Routledge Studies in Religion

SCIENTIFIC ATHEISM IN EAST GERMANY (1963–1990)

HOW TO TURN A HARE INTO A LION

Eva Guigo-Patzelt

Scientific Atheism in East Germany (1963–1990)

This book offers an in-depth, archive-based analysis of "scientific atheism", focused on the development of the field in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Scientific atheism was established as a Soviet import in 1963 at Jena University, with a presence in East German universities, propaganda and politics for nearly 30 years. The chapters explore the sociological work done by scientific atheists such as Olof Klohr, how they defined religion and atheism, and their role as actors of atheisation in various fields. As well as reflecting on the specific religious and political context in East Germany, the author makes comparison with other communist-ruled countries. Drawing on extensive and unique documentation, this book will be of interest to scholars of atheism and secularism, religion and politics, religious history, German history and East European studies.

Eva Guigo-Patzelt is an associate member of CéSor – Centre d'études en sciences sociales du religieux (EHESS/CNRS) in France and a project lead within the Explaining Atheism Programme led by Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland.

Routledge Studies in Religion

The Making and Unmaking of the Psychology of Religion
Religion of Mind
Matei Iagher

Retired Missionaries and Faith in a Changing Society
Carmel Gallagher

Religions Are Remixes
Rethinking Originality, Authenticity, and Authority in the Study of Religion
Seth M. Walker

Pope Francis's Synod on Synodality and Modern Sociology
Exploring the Synod's Behavioral and Research Aspects
Vivencio O. Ballano

Contemporary Yoga and Sacred Texts
edited by Susanne Scholz and Caroline Vander Stichele

Demons in the USA
From the Anti-Spiritualists to Qanon
Michael E. Heyes

Religion in the Market Era
François Gauthier

Scientific Atheism in East Germany (1963–1990)
How to Turn a Hare into a Lion
Eva Guigo-Patzelt

For more information about this series, please visit: https://www.routledge.com/religion/series/SE0669

Scientific Atheism in East Germany (1963–1990)

How to Turn a Hare into a Lion

Eva Guigo-Patzelt

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2025
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

This publication was made possible through the support of Grant 61928 from the John Templeton Foundation managed by The Queen's University of Belfast. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation or The Queen's University of Belfast.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 9781032700960 (hbk)
ISBN: 9781032744650 (pbk)
ISBN: 9781003469322 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322

Typeset in Sabon
by codeMantra

This publication was made possible through the support of Grant 61928 from the John Templeton Foundation managed by The Queen's University of Belfast. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation or The Queen's University of Belfast.

Contents

Acknowledgements

This book is the result of a doctoral thesis in Germanic Studies defended in December 2021 at Sorbonne University, Paris. My first and very warm thanks go to my thesis supervisor, Hélène Miard-Delacroix, for her unfailing support, which opened up many new perspectives for me. I would like to thank the members of my jury: Emmanuel Droit, Sylvie Le Grand Ticchi, Armin Owzar and Laura Pettinaroli. My gratitude also goes to the group of doctoral and postdoctoral students at the Sorbonne; to the doctoral college, including Luxembourg, Paris and Saarbrücken; to the college bringing together doctoral students from Bonn, Mainz, Munich and Paris; and to their directors. These were all places where I was able to present my research and benefit from discussions and advice. I would also like to thank my class at the Institut Protestant de Montpellier and Elian Cuvillier and Claude Levain for the opportunity to present and discuss my work there.

The visits to the archives were made possible thanks to the support of the French *Association des germanistes de l'enseignement supérieur*, the German Academic Exchange Service (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*, DAAD), the Franco-German University and Sorbonne University. In addition to the very welcome financial relief, I would like to thank these organisations and their managers for the recognition and encouragement they have given me. Once completed, the thesis received a mention in the 2022 Robert-Mallet Award – thanks also go to its committee.

Countless archivists, employees of various universities and former colleagues of the scientific atheists actively helped in the search for collections and witnesses. I would also like to thank all former East German scholars and their relatives who were willing to share their memories with me and to whom I owe part of the documentation. The search was not always successful and not all places were included in the list of sources used. However, I will not forget the responses to my enquiries and the work involved from Greifswald, Halle, Cologne, Rome and elsewhere. I would also like to thank the staff of numerous libraries who were able to make essential resources available to me without sometimes realising it. I will notably mention here the person responsible for interlibrary loans at the Witten City Library.

My special thanks go to the Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research and its successive directors, Joachim Heise and Horst Junginger, for the archives they made accessible, for their advice and for numerous insightful discussions. In April 2017 and April 2024, they gave me the opportunity to present my topic for discussion, and in 2023 awarded me the Horst-Dähn-Preis.

In my working environment, I have been lucky enough to meet people at various levels who encouraged an additional and very time-consuming scientific job. To mention any of them would be to forget some; they will know who they are. I will limit myself here to thanking the presbytery of the Lutheran parish of Bourg-la-Reine, the regional council of the *Inspection luthérienne de Paris*, the successive ecclesiastical inspectors Jean-Frédéric Patrzynski and Laza Nomenjanahary, the general secretary Sophie Zentz-Amédro as well as my colleague and neighbour Jean-Claude Deroche.

I have to thank the Catholic parish of the Holy Family in Berlin and its secretary for their special hospitality and trust, which made it possible for me to break up many a long working day at the Federal Archives with an intermezzo on the organ.

And finally, I am grateful to my family who has taken on so much over the years; Leonora, Lise, Marie-Pascale, Sandrine, Dominique and Mary, Jane and Stephen. Elisa Goudin lent me some books in the midst of the Covid crisis, and Viera Rebellodo-Dhuin provided invaluable support with the PhD thesis' final manuscript. Thank you.

In 2022, my work on atheism attracted the interest of the core team of the international and interdisciplinary research programme, Explaining Atheism (EA). Its Early Career Grant provides the funding for this publication, and the intellectual encounter gave this book a distinct tone. I am grateful for both. In November 2023, the grant gave me the opportunity to organise an international conference on "Communist Perspectives on Atheism in the 20th Century" in Campus Condorcet near Paris, to meet specialists I had long desired to talk to, to broaden and deepen the perspective beyond the GDR and to receive valuable inspiration. My thanks go to the EA programme, especially to Jonathan Lanman, Lois Lee and Claire Berlyn, and to the Templeton Foundation. On the French side, this would not have been possible without the welcome I received at the CéSor research group (*Centre d'études en sciences sociales du religieux*) and at the EHESS *(École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)* – warm thanks to Pierre-Antoine Fabre, Nathalie Luca, Stéphane Eloy, Camille Amat and the whole team at EHESS. I would also like to thank Una Dimitrijevic for her great help in turning a French manuscript with German origins into a book that I hope will prove enjoyable to read in English.

To my Pierre, whom I cannot thank enough, I dedicate this work once again. Without him, the thesis would never have seen the light of day, and neither would this book.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AfG	Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften (Academy of Social Sciences)
AG	Arbeitsgruppe (working group)
BArch	Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive)
BEK	Bund evangelischer Kirchen in der DDR (Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR)
BISKF	Berliner Institut für vergleichende Staat-Kirche-Forschung (Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research)
BL	Bezirksleitung (Regional leadership)
BStU	Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic)
CAEM	Conseil d'assistance économique mutuelle (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance)
CC	Central Committee
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ČSSR	Československá socialistická republika (Czechoslovak Socialist Republic)
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik (German Democratic Republic)
DDR-FG	DDR-Forschungsgruppe Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus (GDR-wide research group in scientific atheism)
DHM	Dialektischer und historischer Materialismus (Dialectical and Historical Materialism)
DM	Deutsche Mark
DZfPh	Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie (journal)
EKD	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Protestant Church in Germany)

EKU	Evangelische Kirche der Union (Evangelical Church of the Union)
ELAB	Evangelisches Landeskirchliches Archiv in Berlin (Protestant Church Archive in Berlin)
EZA	Evangelisches Zentralarchiv (Protestant Central Archives)
EZW	Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen (Protestant Central Office for World-view Issues)
FDGB	Freier Deutscher Gewerkschafts-Bund (Free German Trade Union Federation)
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth)
FG	Forschungsgruppe (research group)
FKZE	Forschungsstelle für kirchliche Zeitgeschichte Erfurt (Research Centre for Contemporary Church History Erfurt)
FMI	Franz-Mehring-Institut (Franz Mehring Institute)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FSU	Friedrich-Schiller-Universität (Friedrich Schiller University)
F.u.B.	Forschungsberichte und Beiträge (journal)
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GO	Grundorganisation (basic unit of the SED)
HfV	Hochschule für Verkehrswesen (Dresden Transport College)
HUB	Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Humboldt University Berlin and its archives)
IfG	Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften (Institute of Social Sciences)
IHS	Ingenieurhochschule Warnemünde-Wustrow (Naval and Shipping Engineering College in Warnemünde-Wustrow)
IK	Ideologische Kommission (Ideological Commission)
IML	Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Institute of Marxism-Leninism)
INA	Institut Nautchnogo Ateizma (Institute of Scientific Atheism)
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (German Communist Party)
KMU	Karl-Marx-Universität (Karl Marx University)
MfS	Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry for State Security, called Stasi)
MHF	Ministerium für Hoch- und Fachschulwesen (Ministry of Higher and Technical Education)
ML	Marxismus-Leninismus (Marxism-Leninism)
MLG	marxistisch-leninistisches Grundlagenstudium (Marxist-Leninist basic study programme)
MLU	Martin-Luther-Universität (Martin Luther University)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PB	Politbüro (Politburo)
PC	Private Collection

PHG	Pädagogische Hochschule Güstrow (Güstrow College of Education)
SAPMO-BArch	Stiftung der Parteien und Massenorganisationen im Bundesarchiv (Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives)
SBZ	Sowjetische Besatzungszone (Soviet Occupation Zone)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SHF	Staatssekretariat für das Hochschulwesen (State Secretariat for Higher Education)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
St. AG	Ständige Arbeitsgruppe Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus (Permanent working group in scientific atheism)
ThStA	Rudolstadt Landesarchiv Thüringen - Staatsarchiv Rudolstadt (Thuringia Land Archives – Rudolstadt Public Archives)
TUD	Technische Universität Dresden (Technical University Dresden)
UAJ	Universitätsarchiv Jena (Jena University Archives)
UAL	Universitätsarchiv Leipzig (Leipzig University Archives)
UAR	Universitätsarchiv Rostock (Rostock University Archives)
UPL	Universitätsparteileitung (University Party Leadership)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VdF	Verband der Freidenker in der DDR (Association of Freethinkers in the GDR)
WA	Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus (journal)
WA FB	Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht (journal)
WKG	Wissenschaftlicher Kommunismus/Geschichte (Scientific communism/History)
ZIJ	Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung (Central Institute for Studies on the Youth)
ZK	Zentralkomitee (Central Committee)

Note on sources and spelling

Every detail in the quotes, comprising underlining, words in brackets (), question marks, etc., stems from the original documents unless I have used [ ].

