuated more or less strongly. They can serve, however, as "material" for ideological intensification and can, under certain conditions, be expanded into a fundamental conflict. The situation described by Ahmet Kuru (2007) with regard to the regulation of the relationship of politics and religion in terms of "assertive secularism" in contrast with "passive secularism" would thus also be present in other subsections of society.

With this in mind, I will, in the following, view the secularization process of the GDR from the perspective of *conflict theory*. I refer in this to the model of conflict developed by Giegel (1998), according to which a latent basis for conflict is developed by conflict communication into a manifest conflict (cf. Wohlrab-Sahr et al. 2008).

In our analyses, we find three areas in which the secularization conflict has been documented:

a) a conflict of belonging and loyalty that takes on the form of a **membership conflict**. This involves the conflict between party membership and church membership, but also the expression of loyalty toward the state or the church as in the *Jugendweihe* or confirmation ceremonies. The conflict can be expressed more or less explicitly in interviews: in the direct link between entering the party and leaving the church such as when it comes to beginning a career path within the close orbit of the state, or when mentioning in passing having left the church when starting a job at the university or when getting married.

Especially for the middle generation interviewed by us, the *Jugendweihe* was de facto a ceremony expressing belonging, and was understood as such by the state and the churches. The act could, however, also be taken as a matter of course: "*Jugendweihe* was an obligation. [...] It was like being vaccinated" (Family 9).⁶

⁶ Due to limitations of space, I will, in the following, use interview quotes primarily as exemplary illustrations. More expansive interpretations and the contextualization of the interview material can be found in Wohlrab-Sahr et al. 2009. The abbreviations used (in the translations) are as follows: M=Mother, F=Father, GF=Grandfather, GM=Grandmother, D=Daughter, S=Son, I=Interviewer, underlined = stressed speech, L = overlapping speech, (5) = pause in seconds, (...) = omission.

One of the first to examine this level of conflict potential in literary form was Uwe Johnson (1992 [1985]), who in his 1956/57 novel *Ingrid Babendererde* described the conflict between the FDJ and the *Junge Gemeinde* church youth groups, which entered school classes as a political conflict. As the result of this conflict, the question of political and religious orientation transformed into a membership conflict that forced individuals to choose one or the other.

This fundamental presence of conflict potential clearly distinguished the situation in GDR from that in West Germany – with consequences that continue today. The effect of this line of conflict continues to be perceptible today when, for example, those in debate with representatives of the churches are accused of anti-religious “secularism”. Only with this background in mind can we understand the quarrels over the construction of a new university assembly hall (*Aula*) that includes a University Church in Leipzig – in a place where the University Church had once been demolished upon the orders of the GDR government of Walter Ulbricht. The debates started with group activities demanding the original reconstruction of the church in that location, whereas others voted for a modern and secular University building instead. They ended with an architectonic compromise (a modern, church-like building that can serve as an assembly hall as well as a church), which then provoked discussions over the means of separation between the two realms within the building. This involved decades-long fundamental debates, which brought down one university administration, and in which those involved did not shy away from using symbols tied to the historical confessional struggles. One example of this was how on Reformation Day, “theses” were nailed to the construction fence, thus making attitudes toward the construction project and its design into a sort of *status confessionis* (cf. Richter and Schmidt-Lux 2009).

b) The second dimension is a **conflict of world interpretation**, as expressed in the two poles of “scientific worldview” and “religious world interpretation”. Even if this level of conflict would seem to be linked closely to official ideological programs, this also appeared relevant in our material in terms of subjective appropriation – beyond any political program – inasmuch as it adhered to the perspectives of enlightenment and of “knowledge” that was seen to overcome all barriers, which were also subjectively relevant for the interviewees. They could thus become atheists in the course of their university studies *without* in fact becoming Communists:

M: And um, yes, then later I began to have science subjects in school. And then (...) the knowledge followed, and then you just say “no”. Because I got to know the faith in this small simple form, I thought: ‘That is all nonsense. That’s nonsense. You can explain everything. People will someday find out everything anyway,’ just like the comrades also always said: ‘realistic image of humankind’ and all that. Great, yes. But I still didn’t become a Communist, but first an atheist. [Family 2, 155-162]

As emerges in the course of the following interview, a softer version of a perspective critical of religion remained after the fall of Communism, which can be seen in the replacement of *Humbig* as a description of religious writings with *Kulturgut* (“cultural heritage”) which are still discussed as “myths” and “fairy tales”. This perspective continues as a skeptical and secular viewpoint in the youngest generation. This is displayed in the interaction between the mother and daughter of the family interviewed here:

M: Well, you didn’t come from a believing home (...) where they always prayed before eating or something. That was of course not the case for us. We did talk about it though, and she knows a lot of, you knew a lot of stories from the Bible. I narrated them to you, but always as a story. And as cultural heritage more than a matter of.. um.. belief. Yeah.

