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| <p style="text-align: center;">After the Wall Teaching Materials The First Enquete-Kommission</p> |
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Resources

The following exercise is suitable for both beginners of German and more advanced German speakers. For beginners, the recommended resource is the After the Wall PowerPoint presentation entitled 'What was the first Enquete-Kommission'. More advanced speakers could use the German original of the Enquete-Kommission report, pp. 5-6 and 279-283 (available at: <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/12/078/1207820.pdf>).

General Questions

1. Why was the first Enquete-Kommission set up?
2. Who participated in the first Enquete-Kommission?
3. What were the aims of the first Enquete-Kommission?
4. What were the outcomes of the first Enquete-Kommission?
5. Which of the five aims do you think is the most important? Why?
6. The five aims of the first Enquete-Kommission suggest that its main focus was the oppressive nature of the SED. Do you think that this is a useful way of understanding the GDR past? Why (not)?
7. If you had been a part of the working group, would you have added any other aims?
8. What do the outcomes of the report tell you about the way that the GDR is perceived in unified Germany?
9. What do you think the working group is most worried about? What impact could this have on the eastern population in unified Germany?
10. In your opinion, which outcome is the most controversial? Why?

Group Discussion Activities

1. Put yourself in their shoes...

Imagine you are:

- a) An easterner who was a committed member of the SED – how would you react to the report?
- b) An easterner who was spied on by the Stasi – would you be happy with the report?
- c) An easterner who had no direct contact with the SED or Stasi – would you feel that this report is a useful way of working through the history of the GDR?
- d) A westerner – what impression would this report give you of the GDR? Do you think this is an appropriate depiction?

2. Your group has been given the task of forming a working group to respond to the outcomes of the first Enquete-Kommission. How would you design your investigation?

Think about:

- a) who would participate in your working group;
- b) what your aims would be (remember you are working from the outcomes of the first report);
- c) what your intended outcomes would be.

3. In response to the report, the German sociologist and historian Manfred Wilke wrote:

‘Das Urteil der Enquete-Kommission über die Diktatur konnte nur dann überzeugend sein, wenn es zwischen den politischen Verantwortlichen der SED Diktatur und der Bevölkerung unterschied.’¹

- Do you agree that this is an important distinction? Why (not)?
- Are there any difficulties in making this distinction? What are they?
- Do you think that the report is successful in making this distinction?

¹ Wilke, Manfred, ‘Die Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur im Prozess der deutschen Vereinigung’, p. 15, available at: http://www.sed-staat.de/texte/20070330_Polenvortrag_Maerz-07NEU.PDF.

- Given that a main focus of the report is the SED regime, do you think that it risks overlooking the interests of those who were not involved in the party? Does this pose any problems for unified Germany?

Additional Activity: The comparability of the GDR and National Socialism

Resources

The first Enquete-Kommission report, pp. 281-281, paragraph 6, 'Die Vergleichbarkeit totalitärer Herrschaftssysteme'

'Wo treffen sich NS-Staat und DDR?', *Berliner Zeitung* [online], 5/5/94, available at: <http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/1994/0505/tagesthemen/0011/index.html>.

Questions

1. According to the report of the first Enquete-Kommission, what are the similarities between the SED and National Socialist regimes?
2. Which similarities does the report identify between the two regimes?
3. Why does the report suggest that a comparison of the two regimes is useful and relevant?
4. The newspaper article about the comparison explains that it is particularly controversial for east Germans. What do you think about this?
5. In your opinion, is it reasonable to compare the two regimes? Do you think it would be useful? Why (not)?