As to names, especially Russian ones, I have adopted the English transliteration found in other scientific works. In the reference lists, I have stuck to the spelling as given in the references. East Germans were not consistent in how they spelled the names of their colleagues.

Introduction

> Ways to catch a lion in the Sahara:
>
> The experimental physicist gets a shovel and a sieve and keeps shovelling; what falls through the sieve is the Sahara, and what remains in it is the lion. The mathematician halves the Sahara and says to himself that the lion must be in one of the two halves; this is halved again and so on. At the end, a part of the Sahara remains in which the lion fits precisely; a cage is placed over this part and the lion is trapped. The Marxist-Leninist philosopher goes into the forest, catches a hare and talks to the hare until the hare admits to being a lion.
>
> East German joke (Schimunek 2002, 28)

East German philosophers, social scientists and all those who worked in so-called ideological fields have a bad reputation. The vast majority were unable to pursue their careers beyond the collapse of the regime, after an often scathing assessment. "Practically only communist ideology under the disguise of 'science'", "primarily ideological mediators and not researchers" (Voigt and Gries 1994, 52–56), whose writings were "widely characterised by propaganda" (Weber 2003, 17), one could read. The sole purpose of their work was seen in legitimising the communist regime, and Weber concluded: "and so their empirical explanations were also mostly forgettable" (Weber 2003, 17). Those who studied religious phenomena and atheism in this regime did not escape opprobrium. Writer Stefan Heym even created a parodic monument to them in his 1981 novel *Ahasver*, featuring the director of a scientific atheism institute in Berlin that never existed (Heym 1981). East Germany did indeed institutionalise a university discipline of the same name in 1963, taking its inspiration from the Soviet Union. Olof Klohr, a young professor of dialectical materialism, occupied a chair dedicated to this subject at the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Jena. After the university chair was abolished in 1968 and Klohr moved to the Baltic coast, scientific atheism gained renewed interest in the East German political and academic world from 1972 onwards. A small group of scholars was formed whose ambition was to establish scientific atheism in all higher education establishments throughout the country. By the end of the 1970s, however,

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322-1

this expansion had reached its limits. Its supporters managed to introduce the discipline in a wider range of places in the 1980s, but it did not survive German reunification in 1990.

The research carried out under the label of "scientific atheism" shared the fate of other social sciences of the past regime. Dahms judged the work on the sociology of religion at the Jena Chair of Scientific Atheism to be "methodically very rough" and its results "correspondingly poor" (Dahms 2007, 1609). Graf dismissed in a few sentences all empirical work on the reality of Protestantism in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) carried out by historians and theologians (he made no mention of scientific atheism) and spoke of a "terra incognita" (Graf 1994, 299–300). In presenting the "sociology of religion in Germany since 1945", Detlef Pollack simply failed to take into account the "other Germany" (Pollack 2015). The former Czechoslovak scientific atheists fared no better, with a present-day specialist in the sociology of religion in Czechoslovakia conceding "hardly any scientific findings at all"; like Voigt and Gries, he too used the term "disguise" and preferred what others wrote in exile (Nešpor 2011, 82).

"Scientific atheism", which spread to many Eastern Bloc countries from the second half of the 1950s onwards, was part of a wider atheisation system that was often rejected after the end of the socialist period.[1] Remmel, Václavík and Bubík even questioned the possible effects on historiography to this day: "Scholarly accounts on nonreligion in the CEE region are difficult to find - perhaps a result of the same Soviet period that has given the topic of 'atheism' negative connotations lasting even until the present" (2020, 5). Agadjanian identified scientific atheism more specifically as a major element among the Soviet and imperial legacies of secularisation. According to this author, it was then "de-sacralized", and the "obvious emancipation and growth in religious agency after the end of the official 'scientific atheism' took different shapes across nations" (2015, 243). Has scientific atheism been one of the "different shadows of 'Soviet State atheization'" (Bubík, Václavík and Remmel 2020, 310) that have attracted renewed academic interest in recent years (see also Buchenau 2015)? A "dogma" among others (Smolkin 2014, 175), an ideology (Bubík and Václavík 2020, 76) or even the official ideology of the Soviet Union (Ališauskienė 2020, 156)? A "thought style" more concerned with the development of ideas, as distinct from propagandistic implementation (Tesař 2019)? Or, on the contrary, the equivalent of atheist propaganda (Bubík, Václavík and Remmel 2020, 321–322)?

The different markedness of the "atheist establishment" (Smolkin 2018) in the various countries undoubtedly accounts at least partly for this wide range of assessments in recent scholarship. For the Soviet Union, Smolkin put into perspective the departments of scientific atheism and the institute of scientific atheism founded in 1964 at the Academy of Social Sciences under the Central Committee of the CPSU as part of the "Soviet atheist apparatus - party and government officials, ideology theorists and propaganda cadres, social scientists, cultural workers, and enlightenment

activists, among others". These also included the State Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism in Leningrad, the League of the Militant Godless and the Znanie Society (Smolkin 2018, 4). Prior to Smolkin's landmark work, James Thrower and Kimmo Kääriäinen had devoted studies to scientific atheism in a more restricted sense, begun before the fall of the USSR, within the framework of a history of ideas, with less attention to material and institutional conditions (Thrower 1983; Kääriäinen 1989).

For the present study on the GDR, it has proved helpful to focus on the university discipline known as "scientific atheism" in order to be able to grasp the phenomenon and identify a core of actors on the one hand and to be able to offer points of contact for possible and still largely outstanding comparisons with other Eastern Bloc countries on the other. The phenomenon known as "scientific atheism" had inter- and transnational dimensions whose investigation would refine our knowledge and understanding of this geopolitical area. In addition to the Soviet example, in Czechoslovakia there was evidence of a move in this direction as early as 1955 (Bubík and Václavík 2020, 69). Scientific atheism was also established in Hungary and Bulgaria, and more timidly in Poland, Romania and as far afield as Mongolia. Yugoslavia and socialist countries on other continents appear only very occasionally in the archives and literature I have been able to consult. Yet the flourishing field of studies on atheism and different forms of the nonreligious often suffers from a lack of consensual definitions, which causes the case studies to be "often incomparable with one another" (Remmel, Václavík and Bubík, 2020, 5). This state of affairs needs to be overcome in order to grasp a phenomenon such as "scientific atheism" that was sufficiently unified to present international and transnational dimensions and yet differentiated according to national contexts. Indeed, as Remmel, Václavík and Bubík emphasised in a pioneering work that did not include the GDR:

> although the region has undergone a similar historical experience and although nonreligion has been 'filtered' somewhat through Soviet atheism, the respective developments are diverse, not only before and after the fall of the Communist bloc, but even during the Communist era.
>
> (2020, 6)

In the most recent research on scientific atheism, Jan Tesař's PhD thesis offers a valuable first step in this direction. By examining the example of Moscow, Brno and Bratislava, "the goal [was] to determine how [scientific atheism] emerged and functioned as a science (or scholarship) in specific historical […] boundaries" (Tesař 2019, 17). The perspective, however, is not one of academic or political history alone, for as Tesař goes on to write, "'scientific atheism' is understood as a way of seeing" (2019, 9). To make the best possible contribution to this ongoing research, the present work will place particular emphasis on the international ramifications as they emerge from the archives consulted, which need to be supplemented by other perspectives.

The adopted approach is therefore closer to that of Marianna Shaknovich, for whom scientific atheism was the communist equivalent of the study of religion (quoted in Remmel and Friedenthal, 2020, 96). However, this study was never intended to be neutral. Those who practised it subscribed to the vision of a science subject to political imperatives, where research, expertise, education and propaganda joined forces in the service of the communist societal project. The East German regime experienced its own form of what Lutz Raphael called the "scientificisation of the social", i.e. "the permanent presence of human science experts, their arguments and research results in administrations and companies, in parties and parliaments, right through to the everyday worlds of meaning of social groups, classes or milieus" (Raphael 1996, 166; see also Szöllösi-Janze 2002; and Brückweh et al. 2012).

The figure of the "expert" was one of the most striking manifestations of this trend, which went hand in hand in European history from the nineteenth century onwards with the emergence of the welfare state, bureaucratisation, professionalisation and a way of thinking about society that also aimed at disciplining it (see Reinecke and Mergel 2012, 9, 11). Experts found themselves at the intersection of two interdependent processes, like two sides of a coin: The "scientificisation of politics" and the "politicisation of the sciences" (Leendertz 2012, 339; see also vom Bruch 2000, 46; Harwood 2002). The role of the sciences in the political project, whatever the regime, but also what this public importance did to the sciences, has proved to be a fruitful issue for shedding light on the history of the Cold War (see Link 2018; Brunnbauer, Kraft and Schulze Wessel 2011). The GDR coined the slogan "science as a productive force" (*Produktivkraft Wissenschaft*) and claimed that its politics were based on science. Questions about the interference of the communist parties, the autonomy of science or its instrumentalisation are widely debated and have already been raised in James Thrower's study of scientific atheism in the USSR (1983, 159; on the GDR, see Burrichter and Diesener 2002; Malycha 2001).

Conversely, this interweaving of politics and science raises the question of the influence that the latter may have exerted on the policies pursued. In the case of scientific atheism, the link with the Church policy (*Kirchenpolitik*) pursued by the East German State needs to be examined. Scientific atheists sometimes produced studies at the request of a public administration, a body of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) or the Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*, FDJ), acting as experts on religious and atheist issues. In this way, they played an active part in the negotiations that took place out of sight to define a "political line" that was still often perceived as being set by "the SED" as a monolithic bloc. As Smolkin regretted for the Soviet case:

> few studies, therefore, examine the debates *within* the bureaucratic apparatus, which usually (though not always) took place behind the

> sciences. Ideological debates did not always reach the public, and ideologists often lacked the political power to turn their polemics into politics.
>
> (Smolkin 2014, 175)

These debates have much to teach us about the regimes in question, the role of scientific atheists and diverging visions of atheism and atheisation. Here, our study is in line with other work on the relationship between ideology and science in socialist regimes (see Mazurek 2007; Brunnbauer, Kraft and Schulze Wessel 2011; Mink 2017, 23; Kowalczuk 1995, 36–37; Voříšek 2011, 42–43).

The scientific atheists went further, assuming a dual role as observers and actors of atheisation in various fields: Among their students, colleagues and the population, often through the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge as existed in most European socialist countries, and within the new Freethinkers' Association. Research into socialist rites with immediate practical application, which was a dominant feature of scientific atheism in Bulgaria and, to a lesser extent, in Latvia and Ukraine, was also not foreign to the East Germans (Denkov, Vulchev and Gueorguieva 2020, 18; Kiope, Runce and Stasulane 2020, 146–147; Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020). The means and sharing of tasks varied from country to country, contributing to the shifting contours of scientific atheism. The East German "atheist establishment" was much less developed than elsewhere, with no museums of atheism or planetariums such as existed in Moscow, Leningrad and Vilnius, in Ukraine and Slovakia, and no publishing houses or book series (on Slovakia, see Tížik 2020). Unlike their Czech colleagues during the Prague Spring, East German scholars never directly engaged in politics (Nešpor 2011; Matějka 2011). Nonetheless, the commitment of these "Party workers" (*Parteiarbeiter*, see Ploenus 2007) was substantial and deserves to be included in the analysis, again to offer points of contact for further comparison.