D: Yeah nicely packed up and always with question marks. [Family 2]

In terms of family biography, this perspective often picks up on older traditions critical of religion. In Family 2, for example, the deceased grandfather was quoted as saying: “Toss me on the manure pile when I’m dead so that I can at least still be of some use.”

It seems to have been a major factor for the perpetuation of this tension between religion and rationality that the SED did not just simply invent this conflict potential. The SED was indeed able to follow on themes that were part of the basic foundations of the European Enlightenment and Western modernity, even if these cannot be boiled down to one common denominator in terms of criticism of religion. The relationship between religion and science was, as part of the process of social differentiation, undoubtedly one full of tensions (if not in fact in general opposition to one another): The conflict between Galileo Galilei and the church that originally supported him, for example, has been indelibly chiseled into the history of European science and secularization. The SED was thus able to pick up on a particular discourse in modernity, one which was of course also present in West Germany and other Western countries. This tension was, however, not expanded in those places into an irreconcilable opposition, and not all throughout the society, but more so in smaller intellectual circles. The development in the GDR was a particular one not only in terms of the tension itself but even more so in terms of the conflict communications, in which this tension was enhanced and transformed into an irreconcilable opposition of irrationality and rationality, "backwards-oriented" and "progressive" forces. It is this view of an opposition between religion and science that one comes across time and again in Eastern Germany, even today, as it has continued beyond the fall of the GDR political system. Representative surveys continue to depict a significant regional difference in the degree of agreement with a statement such as the following: "In my opinion one should stick on things that one can understand rationally and leave everything else as it is." (Allbus 1991; 2002, question # 33). This second line of conflict is linked to a fundamental delegitimation of religious knowledge, to which, in light of the conflict communication described here, one can no longer make reference lest one be open to ridicule.

c) The third line of conflict, which we have designated as the **conflict over ethics and morals**, is secondary to the other two inasmuch as it touches less directly on practical life decisions and serves more to describe the substitution process of ethical references. This, at first glance, takes the guise of universalism. Our interviewees, in numerous places, explained that Christianity and Socialism – if understood correctly – involved the same moral principles. This is, for example, the case in the following statement by the father of Family 17. Father, mother, and two sons of the family were SED members and thus identified with the state. The father was in fact a party secretary:

F: However, I would say again: I have respect for every Christian who is honest about things. Point A: I'll start with the church tax. For me, nobody is a Christian (...) who doesn't fulfill his first duty of paying church tax. He doesn't have to go to church every day and – um – or every Sunday. But if the Christians, they have the same goals, if it is really as it is intended, as it is in the catechism and in the Bible and, and in Ten Commandments, hymnbook, right, whatever you take, the fundamental works, they are the fundamental works, then they are not very different, only whom they relate to. One just goes to God and thinks he'll make everything right, and the other thinks Marx is up there with a club and so forth. (...) But otherwise we don't have too many quarrels. [Family 17]

This argument is – even as it is presented here as tolerance – at its core *not* a universalistic argument but one that, ultimately, propagates the superfluity of Christian principles, since they are included in Communism anyway. Christianity is, moreover, even when it is to be respected at all, reduced to an abstract system of obligations and morals with its actual statements of faith airbrushed out so that it no longer can be distinguished from other systems of obligations and morals. It is no coincidence that the interviewee cited here just before had justified the disadvantaging of Christian students in the GDR in his claim that the state had a reason to expect its people to be loyal to its worldview. The disadvantaging of Christians, who had always "looked to the West" was thus justified from his point of view. This does not therefore invoke a tolerant state that sought common ground between Christians and Socialists, but rather a state that embraced a particular worldview with claims to a monopoly of interpretation and allegiance. If we, therefore, speak of a conflict over ethics and morals, we

do not mean that individuals – as in the case of a membership conflict – had to decide for one or another ethical framework. We rather address the social delegitimation of an ethical system with an explicit reference to its religious foundations, so that those who invoked this system were in danger of being marginalized.

