

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

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 'The Sabrow-Kommission'. More advanced speakers could use the German original of the Sabrow-Kommission report, pp. 1, 4, 12-13 and 20-21, available at:
<http://www.stiftung-aufarbeitung.de/downloads/pdf/sabrow-bericht.pdf>

Questions

1. Why was the Sabrow-Kommission set up?
2. Who participated in the Sabrow-Kommission?
3. What was the overarching aim of the Sabrow-Kommission, and what were the criteria for this aim (name two criteria)?
4. Which institutions did the Sabrow-Kommission focus on? In your view, what do they have in common? Do you think they are a useful way of assessing the GDR past in unified Germany? Why (not)?
5. According to the Sabrow-Kommission, what was lacking in the process of working through the GDR past in unified Germany at the time of the Kommission? Try to find six deficits.
6. Which of these deficits do you think is the most problematic? Why?
7. According to the Sabrow-Kommission's recommendations, the depiction of the SED regime is increasingly trivialised by the media, and at the same time there is not enough focus on everyday life in the GDR. Why might it be difficult to strike a balance between the depiction of SED oppression and the portrayal of those who had no direct experience with this oppression? How could these difficulties be overcome?

8. In its conclusion, the Sabrow-Kommission identifies three sets of themes under which the GDR should be dealt with. What are these themes? What do you understand by them?
9. Imagine you have been asked to add a fourth theme to the Kommission's conclusions. What would you add, and what exactly would this entail? Why would you choose to add this theme?
10. Compare the Sabrow-Kommission's aims and recommendations – do you think it fulfilled its aims? Why (not)?

Group Discussion Activities

1. An article about the Sabrow-Kommission reports that:

'Von einer gemeinsamen Erinnerung an die DDR aber sind wir noch weit entfernt.'¹

- What do you think 'gemeinsame Erinnerung' means?
- What are the problems with the concept of 'gemeinsame Erinnerung' in a society consisting of lots of different people?
- Do you agree that it is currently not being achieved when it comes to remembering the GDR in unified Germany? Explain your response.
- In your opinion, is a 'gemeinsame Erinnerung' important in dealing with the GDR in unified Germany? Why (not)?

2. 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?

¹ Schröder, Richard (2006) 'Auch wir hatten glückliche Tage', *Zeit* [online], available at: <http://www.zeit.de/2006/27/DDR-neu>.

- d) A westerner – what impression would this report give you of the GDR?
Do you think this is an appropriate depiction?

3. According to the Sabrow-Kommission, there is not enough teaching about the GDR in schools. You have been asked by those involved in the Kommission to design a project for schoolchildren in Germany which ensures they have a better understanding of the GDR.

When designing your project, think about:

- a) what exactly you want the children to learn;
- b) how you will strike a balance between dictatorship and the everyday;
- c) which topics you will focus on;
- d) which objects or resources you will use to represent the GDR?

Additional Activities: Media Responses to the Sabrow-Kommission

Resources

'Kleine, graue, miese DDR', *Welt* [online], 10/6/06, available at:
http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article222229/Kleine_graue_miese_DDR.html.

'Historiker: "Es darf kein einseitiges Bild entstehen"', Interview with Stefan Wolle on *Deutschendradio Kultur*, 16/06/06, available at:
<http://www.dradio.de/dkultur/sendungen/kulturinterview/511182/>.

Questions

1. What is Wolle's main point in his interview? Do you agree with this? Why (not)?
2. Read Wolle's responses to the third and fourth questions in the interview. Summarise his views about the contentions between everyday GDR experiences and SED oppression. Why does this contention pose a problem when it comes to remembering the GDR? According to Wolle, how might this contention be overcome?
3. Given the tone of the *Welt* article, how do you think the journalist's views compare with Wolle's opinions?

4. Which article do you think the members of the Sabrow-Kommission would agree with most? Give reasons for your answer.

5. The article from *Die Welt* states: 'Je grauer und härter der Osten, um so farbenprächtiger seine Auferstehung'. What do you understand by this? Why might this be seen as a problem in the context of unified Germany? Do you agree with these concerns?