Research on scientific atheism as a double contribution to nonreligious studies

Through their various commitments in society, scientific atheists sought to promote a certain type of atheism – a certain vision. For the GDR, Horst Dähn spoke, for instance, of "very specific world-view positions, namely those of 'scientific atheism'" (Dähn 1994, 257). The field of possibilities was vast if we look at what is known about the discipline of "scientific atheism" in different countries. Referring to the same "classics" – Marx, Engels and Lenin – was not enough to circumscribe the content of the discipline or even to fix once and for all a position with regard to religious communities and believers and to cement the will to spread atheism.[2] Doubts inspired by the rising indifference towards religion and also atheism, observed in various

countries from the 1960s onwards, and phases of dialogue are phenomena that are now well-known in historiography (see Tóth and Weir 2020; Ramšak, Mithans and Režek 2022). It, therefore, seemed more appropriate to align the analysis with what the historical actors referred to as scientific atheism, to scrutinise the concrete content, the research work done and the methodology, rather than to contrast this term with phases of religious sociology and "dialogical Marxist atheism" (Bubík and Václavík 2020, 69; Nešpor 2011). By the content proposed, scientific atheism is thus part of the wider history of atheism and nonreligion, an expanding field of research, as one historically situated proposition among many others. The convictions of those who say they have no religion are increasingly intriguing researchers.[3] Atheists, agnostics and "nones", those who are indifferent, hesitant or doubtful also have beliefs and practices and present a wide variety of profiles.[4] Pierre Bréchon and Anne-Laure Zwilling, organisers of the first conference held in France on the subject, in 2016, went so far as to say that "thinking about nonreligion, atheism and religious indifference is becoming a major challenge for the social sciences of religion" (Bréchon and Zwilling, 2020, 14).

In the present case, access via the academic discipline of "scientific atheism" enables us to retrace how a certain group of historical actors defined atheism, or different types of atheism, and what seemed to them to favour its consolidation. Here, scientific atheism mirrored, with fundamentally different assumptions and practical consequences, questions that are still relevant and have been the object of the international and interdisciplinary Explaining Atheism Programme in 2023–2024. Whether atheism should be a negative notion, constructed in opposition to religion, or at least in relation to it, or one of religion's various "others" – all questions that occupy researchers today – becomes a topic of discussion among scientific atheists and not an issue to be decided by the historian (see, for instance, Remmel, Václavík and Bubík 2020; Quack, Schuh and Kind 2020). In this respect, atheism is indeed, as Remmel, Václavík and Bubík stated following Bagget, "a culturally constructed phenomenon" (2020, 5). As the story unfolds, the scholars of scientific atheism – who did not call themselves "scientific atheists" in German (*wissenschaftliche Atheisten*) but rather holders of a "scientific world-view" (*wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung*), of which scientific atheism was to be a part – questioned, discussed and negotiated with each other and revealed what kind of atheism they could and wanted to enforce. The scope of the studied period makes it possible to follow the process of definition and the various phases of discussion. As a specific atheist proposition, scientific atheism claimed a monopoly in the national contexts where it was possible and proved most often incompatible with the maintenance or revival of other forms of non-religiosity, judged less accomplished than Marxist-Leninist atheism (Bubík, Václavík and Remmel 2020, 320; Bubík and Václavík 2020; Hoffmann and Tyrała 2020). In East Germany, the refounding of a movement of freethinkers was prevented in the 1940s (Neef 2024), and the history of atheism was little valued, at least within the framework of the discipline

of scientific atheism.[5] This certainly could not prevent all traditions from being perpetuated, and more research would be needed to bring continuity to light. In other countries such as Ukraine, Estonia and Latvia, scientific atheists have, on the contrary, attempted to tell the story of a long anti-religious, freethinking and atheist past (Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020; Remmel and Friedenthal 2020; Kiope, Runce and Stasulane 2020).

Scientific atheism is, therefore, part of the story not only to be told by nonreligious studies but also to be looked at from another angle, since it was itself an attempt to institutionalise a science of irreligion, atheism and the religious. Scientific atheism was most often perceived as a sub-discipline of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, as it was in the GDR. However, depending on the country, it also found its methodological tools in psychology (Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria), ethnography (Soviet Union), ethics (Poland, GDR) and aesthetics (Soviet Union) (on Hungary, see Balogh and Fejérdy 2020). Above all, scientific atheism underwent a sociological turn that, in the GDR, was strongly perceptible in the mid-1960s and remained significant until the end of this historical experiment. Scientific atheists not only – and not always first and foremost – wanted to give a spiritual content to atheism (see Smolkin 2018); they also wanted to grasp and measure the state and evolution of atheism in their respective countries. This ambition forced them to question the categories of the nonreligious as well as the religious, and of indifference.

Moreover, not everything that scientific atheism has produced in this field has been rejected in the way described above. Matějka, for example, spoke highly of the research carried out in 1963 in northern Moravia: "The scientific value […] was already indisputable in the 1960s. It was a pioneering initiative, which aroused interest even from abroad" (Matějka 2011, 120). Similarly, in Germany, it was pointed out that excellent research was "very well possible" even under a dictatorship (Link 2018, 64). Voices were raised in defence of the history of law and research on developing countries conducted in the GDR. The argument for considering certain East German works to be acceptable consisted either in seeing in them only a very superficial ideological veneer, which could simply be removed in order to rediscover works of quality, or in distinguishing between high-profile, synthetic or theoretical works, judged to be irrelevant after 1989, and empirical research sheltered from ideology (Stolleis 2009, 166–167; van der Heyden 2001, 180–181). It was precisely the empirical work that was highlighted as being worth preserving, sometimes by its authors but not exclusively, as in the fields of sociology and youth research, which were close to scientific atheism (Sparschuh and Koch 1997, 26–27; Griese 1999, 556; Brunnbauer, Kraft and Schulze Wessel, 2011, 18; Bafoil 1991, 281–282). And even Olof Klohr's work was recognised as being "definitely more sophisticated" than a mere atheist polemic (Kühn 1997, 264). Manfred Lauermann described certain analyses in a collective work edited by Olof Klohr and Masula in 1966 as "empirically usable", but only those on other socialist countries – as if it

were easier to admit what affects the reader less (Lauermann 2016, 132). Questioned by Klohr and his colleagues in 1990, the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR (known as the BEK, or *Bund Evangelischer Kirchen in der DDR*) also had to take a position on the value of the sociological work to which they had just been given access. Their internal judgement was: "very carefully worked […] and - irrespective of the clearly recognisable Marxist attitude of the authors - free of any polemics". The Department of Theological Studies was delighted to obtain copies "in order to be able to use them occasionally". It was therefore for political reasons that it was "totally out of the question" for the Church to be associated with the continuation of the work.[6] As another BEK staff member put it, "Klohr cannot be released from his disastrous, system-stabilising effectiveness into scientific neutrality".[7]

Not all have taken the same precautions. Statistics produced by East German scientific atheists on religion and secularisation in the GDR have been picked up by many Western or later authors (Sorg 1974; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 1981, 36, 41; Heise 1993; Dähn 1994; Fulbrook 1995, 103–104; Diederich 1997, 209; Ramet 1998, 53; Thiede 1999, 287; Fincke, 2002, 9). Some have even taken up the categories of analysis and hence certain conclusions, thereby confirming their validity without openly saying so (Büscher 1982). The proposal was tempting insofar as few other statistics exist on believers and non-believers over the course of the GDR's existence. Yet, the Eastern part of Germany is recognised as a most interesting area for studying the phenomena of secularisation. "Something like a church disaster area" (Berger quoted in Tiefensee 2002, 199), the "pagan east" of Germany (Heise 1998, 150) had been the scene of an "unprecedented process of turning away from Christian religion and Church" (Schmidt-Lux 2008, 12). Membership of the Lutheran-Reformed Protestant and Catholic Churches fell from 82% and 12%, respectively, in 1946 to 60% and 8% in 1964, according to the only existing official census, and to around 25% and 2%–5% in 1990, according to concordant surveys on which there is a consensus (see Maser 1992, 71, 82). This numerical decline lasted beyond the end of the socialist regime. As Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein and Schmidt-Lux put it, "in terms of its long-term consequences, the SED's religious policy therefore appears to have been one of the most 'successful' projects of the former GDR. The experiment of sustainable secularisation seems to have been a success" (Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein and Schmidt-Lux 2009, 14). In the early 2010s, 64% of people living in the former GDR territories said they were "not religious at all" (*gar nicht religiös*), and 68% did not belong to any religious community (Wilke 2013, 37).

The appropriate categories continue to be debated. However, the loss of significance of religious references seems to be a given. Ulrich Kühn has pointed out that "it is usually not so much about a kind of militant atheism, but rather about an attitude to life in which the religious dimension appears to be absolutely obsolete" (Kühn 1997, 257). Annette Wilke spoke of a "religiously rather 'unmusical' East German society" (Wilke 2013, 30), Erhard Neubert of an "atheistic habitus" and Gert Pickel of a "culture of

non-denominationalism" (quoted in Schmidt-Lux 2008, 13; other striking expressions in Dietrich 2018, 1963–1969 and Groschopp 2013). This massive phenomenon observed during the 40 years of socialist rule has never ceased to intrigue observers, giving rise to numerous studies and different types of explanation. This is hardly surprising, given that the study of the present tends to be approached "as an analysis of the 'prehistory' of current problems" and that some historians even see "the present as the traumatic expression of past catastrophes" (Droit, Miard-Delacroix and Reichherzer 2016, 21, 23). Should the shrinking of the Churches be blamed on political and ideological repression and atheist propaganda, particularly in the 1950s (according to Pollack 1994b)? Or should one rally to the theses defended by Marxist researchers who emphasised industrialisation, urbanisation and the role of science (Büscher 1982)? Some have wanted to take a longer view, seeing an older "Christian-without-Church mentality" that circumstances would have made manifest in the second half of the twentieth century (Pollack 1994b, 281). Still others have studied the history of the area, going back as far as the Reformation and the Wars of Religion, or hypothesised an identity crisis shaking the German population (Tiefensee 2002). Thomas Schmidt-Lux has emphasised the importance of science and the focus on the immanent as factors that have led to a decline in religious convictions (Schmidt-Lux 2008, 18). Together with Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Uta Karstein, he has demonstrated the active part played by East German citizens in appropriating the theses proposed to them (Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein and Schmidt-Lux 2009).