CONFLICTS OVER DEFINING ONE'S POSITION: INTERPRETIVE MODELS UNDER THE DICTATORIAL REGIME

The conflict potential of the GDR secularization process does not, however, only appear in terms of the three lines of conflict described above, but also in their semantic treatment. The two older generations interviewed in our study revealed interpretive models which not only documented the relationship between the individual and the environment, between the internal and the external, but which also involved *legitimation figures* tied to this relationship. This entails the expression of why individuals positioned themselves in one particular way and not another; why one's own positioning was legitimate and rational, wise to the world or simply unavoidable; or why individuals may not have agreed with the way in which the situation developed. The semantics here follow on older interpretive models and thus create a suprahistorical framework in which earlier conflicts continue to be reflected. This link to previous historical patterns is able to dramatize present-day positioning and thus serve to solidify the irreducibility of one's own attitude. This can, however, also serve to emphasize the unavoidability of compromise constructs that defy this sort of heroism. The semantics, in their contrastivity, illustrate the patterns of justification in the GDR.

The typology presented in the following is an ideal-typical construction following Weber (1988 [1922]: 190ff.); i.e. the typology is based on empirical material but goes beyond the results in terms of abstractification and theorization. The quotes, however, even if they are recognizably older in origin, came up frequently in the interviews. They represent forms of interpretation and of the institutional order which anchor the actors in a social place and historical time.

We found three major types of interpretive models among the two oldest generations: an "exclusivist", an "integrationalist", and one that is geared toward a "differentiation of spheres". For the first and last of these, we can find religious and secular variants, while the second is by definition neither. The limitation of these interpretive models to the two older generations shows that they are *interpretive models under the dictatorial regime* that lose their function under democratic conditions: Even the drawing of social boundaries, which is in the background of these interpretive models, emerges differently under such conditions. Yet, certain types of motivation continue to persist. We must add that the biographical accounts that document the decision-making process often remain below explicit legitimation. While taking up party membership (or refusal to do so) often led to legitimation accounts, ending church membership was often mentioned only in passing. In many cases, it was the *context* of the latter out of which its institutional anchoring can be recognized. Typical cases include registering for a state wedding or preparing for work in a career that falls within a narrow orbit of the state. What I already described as a fundamental conflict potential within the secularization process of the GDR is documented in many cases as a nearly self-evident lack of compatibility, the decision-making character of which is hidden behind the institutional process. It often takes follow-up questions to make it clear that this did in fact involve a *decision* and that those involved were quite aware of the possible consequences of not making such a decision. The interpretive models, which I will treat in the following, are thus characterized by the explicitness of motivations that were frequently hidden within the logic of institutional procedures.

	Orientation	
Interpretive model	Religious	Secular
Exclusion	"No man can serve two masters"	"You have to take sides"
Integration	"Sociality and religiosity!"	
Differentiation of spheres	"Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" or: "Not waving the church flag"	"He who pays the piper calls the tune." or: "Not waving the flag"

a) Exclusion: "No man can serve two masters"/ "You have to take sides"

The first interpretive model expresses a situation of exclusion before the background of the conflict between the political and religious system. The severing of ties to the other sphere in the course of a biography is normatively generalized in this kind of typing. We found both "Christian" and "Socialist" varieties of this in our material. The interpretive model in the Christian context corresponds with an ethical attitude that is fueled by the experience of the struggle between the church and state in the 1950s and early 1960s and which is tied into experience lived during the National Socialist era as well. The resulting pressure to show loyalty, which first was placed by the state on people who maintained church ties, but which was also at times placed by churches on their members – such as in the case of the confirmation-*Jugendweihe* dispute – develops in this context into a maxim of action. In this, the conflict between social subsystems is translated into the cultural symbolism of a fundamental conflict, in which one must decide between church and state, often at the cost of one's own career ambitions or the opportunities of one's own children. We can see this particularly clearly in the case of Family 4, which is Catholic:

GF: *In school, they (...) already put down if they get an apprenticeship or not, that started up already* /I: *mhm/*

F: **that's right, yeah* (3)*

GF: *And of course because the kids were um brought up in faith, they had disadvantages in school, right? (...)*

I: *So you were both Catholic by confession, right?*

GM: *Always. /I: mhm/ My parents were Catholic/*

GF: *They told me: The boy he will have trouble sometime, won't get an apprenticeship and so on, right?*