Scientific atheism followed the same line of thought, with a scientific approach that was supposed to be able to resolve all the questions facing human beings. Since the 1960s, its representatives have proposed explanations for the observed secularisation, influencing the debate. At the same time, they must be seen as actors who, through their teaching and propaganda activities, have contributed to accelerating the phenomenon. The authors who have ensured the posterity of results produced by scientific atheism have done so without knowledge about their assumptions, categorisations and methods. Like any mapping of a spiritual landscape, research carried out under the auspices of an ideological discipline deserves "methodically controlled access to the data" rather than being used as a convenient provider of supposedly neutral data on past realities (Raphael 1996, 191). The scientific atheists might well have had an interest in swelling the lion's share, in other words, the share of "atheists", "non-believers" and other "nones", categories that are extremely delicate, all the more so in a totalitarian regime. It is therefore important to focus on the study of scientific practices themselves: The production and dissemination of knowledge and teaching (see Burrichter and Diesener 2002; Schimunek 2002; Voříšek 2011, 57; Sparschuh and Koch 1997). Before entering into the debate as to whether the emergence of scientific theories was possible in the East German context, a well-documented investigation is necessary.

The GDR was not the only country in which new social science disciplines attempted to establish themselves in the second half of the twentieth century. Questions similar to those discussed for the sociology of religion institutionalised in France from 1954 onwards may prove inspiring for such a distant context (Béraud, Duriez and de Casquet 2018; Lassave 2019 and 2020, and ongoing research in the CéSor research centre Paris). Beyond the problems shared by any constitution of a new (sub)discipline, the reference can help on two levels. Firstly, the "scientific sociology of the religious field", to use Bourdieu's terms, presents its own challenges that transcend national, linguistic and political boundaries. Bourdieu considered it:

> a very difficult undertaking […] because, when you are part of it, you participate in the belief inherent in belonging to any field (religious, academic, etc.) and, when you are not part of it, you run the risk, firstly, of failing to include the belief in the model […], and secondly, of being deprived of some useful information.
>
> (quoted in Béraud, Duriez and de Casquet 2018, 8)

The question of whether it is better "to be in" or "not to be in", already raised by Durkheim, has found a radical answer in the positioning of researchers in scientific atheism. How did they manage to grasp an object – religion – that was fundamentally foreign to them at a time when most of their Western colleagues "were in" or at least had been?

However, the particularly problematic nature of religion as an object of study, "a dubious object par excellence", according to Danièle Hervieu-Léger (quoted in Béraud, Duriez and de Casquet 2018, 8), does not prevent high-quality research. This has been demonstrated by the consolidation of the social sciences of religion in many countries over the course of the twentieth century and more recently on religion's "others". The change of the discipline's name, initially known as "scientific atheism" in the GDR into "Marxist-Leninist religious studies" between 1988 and 1990, suggested a move towards making it the "Marxist-Leninist" counterpart of the science practised elsewhere. Even under the name of "scientific atheism", it had been recognised by international religious sociology organisations. Has it succeeded in transcending its "dubious" status and acquiring comparable legitimacy? Talking about France, Philippe Portier believes that "intellectual credibility" stems from the methodological probity of the social sciences of religion, which combine techniques shared with other fields with knowledge specific to their field. Secondly, he refers to the cognitive contributions of the research carried out, which are received in other disciplines (Portier 2018, 219–220). In the case of East German scientific atheism, the validity of the methods is verified, or not, by "a look in the production halls of social 'facts' from a history of science perspective" advocated by Lutz Raphael (1996, 191). To verify the accuracy of the knowledge expressed, it would be necessary to compare it with researchers working in other contexts at the same time,

much more so than has been possible in the context of the present work. It could serve as a basis for further comparison.

As for reception by neighbouring sciences, this has been seriously hampered and even largely prevented by the confidentiality of almost all the work produced in East German scientific atheism. However, the little feedback between researchers in different countries and from experts who were called in, for example, prior to the publication of works, is often highly significant. It was not always for political reasons that a publication failed or that cooperation came to an end, far from it. Not everything that was written met the quality standards expected by the East German researchers themselves, revealing scientific standards that may not have been achieved but were present in their minds. The few contacts made beyond the Iron Curtain would also suggest that we should look more closely at the reception – albeit very limited – that they may have had in the Western world. Notably, Olof Klohr, as the main representative of East German scientific atheism, took advantage of the porosities of the "Iron Curtain", which some have more recently re-characterised as the "Nylon Curtain" (György Péteri quoted in Kott 2021, 8), to make his work known to Western sociologists of religion. Similarly, the semblance of an international socialist scientific community, with comrades from many Eastern Bloc countries, could help to assess the degree of scientific life.

Lastly, the cognitive contributions made by East German scientific atheism can only be considered significant if they deviate from what was expected, in contrast to the widespread idea that the outcome was a foregone conclusion in this type of discipline. The evolving notion of "withering away" of religion, confronted with empirical data, is the most striking example here. After initial reinterpretations of the concept, it was openness to other possibilities that prevailed rather than denial. So, apart from the empirical work that has had a certain reception, there is the whole more reflexive side of East German scientific atheism that remains and was waiting to be rediscovered. This could only be done by studying, for the first time, the whole trajectory of the discipline, from its beginnings in the 1950s to 1990.

A history to be explored

In the German case, scientific atheism is most often associated with a university chair of the same name. It was the only one of its kind in East Germany, and its short-lived existence at the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Jena between December 1963 and August 1968 obscured a continuity that the present study sheds light on. This is not to say that the existence of scientific atheism in East Germany has been ignored in publications to date. It is true that many of them use the expression "atheistic world-view state" (*atheistischer Weltanschauungsstaat*), coined by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church to describe and disqualify the GDR, without questioning it (see Haese 1998). Graf spoke of a "society of State-prescribed atheism"

(Graf 1994, 302), Kühn wanted to "deal with official atheism in the GDR" (Kühn 1997, 264) and Dietrich stated that "the entire State saw itself as atheistic, so to speak" (Dietrich 2018, 1969), without these authors specifying who they thought was behind the atheism imposed on society. Other authors explicitly mentioned the discipline of scientific atheism and its main representatives in the context of more general works. For example, Neubert in the history of opposition in the GDR (2000, 181–182) or Pollack (1994a, 186–190, talking however about the 1950s) and Albrecht-Birkner (2018, 43) in works on the Protestant Church. Scientific atheism also appeared in passing in studies devoted to philosophy; this is the case of an article by Lauermann (Lauermann 2016). Dahms referred to Olof Klohr's chair at Jena in the 1960s (2007, 1585, 1609). The role of certain researchers in scientific atheism also emerged in works on East German sociology (Steiner 1997; Ettrich 1997).

Other contributions to collective works were devoted more specifically to scientific atheism in the GDR, often by witnesses or former actors. Indeed, Olof Klohr and several former colleagues gave their accounts in the 1990s, giving direction to the interpretation that was to be made of their recently abolished discipline (Klohr 1993; Lutter 1994, 2001; Kleinig 1994). Ralf Pawelzik, a doctor at the Academy of Social Sciences (*Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften*, AfG) attached to the SED Central Committee, devoted two articles to the Jena Chair of Scientific Atheism, based on the grey literature produced by the chair and on a letter from Klohr to Pawelzik in 1993 (Pawelzik 1994, 1998). While Pawelzik was mainly interested in the sociological studies produced by the Chair of Scientific Atheism, another former AfG researcher, the historian Joachim Heise, has examined the training courses offered by Klohr and his comrades in the 1970s (Heise 1998, see also Heise 2003). Finally, the dialogue between Christians and Marxists in the 1980s was the subject of Simone Thiede's PhD in religious studies and sociology, defended in 1998 at the University of Bremen. On the basis of nine interviews, this former member of a scientific atheism collective sought to ascertain the extent to which there could be a dialogue (Thiede 1999). Her theoretical and normative analysis can be usefully supplemented by historical work based on archives. The 1982 articles by Horst Dähn and Almut Engelien were unable to provide an insider's perspective, as most of what was written in the field of scientific atheism was jealously guarded from Western eyes (Engelien 1982; Dähn 1982).

Another PhD thesis by the Catholic theologian Alfred Hoffmann deliberately chose to confine itself to published East German texts. He concentrated on two philosophical journals with the aim "to analyse the writings that were publicly accessible in the GDR and in this way to understand the meaning and content of the atheism propagated in society at the time". In his view, archival documents and grey literature not published in the journals "can supplement the picture of atheism presented here and modify it in individual aspects, but a fundamental reassessment […] is not to be expected" (Hoffmann 2000, 5). This choice led to a very philosophical discussion,

sometimes neglecting historical contextualisation, which begins by focusing on the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. He then mostly summarised the views of the East German journals and proved to be very concerned by the implications of atheist propaganda for the Churches and Christians. The material chosen does not allow him to dissect the reasoning, identify the factors that influenced it, or get rid of the terms and caesuras proposed by the sources. The attention of the present study is focused on the part of the story that failed to reach the general East German public and complements Hoffmann's work by presenting and differentiating the actors. One of the journals studied by Alfred Hoffmann, the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (DZfPh), has also been scrutinised by Bernd Schäfer in a work that deserves more attention than it has received so far (Schäfer 1997). More recently, Schuster deliberately dismissed the post-1969 work of scientific atheism on the grounds that it was not available to the public (Schuster 2017, 95). Yet to understand the vision of atheism developed by the scientific atheists, the entirety of their writings seems important.

The most widespread approach in works on scientific atheism, whether German or Soviet, has been to give pride of place to the philosophical dimension and to look first and foremost at the understanding of atheism among the founders of Marxism-Leninism. Before the fall of the communist regimes and the opening up of the archives, strongly anti-communist works such as those by Hans-Gerhard Koch (1961, 1963) rubbed shoulders with more academic works by Herta Schlosser and Angelika Senge. The latter are both broader in that they do not confine themselves to scientific atheism as a discipline but naturally lack information or analysis on the – inaccessible – actual work done in this field in the GDR. Angelika Senge is much more interested in Western Marxists, so the main names in East German scientific atheism are absent. In the context of Christian currents seduced by Marxism, she mainly asks the question: "Is the Marxist world-view only atheistic by addition or essentially atheistic?" (Senge 1983, 14). The position of atheism within Marxism was also the focus of Joseph Bochenski's analysis (1975), or within Soviet ideology, as in van den Bercken's (1989). This question will only be of importance in this work insofar as it gave rise to discussions between scientific atheists. There will also be no question here of reopening the debate – very interesting in itself – on Marxism as a possible substitute religion or political religion. Among the many proponents of this approach, including van den Bercken for the Soviet Union and Kowalczuk for the GDR (1995, 36, see also Schlosser 1970; Maier 1993; Mertens 2004; Schmidt-Lux 2008), Sarah Fatima Müller used it to study the scientific atheism group led by Klohr on the Baltic coast in the 1970s–1980s (Müller 2010). Because of the theoretical framework imposed, the reader is left wanting to know how, why and on what the academics of scientific atheism were working for so many years.

The present work starts from a more strictly institutional definition of scientific atheism to encompass the academics who claimed it, even if it means allowing oneself to be surprised by the content that some of them have been

able to give it over the decades. Ploenus, author of a PhD on an institute of Marxist-Leninist philosophy (Ploenus 2007), began to approach East German scientific atheism from a similar angle (Ploenus 2008). His article on the Chair of Scientific Atheism at Jena can be usefully supplemented by more detailed research with more exact referencing. In French, Sylvie Le Grand provided a well-informed overview of one of the issues dealt with in the context of scientific atheism at the very end of the 1980s. She asked some pertinent questions, the answers to which require a better understanding of the discipline over a longer period (Le Grand 2016). All the works cited are characterised by their very partial nature; they focus either on a very specific aspect – a limited number of sociological studies, a few training courses, a colloquium, or so-called "dialogue" meetings – or on a very restricted period, often both. The 1960s dominate the picture, sometimes with the presupposition that activities in the field of scientific atheism would not have been extended or would be of no interest beyond the abolition of the Jena chair (Pawelzik 1998; Schuster 2017, 2020). On the contrary, a study of the two periods in Olof Klohr's career, first at Jena and then at Warnemünde on the Baltic coast, makes it possible to highlight the continuities that may have existed and to assess the impact of his transfer on Marxist research on atheism and religion in the GDR.

In order to do this, a much larger and more varied collection of sources had to be at hand. The documents compiled over many years of work ended up being extensive, and their vast majority were used for the first time. They come from the university archives of Rostock, Berlin, Jena, Leipzig and Dresden; the Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research; the Archives of the Land of Thuringia – State Archives Rudolstadt; the Federal Archives and the Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives; the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former GDR; the Protestant Central Archives and the (Catholic) Research Centre for Contemporary Church History Erfurt. Of course, the historian would be wrong to take everything at face value (Fulbrook 1995, 1996). In addition to these archival sources, the scientific atheists produced books and articles and, above all, a particularly large body of grey literature. The Stasi archives have also been looked into. The secret police's interest in scientific atheism could have been of different kinds. Mistrust of all those in contact with churches, particularly in the 1980s, could have extended to them. Or, conversely (if not both at the same time), the Stasi might have been keen to take advantage of their expertise. Caution was all the more necessary in the present case as there had been obvious errors made by the Stasi itself and contradictory references suggesting that Olof Klohr was a Stasi informer (Ploenus 2008; BStU 2013, 63). Oral history was undertaken in the years 2014–2022 where possible, with second- or even third-generation scientific atheists. Several very interesting private collections were able to be discovered in this way.

Based on these vast sources, the present analysis of scientific atheism in its East German variant starts with its initial signs in the 1950s and its official

establishment at Jena in 1963 under Olof Klohr's direction (Chapter 1). The topics he and his team gave priority to and the methodological toolbox they created in the 1960s are then analysed (Chapter 2). Besides research and knowledge production, scientific atheists were also faced with important expectations as to their active role in the atheisation of students, fellow academics, teachers and the population (Chapter 3). After the end of the Jena Chair of Scientific Atheism in 1968, new political support and academic interest emerged in 1972, and the field had a second phase of development in the 1970s and 1980s (Chapter 4). Lessons in scientific atheism were a concern of the utmost importance in the 1970s, though they had started in the 1960s and ran up to 1989 (Chapter 5). In the 1970s, the fields included in scientific atheism and the conceptual framework changed significantly (Chapter 6). They did so once more in the last decade, motivating scientific atheists to make new commitments in society (Chapter 7).

Quoted archives

Protestant Central Archives (EZA)

Notes

1 Most recently, an international conference was devoted to "Religious Conversions and Atheization in 20th Century Central and Eastern Europe" at the Science and Research Centre Koper in April 2024 as part of three research projects funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency, associating scholars from neighbouring countries.
2 The diversity of "Communist Perspectives on Atheism" was the subject of a conference of the same name on Campus Condorcet near Paris in November 2023, organised by Eva Guigo-Patzelt.
3 A whole series of major research programmes can be cited here, among them Understanding Unbelief and Explaining Atheism, "The Nonreligion in a Complex Future (NCF) project", in France the network "Le non-religieux" led by Anne Lancien and Anne-Laure Zwilling, in Germany "Multiple Secularities" (Leipzig).
4 On the designations, see for instance Bullivant and Ruse 2013, Vainio and Visala 2015.
5 Hermann Ley, author of a monumental *History of Enlightenment and Atheism* (1966, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1989), remained an outsider to the scientific atheism network.
6 EZA 101/3303 Vermerk betr. Forschungsstelle Religionswissenschaft, 10 August 1990.
7 EZA 101/3303 Hohmann, Stellungnahme zur Anfrage von Prof. Olof Klohr, 29 August 1990, p. 1.

References

Agadjanian, Alexander. 2015. "Vulnerable post-Soviet secularities: Patterns and dynamics in Russia and beyond." In *Multiple Secularities beyond the West. Religion and Modernity in the Global Age*, edited by Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Matthias Middell, 241–260. Boston/Berlin/Munich: de Gruyter.

Albrecht-Birkner, Veronika. 2018. *Freiheit in Grenzen. Protestantismus in der DDR*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Ališauskienė, Milda. 2020. "The social history of irreligion in Lithuania (from the 19th century to the present). Between marginalization, monopoly and disregard?" In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 155–176. London/New York: Routledge.

Bafoil, François. 1991. "A quoi servait la sociologie en RDA." *Revue française de sociologie* 32 (2): 263–284.

Balogh, Margit and András Fejérdy. 2020. "Freethought, atheism and anticlericalism in 20th-century Hungary." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 111–136. London/New York: Routledge.

Basauri Ziuzina, Anna Mariya and Oleg Kyselov. 2020. "Atheism in the context of the secularization and desecularization of Ukraine in the 20th century." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 284–309. London/New York: Routledge.

Béraud, Céline, Bruno Duriez and Béatrice de Casquet, ed. 2018. *Sociologues en quête de religion*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

Bochenski, Joseph M. 1975. "Marxism-Leninism and religion." In *Religion and Atheism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe*, edited by Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John W. Strong, 1–17. London/Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Bréchon, Pierre and Anne-Laure Zwilling. 2020. *Indifférence religieuse ou athéisme militant? Penser l'irréligion aujourd'hui*. Fontaine: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.

Brückweh, Kerstin, Dirk Schuhmann, Richard F. Wetzell and Benjamin Ziemann, ed. 2012. *Engineering Society: The Role of the Human and Social Sciences in Modern Societies, 1880–1980*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brunnbauer, Ulf, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, ed. 2011. *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe: Scientific Self-Description in State Socialist Countries*. Munich: Oldenbourg.

BStU, ed. 2013. *Hauptverwaltung A (HV A). Aufgaben - Strukturen - Quellen*. Berlin: BStU.

Bubík, Tomáš, David Václavík and Atko Remmel. 2020. "Nonreligion in the CEE region. Some remarks." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 310–324. London/New York: Routledge.

Bubík, Tomáš and David Václavík. 2020. "Freethinkers and atheists in the Czech Lands in the 20th century." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 58–83. London/New York: Routledge.

Buchenau, Klaus. 2015. "Socialist secularities: The diversity of a universalist model." In *Multiple Secularities beyond the West. Religion and Modernity in the Global Age*, edited by Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Matthias Middell, 261–282. Boston/Berlin/Munich: de Gruyter.

Bullivant, Stephen and Michael Ruse, ed. 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burrichter, Clemens and Gerald Diesener, ed. 2002. *Auf dem Weg zur "Produktivkraft Wissenschaft"*. Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt GmbH.

Büscher, Wolfgang. 1982. "Unterwegs zur Minderheit: Eine Auswertung konfessionsstatistischer Daten." In *Die evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Reinhard Henkys, 422–436. Munich: Chr. Kaiser.

Dahms, Hans-Joachim. 2007. "Philosophie an der Universität Jena 1945 bis 1989." In *Hochschule im Sozialismus. Studien zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (1945–1990)*, edited by Uwe Hoßfeld, Tobias Kaiser and Heinz Mestrup, t. 2, 1568–1626. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.

Dähn, Horst. 1982. "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus und Erziehungssystem." In *Die evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Reinhard Henkys, 144–157. Munich: Chr. Kaiser.

Dähn, Horst. 1994. "Jugend, FDJ und Religion am Vorabend des 21. August 1968. Empirische Befunde zur Mitglieder- und Sozialstruktur der FDJ, zu politischen Einstellungen sowie Verhaltensweisen von DDR-Jugendlichen in der zweiten Hälfte der sechziger Jahre und die Reaktionen der Machteliten." In *"Links und links und Schritt gehalten..." Die FDJ: Konzepte - Abläufe - Grenzen*, edited by Helga Gotschlich, 251–267. Berlin: Metropol Verlag.

Denkov, Dimitar, Georgi Vulchev and Valentina Gueorguieva. 2020. "Bulgaria. Freethought and atheism in the shadow of ethnophyletism." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Non-religion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 9–32. London/New York: Routledge.

Diederich, Georg. 1997. "Die staatlich erzwungene Einführung atheistischer Riten in der DDR am Beispiel des Bezirkes Rostock." In *Religiöses Brauchtum und kirchliches Leben im Alltag der DDR - zwischen Anfechtung und Behauptung. Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung*, vol. VI, edited by Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 195–217. Schwerin.

Dietrich, Gerd. 2018. *Kulturgeschichte der DDR. Band III: Kultur In der Konsumgesellschaft 1977–1990*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Droit, Emmanuel, Hélène Miard-Delacroix and Frank Reichherzer. 2016. "Introduction à des essais franco-allemands." In *Penser et pratiquer l'histoire du temps présent. Essais franco-allemands,* edited by Emmanuel Droit, Hélène Miard-Delacroix and Frank Reichherzer, 9–24. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Septentrion.

Engelien, Almut. 1982. "Die theoretische Auseinandersetzung der SED mit der Religion." In *Die evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Reinhard Henkys, 127–143. Munich: Chr. Kaiser.

Ettrich, Frank. 1997. "DDR-Soziologie: Après la lutte." In *Soziologie und Soziologen im Übergang: Beiträge zur Transformation der außeruniversitären soziologischen Forschung in Ostdeutschland*, edited by Hans Bertram, 263–304. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

Fincke, Andreas. 2002. *Freidenker - Freigeister - Freireligiöse. Kirchenkritische Organisationen in Deutschland seit 1989*. Berlin: Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen, SZW-Texte 162.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, ed. 1981. *Kirche und Staat in der DDR und in der Bundesrepublik*. Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft.

Fulbrook, Mary. 1995. *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949–1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fulbrook, Mary. 1996. "Methodologische Überlegungen zu einer Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR." In *Die Grenzen der Diktatur. Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR*, edited by Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen, 274–296. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Graf, Friedrich Wilhelm. 1994. "Eine Ordnungsmacht eigener Art. Theologie und Kirchenpolitik im DDR-Protestantismus." In *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, edited by Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka and Hartmut Zwahr, 295–321. Stuttgart: Klett.

Griese, Hartmut M. 1999. "Nachwort." In *Das Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung Leipzig 1966–1990. Geschichte, Methoden, Erkenntnisse*, edited by Walter Friedrich, Peter Förster and Kurt Starke, 556–562. Berlin: Edition Ost.