I: *Your son?*

GF: *So I told the teacher: "Let that be my worry. He'll get an apprenticeship in the end." Right? (...)*

GM: *(...) My husband and I had to go to um the principal and had to um/ he should/ um Gerd had to, what was that? (2) He had to um, um, um (1) Jugendweihe!*

I: *Jugendweihe.*

GF: *Yes, that's what it was about too.*

GM: *And then I said: "That is out of the question for me. We're Christians", I said and: "We're*

Catholic and we don't do that. We can only serve one master", I said. {laughs} Then they were g/ "yes, then he will have trouble", he said. "Then he will have trouble with his apprenticeship and all that". Then I said: "Don't you worry. He'll get an apprenticeship." And that's the way it remained. And he also had/ well maybe he had some trouble because of that.

GF: Yes, he had problems. [Family 4]

The self-confidence with which the grandparents, in nearly identical accounts, confronted the representative of the state school who demanded that their son take part in the *Jugendweihe*, and contended with him with regard to defining their son's career path ("Let that be my worry"), dominates over the admission – made nearly in passing and in a certain manner grudgingly – that this still had negative consequences for their son.⁷

This narratively documented attitude is matter-of-factly framed by the exclusionist interpretive model of being able to "serve only one master". From this emerged the fundamental decisions, and the relevance of the consequences of one's own actions are also so defined. What is important is that the family stood by their own convictions with the resulting difficulties being secondary in nature.

The opposite position, but one which nevertheless remains anchored in the same logic of mutual exclusive loyalties, can be found among those who appropriated for themselves the political aims of the SED and who, in this vein, defended the state's demands on loyalty.

This also involves – as in the case of the father of Family 17 – an interpretive model that allows membership in the Socialist Party to develop into an *act of conviction* and *proof of loyalty*, to which the state also has a claim.

F: Yeah, becoming party members... Yeah the kids have already, the three older ones through competitive sports. **/M:** hmmm/ First at the DHfK (sports college), then the KJS (sports school), and then competitive sports. Um, found their own way there, so that nobody told them to join. (...) Yeah and we both, um, I mean my three older kids all became SED members through competitive sports because they were with Dynamo or because they were at the DhfK. But I can also, was also in the, um, in the Youth Commission of the Ernst Thälmann KJS (sports school). I can't say that anyone was forced to join. But you had to say where you stood at some point. And we also had kids from the church in the KJS. Of course, um, it was harder, that's true. **/I:** mhm/ Um it was the same as if they, like I said before, were looking to the West [refers to watching West tv], and talked the next day only about Western ads **/I:** mhm/ and you then wanted that they might be able to get a lot of support there. Yeah, that is e-e-every state likes its own stuff first and and-and-and-and and yeah, you can surely say what you mean about other problems, but in the end everyone wants you to stand on German soil and not in Turkey. Wife, you joined as well in those years, right? [Family 17]

This demonstrates the institutional dimension ("through competitive sports") just like the emphasis on the importance of one's own – exclusive conviction. Being forced to join the party would place this conviction in question. And at the same time, this legitimizes that "children of the church", who deny the state this commitment and are generally identified with a "Western orientation", cannot legitimately expect support from the very state whom they denied their commitment.

b) The differentiation of spheres and divided loyalties: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's"/"He who pays the piper calls the tune"

This form of typing is the opposite of the exclusion model and likely reflects that which was most characteristic for the bulk of the populace under the conditions of the GDR. The interpretive model relates to the life-world differentiation between different spheres and the accept-

⁷ The grandmother has to correct herself in the middle of the sentence, which is confirmed by the grandfather.

ance of their specific loyalty demands, without this, however, providing a basis for exclusive loyalties. This differentiation of spheres is frequently tied to a distinction between types of "authentic" and "inauthentic" or "honest" and "dishonest" behavior.