Groschopp, Horst. 2013. "Worum geht es in der Debatte über den 'ostdeutschen Volksatheismus'?" *Kulturation: Online Journal für Kultur, Wissenschaft und Politik* 36 (16).

Haese, Ute. 1998. *Katholische Kirche in der DDR: Geschichte einer politischen Abstinenz*. Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag.

Harwood, Jonathan. 2002. "Forschertypen im Wandel 1880–1930." In *Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftspolitik. Bestandsaufnahmen zu Formationen, Brüchen und Kontinuitäten im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Rüdiger vom Bruch and Brigitte Kaderas, 162–168. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

Heise, Joachim. 1993. "Kirchenpolitik von SED und Staat: Versuch einer Annäherung." In *Kirchen in der Diktatur: Drittes Reich und SED-Staat: Fünfzehn Beiträge*, edited by Günther Heydemann and Lothar Kettenacker, 126–154. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Heise, Joachim. 1998. "'... die Arbeit auf dem Gebiet des Atheismus intensivieren und qualifizieren': Zum Wandel in der atheistischen Propaganda und Lehre in der DDR von den Anfängen bis Ende der siebziger Jahre." In *"Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung..." Jugend im Spannungsfeld von Staat und Kirche in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Horst Dähn and Helga Gotschlich, 150–167. Berlin: Metropol.

Heise, Joachim. 2003. "Persönliche Erfahrungen bei der wissenschaftlichen Beschäftigung mit dem Thema Geschichte der Kirchenpolitik der SED bzw. der DDR vor und nach dem Systembruch 1989/90." In *Staat und Kirchen in der DDR: Zum Stand der zeithistorischen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung*, edited by Horst Dähn and Joachim Heise, 55–67. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Heym, Stefan. 1981. *Ahasver*. Munich: Bertelsmann.

Hoffmann, Alfred. 2000. *"Mit Gott einfach fertig". Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Leipzig: St. Benno.

Hoffmann, Henryk and Radosław Tyrała. 2020. "Secularist social movements in Poland. History, institutionalization, repertoire of actions." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 177–206. London/New York: Routledge.

Kääriäinen, Kimmo. 1989. *Discussion on Scientific Atheism as a Soviet Science 1960–1985*. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakateimia.

Kiope, Māra, Inese Runce and Anita Stasulane. 2020. "The trajectories of atheism and secularization in Latvia. From the German Enlightenment to contemporary secularity." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 137–154. London/New York: Routledge.

Kleinig, Wolfgang. 1994. "Lehre und Forschung von Religion und Atheismus an der Sektion/Institut für Philosophie der Humboldt-Universtität zu Berlin (1980–1990)." *Berliner Dialog-Hefte 5* (2): 18–30.

Klohr, Olof. 1993. "Atheismus und Religion in der DDR." In *Kirchen in der Diktatur: Drittes Reich und SED-Staat: Fünfzehn Beiträge*, edited by Günther Heydemann and Lothar Kettenacker, 282–293. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Koch, Hans-Gerhard. 1961. *Abschaffung Gottes? Der materialistische Atheismus als heutige Existenzform. Geschichte, Problematik, Widerlegung*. Stuttgart: Quell-Verlag.

Koch, Hans-Gerhard. 1963. *Neue Erde ohne Himmel. Der Kampf des Atheismus gegen das Christentum in der "DDR" - Modell einer weltweiten Auseinandersetzung*. Stuttgart: Quell-Verlag.

Kott, Sandrine. 2021. *Organiser le monde. Une autre histoire de la guerre froide*. Paris: Seuil.

Kowalczuk, Ilko-Sascha. 1995. "Die Durchsetzung des Marxismus-Leninismus in der Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR." In *Historische Forschung und sozialistische Diktatur*, edited by Martin Sabrow and Peter Th. Walther, 31–58. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.

Kühn, Ulrich. 1997. "Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Atheismus in der evangelischen Kirche und in der evangelischen Theologie in der (ehemaligen) DDR." In *Unterwegs zum einen Glauben: Festschrift für Lothar Ullrich*, edited by Wolfgang Beinert, Konrad Feiereis and Hermann-Josef Röhrig, 256–273. Leipzig: Benno Verlag.

Lassave, Pierre. 2019. *La sociologie des religions. Une communauté de savoir*. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.

Lassave, Pierre. 2020. "Cinq vies de recherche. À la naissances des *Archives*." *Archives des sciences sociales des religions*. Special issue.

Lauermann, Manfred. 2016. "Der Atheismus – das ungeliebte Stiefkind der DDR-Philosophie." In *Atheismus: Ideologie, Philosophie oder Mentalität?*, edited by Richard Faber and Susanne Lanwerd, 121–147. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Leendertz, Ariane. 2012. "Experten - Dynamiken zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik." In *Das Soziale ordnen. Sozialwissenschaften und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheit im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Christiane Reinecke and Thomas Mergel, 337–369. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

Le Grand, Sylvie. 2016. "Le patrimoine culturel chrétien en RDA: un potentiel critique?" In *Résistance, dissidence et opposition en RDA 1949–1990*, edited by Hélène Camarade and Sibylle Goepper, 213–225. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Septentrion.

Ley, Hermann. 1966. *Geschichte der Aufklärung und des Atheismus*, vol. 1. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Ley, Hermann. 1978. *Geschichte der Aufklärung und des Atheismus*, vol. 3/1. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Ley, Hermann. 1980. *Geschichte der Aufklärung und des Atheismus*, vol. 3/2. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Ley, Hermann. 1982. *Geschichte der Aufklärung und des Atheismus*, vol. 4/1. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Ley, Hermann. 1984. *Geschichte der Aufklärung und des Atheismus*, vol. 4/2. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Ley, Hermann. 1986. *Geschichte der Aufklärung und des Atheismus*, vol. 5/1. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Ley, Hermann. 1989. *Geschichte der Aufklärung und des Atheismus*, vol. 5/2. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Link, Fabian. 2018. "Sozialwissenschaften im Kalten Krieg: Mathematisierung, Demokratisierung und Politikberatung." In H-Soz-Kult 15 May 2018. https://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/index.asp?id=3095&view=pdf&pn=forum&type=forschungsberichte

Lutter, Hans. 1994. "Marxismus - Atheismus - Religionskritik." *Berliner Dialog-Hefte* 5 (2): 2–17.

Lutter, Hans. 2001. "Zur Geschichte des Atheismus in der DDR." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 43 (2): 72–83.

Maier, Hans. 1993. "Die totalitäre Herausforderung und die Kirchen." In *Kirchen in der Diktatur: Drittes Reich und SED-Staat: Fünfzehn Beiträge*, edited by Günther Heydemann and Lothar Kettenacker, 33–64. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Malycha, Andreas. 2001. "Neue Forschungen zur DDR-Wissenschaftsgeschichte. Aspekte des Verhältnisses zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik." *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 41: 663–676.

Maser, Peter. 1992. *Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften in der DDR 1949–1989. Ein Rückblick auf vierzig Jahre in Daten, Fakten und Meinungen*. Konstanz: Christliche Verlagsanstalt.

Matějka, Ondřej. 2011. "Between the academy and power. Czech Marxist sociology of religion (1954–1970)." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 107–132. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Mazurek, Małgorzata. 2007. "Between sociology and ideology. Perception of work and sociologists advisors in communist Poland, 1956–1970." *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 16: 11–31.

Mertens, Lothar. 2004. *Rote Denkfabrik? Die Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED*. Münster: LIT.

Mink, Georges. 2017. "Sociology of social structure and sociologists working in totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes in Central Europe, 1945–1989." *Stan Rzeczy* 13 (2): 21–43.

Müller, Sarah Fatima. 2010. *Atheismus als politische Religion - Das Beispiel des Forschungskollektives "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus"*. Bachelor thesis, Rostock University.

Neef, Katharina. 2024. "Patterns of decline in German organised freethought in the twentieth century." In *The Non-Religious and the State. Seculars Crafting Their Lives in Different Frameworks from the Age of Revolution to the Current Day*, edited by Jeffrey Tyssens, Niels De Nutte and Stefan Schröder, 339–356. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Nešpor, Zdeněk R. 2011. "Czech sociology of religion under the communist regime 1948–1989." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 59–86. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Neubert, Ehrhart. 2000. *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949–1989*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

Pawelzik, Ralf. 1994. "Der Lehrstuhl für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus an der Universität Jena." In *Staat-Kirche-Beziehungen in der DDR und anderen ehemals realsozialistischen Ländern 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Joachim Heise, 81–86. Berlin: Evangelische Akademie Berlin-Brandenburg.

Pawelzik, Ralf. 1998. "Zum Säkularisierungsprozeß der DDR-Jugend." In *"Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung..." Jugend im Spannungsfeld von Staat und Kirche in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Horst Dähn and Helga Gotschlich, 184–192. Berlin: Metropol.

Ploenus, Michael. 2007. *"… so wichtig wie das tägliche Brot" Das Jenaer Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1945–1990*. Cologne: Böhlau.

Ploenus, Michael. 2008. "'... einmalig von Eisenach bis Wladiwostock'. Olof Klohr (1927–1994)." In *Ketzer, Käutze, Querulanten. Außenseiter im universitären Milieu*, edited by Matthias Steinbach and Michael Ploenus, 366–380. Jena: Bussert & Stadeler.

Pollack, Detlef. 1994a. *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft: Zum Wandel der gesellschaftlichen Lage der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.

Pollack, Detlef. 1994b. "Von der Volkskirche zur Minderheitskirche. Zur Entwicklung von Religiosität und Kirchlichkeit in der DDR." In *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, edited by Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka and Hartmut Zwahr, 271–294. Stuttgart: Klett.

Pollack, Detlef. 2015. "Religionssoziologie in Deutschland seit 1945: Tendenzen - Kontroversen - Konsequenzen." *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 67: 433–474.

Portier, Philippe. 2018. "Conclusion: Marginalité et reconnaissance. Le statut paradoxal de l'objet religieux dans les sciences sociales." In *Sociologues en quête de religion*, edited by Céline Béraud, Bruno Duriez and Béatrice de Casquet, 215–228. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

Quack, Johannes, Cora Schuh and Susanne Kind. 2020. *The Diversity of Nonreligion. Normativities and Contested Relations*. Oxon/New York: Routledge.

Ramet, Sabrina P. 1998. *Nihil Obstat. Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Ramšak, Jure, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, ed. 2022. *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

Raphael, Lutz. 1996. "Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22 (2): 165–193.

Reinecke, Christiane and Thomas Mergel. 2012. "Das Soziale vorstellen, darstellen, herstellen: Sozialwissenschaften und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheit im 20. Jahrhundert." In *Das Soziale ordnen. Sozialwissenschaften und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheit im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Christiane Reinecke and Thomas Mergel, 7–30. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

Remmel, Atko and Meelis Friedenthal. 2020. "Atheism and freethought in Estonian culture." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 84–110. London/New York: Routledge.

Remmel, Atko, David Václavík and Tomáš Bubík. 2020. "Studying freethought and atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. An introduction." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 1–8. London/New York: Routledge.

Schäfer, Bernd. 1997. "Die KPD/SED und ihr Umgang mit religiösem Brauchtum und kirchlichem Leben im Alltag von SBZ und DDR - unter besonderer Berücksichtigung

Mecklenburg-Vorpommerns bzw. der ehemaligen drei Nordbezirke." In *Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung,* volume VI: *Zur Arbeit der Enquete-Kommission: "Leben in der DDR. Leben nach 1989 - Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung". Expertisen und Forschungsstudien zum Thema "Kultur und religiöses Brauchtum"*, edited by Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 158–194. Schwerin.

Schimunek, Franz-Peter. 2002. *Die unheilige Neugier.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Schlosser, Herta. 1970. *Marxismus und Religion. Die politische Interpretation des Religiösen in der DDR, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Auseinandersetzung mit der Schönstattbewegung*. Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain.

Schmidt-Lux, Thomas. 2008. *Wissenschaft als Religion: Szientismus im ostdeutschen Säkularisierungsprozess*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.

Schuster, Dirk. 2017. "Das Postulat vom baldigen Ende der Religion. Die DDR-Religionssoziologie über eine Zukunft ohne Gott." In *Zurück in die Zukunft. Die Bedeutung von Diskursen über "Zukunft" in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, edited by Klaus Freitag and Dominik Groß, 91–102. Kassel: Kassel university press.

Schuster, Dirk. 2020. "The rise and fall of the 'Marxist Sociology of Religion' in the GDR." In *Communicating Religion and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Jenny Vorpahl and Dirk Schuster, 25–39. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Senge, Angelika. 1983. *Marxismus als atheistische Weltanschauung: Zum Stellenwert des Atheismus im Gefüge marxistischen Denkens*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.

Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014. "The ticket to the Soviet soul: Science, religion, and the spiritual crisis of late Soviet atheism." *The Russian Review* 73: 71–97.

Smolkin, Victoria. 2018. *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty. A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Sorg, Richard. 1974. *Marxismus und Protestantismus in Deutschland: Eine religionssoziologisch-sozialgeschichtliche Studie zur Marxismus-Rezeption in der evangelischen Kirche 1848–1948*. Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein.

Sparschuh, Vera and Ute Koch. 1997. *Sozialismus und Soziologie. Die Gründergeneration der DDR-Soziologie. Versuch einer Konturierung*. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

Steiner, Helmut. 1997. "Aufbruch, Defizite und Leistungen der DDR-Soziologie: die 60er Jahre." In *Soziologie und Soziologen im Übergang: Beiträge zur Transformation der außeruniversitären soziologischen Forschung in Ostdeutschland*, edited by Hans Bertram, 223–262. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

Stolleis, Michael. 2009. *Sozialistische Gesetzlichkeit. Staats- und Verwaltungsrechtswissenschaft in der DDR*. Munich: C.H. Beck.

Szöllösi-Janze, Margit. 2002. "Die institutionelle Umgestaltung der Wissenschaftslandschaft im Übergang vom späten Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik." In *Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftspolitik. Bestandsaufnahmen zu Formationen, Brüchen und Kontinuitäten im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Rüdiger vom Bruch and Brigitte Kaderas, 60–74. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

Tesař, Jan. 2019. *The History of Scientific Atheism. A Comparative Study of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union (1954–1991)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Thiede, Simone. 1999. *Der Dialog zwischen Religionen und säkularen Weltanschauungen: Dargestellt am Beispiel des christlich-marxistischen Dialogs in der DDR*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Tiefensee, Eberhard. 2002. "Homo areligiosus: Überlegungen zur Entkonfessionalisierung in der ehemaligen DDR." In *Gottlose Jahre? Rückblicke auf die Kirche im Sozialismus der DDR*, edited by Thomas A. Seidel, 197–215. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Tížik, Miroslav. 2020. "Slovakia as a country without atheism but with a history of atheization." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 258–283. London/New York: Routledge.

Thrower, James. 1983. *Marxist-Leninist "Scientific Atheism" and the Study of Religion and Atheism in the UdSSR*. Berlin/New York/Amsterdam: Mouton Publisher.

Tóth, Heléna and Todd H. Weir. 2020. "Religion and socialism in the long 1960s: From antithesis to dialogue in Eastern and Western Europe." *Contemporary European History* 29: 127–138.

Vainio, Olli-Pekka and Aku Visala. 2015. "Varieties of unbelief: A taxonomy of atheistic positions." *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 57 (4): 483–500.

van den Bercken, William. 1989. *Ideology and Atheism in the Soviet Union*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

van der Heyden, Ulrich. 2001. "Standpunkte, Hintergründe und Diskussionen zum Für und Wider der Beseitigung der Afrikawissenschaften aus der DDR." *Hochschule Ost* 10 (1): 171–200.

Voigt, Dieter and Sabine Gries. 1994. "Zur wissenschaftlichen Qualität von Doktorarbeiten (Dissertationen A) und Habilitationsschriften (Dissertationen B) in der DDR." *Hochschule Ost* 4 (5): 46–67.

vom Bruch, Rüdiger. 2000. "Wissenschaft im Gehäuse: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil institutionengeschichtlicher Perspektiven." *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 23: 37–49.

Voříšek, Michael. 2011. "Sociology in Soviet Europe. Perspectives on the historiography of sociology and its problems." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 29–58. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Weber, Hermann. 2003. "Die Entwicklung der DDR-Forschung vor und nach der Herstellung der deutschen Einheit." In *Staat und Kirchen in der DDR: Zum Stand der zeithistorischen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung*, edited by Horst Dähn and Joachim Heise, 17–28. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Wilke, Annette. 2013. "Säkularisierung oder Individualisierung von Religion? Theorien und empirische Befunde." *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 21 (1): 29–76.

Wohlrab-Sahr, Monika, Uta Karstein and Thomas Schmidt-Lux, with Anja Frank and Christine Schaumburg. 2009. *Forcierte Säkularität. Religiöser Wandel und Generationendynamik im Osten Deutschlands*. Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus.

1 Atheism, sciences and the introduction of scientific atheism in Eastern Germany

The East German State facing powerful Churches

When scientific atheism was institutionalised at the University of Jena in 1963, it took its place in a stable academic and political environment in which religion had never been absent. The creation of the university chair must be seen in the context of the political strategies that had been tried out up to that point. It could only rely on actors who were already present: Politicians, civil servants and academics, including Olof Klohr, the new director of the university chair, but whose interest in religious phenomena was much older.

At the end of the Second World War, the territories of the future GDR were home to a population that overwhelmingly belonged to a church or religious community. The official census of 1946 revealed that 81.6% of the population were Protestants, mainly Lutherans, Reformed or members of a United Church, compared with 12% Catholics and around 4,500 Jews, out of a population of 17 million (Maser 1992, 21). The Protestant Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*, EKD) guaranteed strong links between Protestants beyond the occupation zones. As for the Catholics, the new borders were far from corresponding to the boundaries of the dioceses, so most remained under the responsibility of West German or Polish bishops (Grütz 2004; Feiereis 1995, 46). The two major historical Churches, the EKD and the Roman Catholic, had structures covering the entire territory, numerous hospitals and social institutions and extensive agricultural holdings (Maser 1992, 73).

Faced with these powerful ecclesiastical structures, the German Communist Party (KPD) adopted the rather conciliatory attitude of the Soviet occupiers (Talandier 1994, 23; Seidel 1994, 51; Heise 1994, 37–38; Hartweg and Heise 1995). The possibility of reconciling socialism and Christianity was emphasised in official speeches, beginning with a statement by Wilhelm Pieck, then leader of the KPD, on 15 June 1944.[1] However, this did not stifle less favourable voices within the KPD and later the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) (Maser 1992, 21; Hartweg and Heise 1995) nor prevent a non-negotiable position of principle in favour of a separation between State and Church and the abolition of

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322-2

religious education in State schools (Dähn 1982, 147). The constitution of the new German Democratic Republic (GDR), which came into force on 7 October 1949, avoided exacerbating the conflicts by adopting the provisions of the Weimar Republic, granting broad guarantees to citizens and legal and financial privileges to the established Churches (Amos 2006). At the time, Western observers recognised that the GDR, along with Poland, had the most favourable regime for religious denominations within the Eastern Bloc. In contrast to Albania, East Germany, like the other socialist countries, guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion in law but also ensured that the churches were well known and recognised, which made them easier to control; there were never any schisms or clandestine churches like in the USSR.

However, legal norms were only one factor in the concrete relationship between the State and religious communities and not the most decisive. The SED's first offensive in the field of "world-view" (*weltanschaulich*) at the end of the 1940s was aimed at its own members; over 75% of them up until the mid-1950s were still members of a religious community (Heise 1994, 37–38 and 2003, 127; Hoffmann 2000, 145–152). The year 1950 saw the creation of a training year for all SED members (*Parteilehrjahr*) and new SED statutes. Several documents from 1958 defined the Party as a place where the Marxist-Leninist position, explicitly atheist, was acquired over time without excluding members "still linked" to the Church or "tainted" by religious ideas (Hoffmann 2000, 163–168, 170, 175). But this was supposed to apply equally to the population as a whole. The "methodical construction of the foundations of socialism in the GDR" proclaimed in July 1952 meant, among other things, that the masses of the population were henceforth to take Marx, Lenin and Stalin seriously. The education system was gradually reshaped according to this objective (Hoffmann 2000, 154–155, 157). The year 1958 was characterised by a new offensive. Hoffmann has shown that a sufficiently large number of documents included atheism for it to have a prominent place in the 1950s (Hoffmann 2000, 39, 62, 170–172, 179).

Faced with these ideological offensives, the majority Protestant churches entered into serious conflicts with the SED and the State. Their claim to a "watchdog office" (*Wächteramt*), "open work" (*Offene Arbeit*) not restricted to their members, and a particularly rich offer to the younger generation were all causes for confrontation. Measures were taken against the "young community" (*Junge Gemeinde*) and student communities, as well as to enrol teenagers in the *Jugendweihe*, a secular confirmation rite actively promoted in 1954 and 1957–1961. The maintenance of a common West and East German Church and the positions taken by West German churchmen were another source of conflict throughout the 1950s (Fulbrook 1995). In the East German part of the EKD, discussions were multiplying to define the attitude and place of Christians and the Churches in a socialist regime that was settling in for the long term. From the mid-1950s, the SED applied a policy of "differentiation" (*Differenzierung*) between "progressive" forces (*progressiv* or *fortschrittlich*) and "reactionary" forces (*reaktionär*), seeking divide

and rule (Maser 1992, 76; Goerner 1994, 62–63; Neubert 2000; Hoffmann 2000, 186; Albrecht-Birkner 2018, 28–31). In this dual strategy of struggle on the one hand and integration of pro-socialist Christians on the other, each player had to find their place; this was also the case for scientific atheism.