In the church variant of this model, a religious socialization milieu is employed as a contrast to the state-regulated spheres. The possibility of extrascholastic socialization is used as a measure of success in the separation of spheres. As long as this area remains untouched by the state, the separation of the spheres remains balanced. Some interviewees who supported the differentiation of spheres explicitly mentioned the exclusive model as being the opposite, from which they distanced themselves clearly. This included, for example, "heroes" or "revolutionaries" and those who "held the church flag high". In the following, the father of Family 2 connects being aware of his own privilege as the son of a doctor and of being freed from making certain decisions (e.g. whether to join the FDJ) due to his age with a very precise sense of how far one could go: "not holding the church flag high" evolves here into an interpretive model in contrast, for example, to the attitudes of Family 4 as described above:

F: Maybe once more on political topics. Until 61, I went to school in West Berlin. (1) But then again typical for the GDR: Since my parents were doctors, I (...) could keep going to/ to high school here. And that was actually not the norm. So a lot of people from my class back then, if I really think about a few of them, who were much better than me. So, I wouldn't actually have been able to continue, but in fact they (...) did not continue, whereas I could. There were of course certain inequalities that one could see back then. But what you did experience then was actually that/ I never kept really um (2) quiet about my attitude. So I was never, that I would hold the church flag up high. But if something happened or if there were conflicts at times... /I: hmh/ That was the way it was, I mean, the FDJ did not come into question for me since I was in 61, I was born in 43, in 61 I was 18, that when I came back here to high school, that was senseless.

The image of "not holding the flag up high" was heard in an identical fashion in conversations with families that had absolutely no church links, but differentiated themselves both from those who identified fully with the state and from those who as church adherents came into conflict with state.

The consequences of these attitudes depended to a considerable degree on the individual contexts, the people's own resources and opportunities to lean on niches for support. The results could in fact be similar: There were children who were *not* permitted to take part in the *Jugendweihe* ceremony both among families who followed the first and those that followed the second interpretive models. Their underlying motivation was, however, quite diverse. Non-participation in the ceremony can in one case have been the expression of an ethics of responsibility as documented in other fields as well, while in another case it may constitute the demarcation of an area in which the state could *no longer* govern, but which was then "paid off" with other means of conforming with the state. These forms of compromise often emerge clearly in discussions with the families as well as in interviews with the children.

The explanations refer occasionally to motives grounded in the ethics of responsibility, and focused on consequences and reasoned sensibility. This was presented in other interviews as a split in loyalty in accordance with a biblical interpretive model: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 12:17). This is evident in the following interview segment, into which an interpretive model of split loyalties is woven – in terms of the juxtaposition of welcoming the political changes and new freedoms (such as their grandchildren's ability to travel abroad) even as the authoritarian state is granted its place as "Father State" and the allegiance this entails:

GM: *We were happy that the freedom was there, of speech, L that made us very happy /I: mhm/*

GF: *L that this and that was better and worse, is bad and good or completely normal. But a dictatorship like the SED, we rejected that /GM: totally/ and, and we acted loyally because one had to live in Father State. And even the*

church says, even our Lord said: Render unto the Caesar {knocks on the table}, what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's! /I: mhm/ So, we can't reject Father State and we should also work positively for him, but he should, in a certain sense, protect his, his populace, let them live here properly and allow me a little freedom. And that's why we, I want to say that again, supported the great political changes not only 100, but 110 percent, that they did away with the dictatorial SED state and that we now live in a democratic Germany. /I: mhm/ Amen. [Family 16]

We encounter, in the secular context, a structurally similar model of separating spheres with families who were successfully integrated into the GDR state in terms of profession, and who partly supported the state ideologically, but who partially withdrew from the state orbit in terms of child socialization and other non-public areas.

"He who pays the piper calls the tune" lends expression to an interpretive model that reflects an attitude spanning strategic loyalty and mental reservation:

F: The curricula were to a large degree dedicated to science. That is really true. And civics classes, that was sort of added on, we had to go along with that and interpret certain things, beginning via Hegel via Marx, Engels, Lenin, through to the state doctrine of our leading people Walter Ulbricht and back then also Erich Honecker in particular. /I: mhm/ In the boarding school, we had to, to be honest, um when there were party meetings, we all sat in front of the black-and-white television, an old thing, and had to listen to the speeches together for an hour. /I: mhm/ That was okay, as they say: "He who pays the piper calls the tune." [Family 18]

A bit later in the interview, the father of Family 18 extended this attitude into the present, thus transforming it into a maxim of life beyond time, by which he denied as being problematic the actual adaptation process of the GDR period.

c) Integrationism: "Sociality and Religiosity"

Interpretive models that in some way refer to the tensions between religion and politics and which present different and conflicting "solutions" related to this, are of particular and characteristic relevance to the reality of the GDR. There are, however, also others that respond to the tension with a type of integration aiming at the interconnection of Christianity and Socialism. Only a few individual cases of this type of integrationist interpretive model appeared in our sample. This position, however, was undoubtedly present in the GDR. Christian circles such as the *Weißenseer Arbeitskreis* ("Weissensee Working Group") adopted this self-understanding beginning in the mid-1960s and attempted to integrate Christian and Socialist engagement in the GDR. In our sample, the position corresponds with the phrase "sociality and religiosity" and decidedly links state-orientation and church allegiance. In Family 8, for one, both sides were represented by the grandparents. While the grandfather was a representative in the GDR *Volkskammer* (People's Chamber) as a member of the LDPD, he still never left the church. The grandmother – a pastor's daughter – took care of the large family and ensured the family's ties to the Protestant Church not without, however, making use of what state socialization had to offer. In this interview, the grandmother develops an image of the family as the nucleus of the state while the grandfather supports the motto "religiosity and sociality" at the end of the conversation:

GF: In the book of my youth, um, I summed this up in one term: Religiosity and sociality, those are the supporting pillars of a society /I: mhm/ Religiosity and sociality, right. Hey, that is and the other is, he who wants freedom also needs to offer things voluntarily, right? /I: mhm/ People are always shouting for "freedom" before a/ partly it's pure selfishness, /I: mhm/ right, but voluntary? Just say: "okay, do that! That's what society asks of you!" Then they say, "that's no fun". I don't want to overstate it "that's no fun, I don't care, I want my freedom", and that's where part of our German people are veering terribly off course, right? [Family 8]

This segment depicts the primary motivation for the connection between "religiosity and sociality" and thus also between "Christianity and Socialism" as a form of functionalism that is anti-individualistic at its core. Religion, far from being a liberating force, is legitimized here as "social glue".

CONCLUSION

Can the status of religion in Eastern Germany be appropriately interpreted as being the result of "imposed secularization" (Meulemann 2003)? Or, in view of the longevity of de-churching and religionlessness today, must we not assume more the voluntary nature of these attitudes? What can we now still learn by looking back at the history of the GDR, and beyond that, if non-membership and atheism have long since become the normal situation for many Eastern Germans?

In this text, I have endeavored to reconstruct the subjective reflection on the SED policy on religion and on the resulting situation in the GDR, and to reconstruct the consequences of this reflection. In the investigation that forms the basis of this article, we see how, while the label of "imposed secularization" may be appropriate as a description of the political measures and their effects, it is inadequate when it comes to describing the social process with which this was connected. People engage actively with their surroundings even in a dictatorship. They appropriate that with which they are confronted, each in their own way, and develop – in the context of families, groups, and institutions – their own ways of dealing with it. A society also has a variety of interpretations in its body of knowledge that are used by individuals to make their own positions plausible and to justify them. These interpretations can be found both in the camps supporting and critical of the dictatorial regime and in movements that refer back to either or both. The SED was able to pick up positively on the traditions of the criticism of religion and scientism (Schmidt-Lux 2008), on the disillusioning experiences of war, on the pressure to begin a new biography in the "new society" that replaced National Socialism, as well as the wish not to impede the careers of one's own children. The SED was able to propagate the perspective of a fundamental conflict between religion and politics as well as religion and science, achieving this both through repressive measures and through persuasion. This perspective continues to be documented in the accounts and arguments of Eastern German interviewees to this day. An orientation toward being "scientific" and "rational" is one motive that continued beyond the collapse of the GDR and which can be linked today to a criticism of religion that has been decoupled from politics. At the same time, the severity of many reactions to the public influence of the churches continues to reveal the degree to which these attitudes remain anchored in people's affect today. The SED was also able to implement a membership conflict on the backdrop of which even the clearly *expected* break with the church looks like the consequence of individual loyalty. Looking back, further grounds for having to make a decision can be seen: the churches themselves were not impervious to the "trap" of this membership conflict when they claimed incompatibility between confirmation and *Jugendweihe*. Even if the state, which demanded this loyalty, no longer exists, many continue to view this expectation of "taking sides" as legitimate. According to this logic, each individual was responsible for the disadvantages that came with a "wrong" choice.

Forced secularization is thus appropriated as an attitude of secularity even in the process of passing on family tradition. It would be tantamount to a very surprising revival movement if large sections of the GDR population without confession or religion would now return to a form of religious adherence today. When three quarters of the population do not belong to a religious community, a distance to religion and churches can be expected to continue unabated, just as religious allegiances are mostly passed on within families.

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