A large number of actors were involved in the implementation of this differentiated policy, and their configuration only stabilised in the second half of the 1950s. They included the leaders Pieck, Grotewohl, Ulbricht and then Honecker, as well as the East German party CDU, which was quickly driven out by a secretary of the SED Central Committee and a working group on Church Affairs (*Arbeitsgruppe Kirchenfragen*). Within the State administration, the State Secretary for Religious Affairs (*Staatssekretär für Kirchenfragen*) became the person in charge of the Churches from 1957 onwards. The dual structure of Party and State was reflected in the districts and circumscriptions. The 1950s also saw the structuring of the Ministry for State Security (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, MfS, also known as the Stasi). The efforts of political actors were supported by propaganda campaigns that inundated the East German public with books and brochures. The *Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse* (Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge, also called Urania), founded in 1954, was a key player in scientific and atheist propaganda (Schmidt-Lux 2008). Similar societies were active in various republics of the Soviet Union as well as in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania (Kiope, Runce and Stasulane 2020; Ališauskienė 2020; Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020; Bubík and Václavík 2020; Balogh and Fejérdy 2020; Denkov, Vulchev and Gueorguieva 2020; Turcescu 2020). However, their value for the atheisation of the population remains disputed (see Tesař 2019; Tížik 2020 on the Czechoslovakian case).

The fate of the smaller religious communities in the GDR, numbering around 30, differed on a case-by-case basis (Hall 2003). The Roman Catholic Church was much less vulnerable to the differentiation policy than its Protestant counterpart. As early as 1947, Cardinal von Preysing had formulated the principle that "only the bishops of Germany as a whole are authorised to make statements on contemporary issues in the name of the Catholic Church in Germany" (quoted in Maser 1992, 52). This rule was reaffirmed in 1957 and observed without notable deviation until 1989 (Schäfer 1997; Mechtenberg 1999). Thus the history of the Catholic Church in the GDR is one of "political abstinence" in a "foreign house" where Catholics lived at best "under the stairs", as Bishop Otto Spülbeck put it in 1956 (quoted in Hoffmann 2000, 47). This did not prevent the existence of different points of view within the East German Catholic Church (Grütz 2004; Schäfer 1997). However, the latter minimised the points of interaction with the State, for example, by opening its own seminary in Erfurt far from the public universities (Feiereis 1995, 46–56). And it could count on the Vatican when opposing the SED's demands with its own incompetence, for example concerning the boundaries of dioceses that the SED would have liked to redraw. Yet the Holy See and the East German government had no diplomatic relations.

Olof Klohr and the beginnings of Marxist scholarly work on religion

The SED also relied on academics to publicly lead the fight against religion. Among those interested in the subject was Olof Klohr, the future "chief atheist of the GDR" (Ploenus 2008, 368). Born in 1927 in Hamburg into a communist family and with no religious education, he moved to the Soviet occupation zone in 1947, where he enjoyed all the opportunities for advancement given to his generation.[2] To the KPD and later the SED, higher education was a key issue. The aim was to "break the bourgeois privilege of education" (Jessen 1999, 372) by recruiting "workers' and peasants' cadres". Specific institutions were intended to enable them to pursue a "fast-track career" (Konrad and Szelény in Dietrich 1996, 28) outside the traditional academic environment before contributing to its transformation (Ploenus 2007; Laitko 2002; Wustmann 2004; Feige 1993). Olof Klohr made up for his *Abitur* at a "workers' and peasants' faculty", studied at the "Gewifa" faculty of social sciences in Leipzig, took part in an express teacher training course at Eberswalde and in 1949 became an assistant lecturer at the Franz-Mehring-Institut in Leipzig. In 1951, he joined the traditional university in Halle. Lessons in Marxism-Leninism such as Klohr gave them became compulsory for students of all disciplines the same year.

The primary role of a "socialist scholar" was indeed to teach in order to develop the students' "socialist consciousness". However, the SED was not opposed to research as a matter of principle; it just had its own understanding of science and scientificity. Science was proclaimed a "force of production" (*Produktivkraft*) and was to be used to move society towards communism (see, for instance, Burrichter and Diesener 2002). Experts were supposed to provide the keys to guide public policy. Yet the SED, the "vanguard of the working class", was nonetheless seen as ultimately possessing superior wisdom: "The Party can't go wrong" (see Sparschuh and Koch 1997, 95; Zimmermann 1994, 326–327). In all circumstances, a researcher's attitude had to be not objective but based above all on the interests of the party (*parteilich*). Academics like Olof Klohr felt no contradiction in being scientists and serving their party at the same time. Olof Klohr chose to specialise in the relationship between science and religion and the philosophical problems arising out of biology; such was the subject of his doctoral thesis, defended in 1956, and his first books. The year 1956 also saw the creation of a working group called the "GDR Circle for Atheist Issues" (*DDR-Arbeitskreis für Fragen des Atheismus*), which he directed together with Helmut Wolle (Lutter 1994, 2001).

While working at the University of Rostock from 1957 to 1962, Olof Klohr succeeded in establishing atheism – he was already talking about "scientific atheism"[3] – as a speciality of his new research team, which consisted of a dozen early-career researchers. Being the head of the department, he was criticised on several occasions for over-emphasising research and scientific

qualifications. However, an evaluation of his work acknowledged that "he rendered outstanding services to the formation and instruction of a research group on questions of atheism",[4] a specialisation that did not exist before. Moreover, its establishment was neither linear nor irreversible and did not correspond to a medium- or long-term desire on the part of the Secretary of State for Higher Education or the university. Different research themes were pursued in parallel, and resistance to the theme of atheism resurfaced periodically, sometimes presenting it as a personal mania on Klohr's part. When he left Rostock in 1962, Olof Klohr urged his colleagues: "Stick together as atheists. No fragmentation in the research work!".[5] However, this approach was soon called into question and left aside, and atheism reappeared only occasionally in the work programmes and reports of the University of Rostock.[6]

Under the decisive impetus of Olof Klohr, the "atheism" research group included Ulrich Seemann, Karl-Heinz Jesper, Heinrich Vogel and Jochen Stahl, who were joined at least from time to time by several teaching assistants: Johannes Steyer, Karl-Heinz Oberländer, Gerhard Peine, "comrade" Wächter, Dietrich Wahl, Willi Finck and Helga Bühring. Jochen Stahl was given the task of developing a course on Marxism and religion,[7] and the subject was introduced into the courses given to students at the University of Rostock.[8] As early as 1956, the assistant Heinrich Vogel published an article on "Planck's and Einstein's position on religion" (Vogel 1956). The following year, the department produced five small publications and prepared another four on religious subjects. Several other projects were planned and not completed.[9] As the scholars were at the beginning of their careers, the theme of atheism could slip into a number of longer-term projects, including the PhD thesis projects of Jochen Stahl and Johannes Steyer, Ulrich Seemann's habilitation thesis on the *Jugendweihe* and Klohr's habilitation thesis. The topic also benefitted from the great productivity of Olof Klohr himself. In the philosophy department's research programme for 1960/1961, three out of four topics had to do with religion.[10]

In so doing, the thematic field around religion and atheism was approached from a number of interconnected angles whose links have rarely been presented in a systematic way. One starting point for tackling the thematic complex was reflecting on "socialist consciousness". Religion was seen as an obstacle to the development of socialist consciousness, as summed up in the title of one of the planned doctoral theses: "The remnants of superstitious thinking as an obstacle to the development of socialist consciousness in the countryside".[11] The optimism inherent in Marxist philosophy, in which religion was defined as a form of social consciousness,[12] prevented its proponents from seeing anything more than remnants or vestiges (*Überreste*). However, these vestiges deserved to be confronted, and hence justified the work done to gain a better understanding of them.[13]

The fact that religion hindered "socialist consciousness" could be seen in concrete terms in the field of morality, which was very present in the work of the Rostock department and the courses. As early as January 1957, the

group chose the collective research project "Marxist Criticism of the Moral Doctrines of the Christian Churches" – it was always a question of criticism.[14] This very strong link between ethics, or morality, and religion was not systematically established in the GDR and therefore deserves to be emphasised here. The theme of morality lost importance in the early 1960s.

The development of atheist propaganda to contain the harmful influence of religion was another area of concern for the scholars. It was seen as a genuine subject for research. The work of persuasion was based in particular on the thesis of "materiality of the world", which opposed religion and superstition on the one hand and science (particularly natural science) and the "scientific world-view" on the other. Here, the argument reached its theoretical underpinning; teaching usually began by answering the "fundamental question of philosophy" (*Grundfrage der Philosophie*). The Church (in the broadest sense) was accused of having fought and of still fighting the freedom of science. Heinrich Vogel examined why scientists such as Max Planck were still regarded by some people as believers. They also discussed Darwinism. In 1959, Klohr took part in an international symposium in Leipzig on the relationship between philosophy and the natural sciences.[15] With his habilitation thesis on the biologist Ernst Haeckel, defended at the University of Jena on 2 May 1962, Klohr was able to link up with an important movement in the GDR studying the "philosophical problems of natural sciences" (*philosophische Probleme der Naturwissenschaften*). His work was entitled "Catholic Philosophy and Theology on some fundamental questions of Life" and subtitled "An examination of idealistic errors and misinterpretations in West German Catholic literature".

How to convey this conviction of the materiality of the world to students was a matter of debate within the collective. In the discussions that marked the years 1958–1961, one of the stated aims was to invalidate the "hypothesis of God" and the idea of the creation of the world, to clearly oppose the realm of belief (religion) and that of knowledge (Marxism), and to prove the primacy and eternity of the material.[16] Bringing the audience around to a "scientific world-view" was not enough, however, and according to some, it was not the first priority: "The ideological [*weltanschaulich*] opposition between Christians and Marxists is said to be secondary to the political opposition. The main thrust of atheist propaganda was to unmask political Catholicism".[17] Claiming primacy for the political dimension in this way was characteristic of Klohr's later work and of the discipline of "scientific atheism" in its East German variant in general. At the end of the 1950s, this principle was enforcing an opposition through "political Catholicism" and related concepts. The group around Klohr in Rostock was caught up in the much wider ambivalence of East German policy towards religions. Thus, based on decisions taken by the SED's Politburo, a report from the end of 1958 stated: "We would only have to emphasise more strongly that a Christian may also be a socialist".[18] Atheist propaganda therefore focused on the fight against specific historical forms of religion, summarised under the term

"clericalism".[19] In this way, the Rostock collective made contact with other groups working on these issues and became known throughout the GDR.

As is most often the case when it comes to clericalism, the Rostock scholars were referring mainly to Roman Catholicism in its West German form. One of the assistants came to wonder why the attacks were so concentrated on Catholicism when most of the East German students were Protestants. This was an opportunity to reiterate that everything revolved around politics: "Political Catholicism is the basis of Bonn's policy".[20] However, the group tried not to forget "that in our country the clerical NATO ideology appears primarily not in the Catholic but in the Protestant form of the Dibelius group, often in an extremely concealed way", by reference to the West German Chairman of the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany.[21]

Alongside these phenomena, which were mainly observed in the West, Klohr's group began to take an interest in the relationship between Marxism and religion and the place of the Churches in the GDR.[22] What the Rostock researchers knew about the Churches and believers in their territory is difficult to say. What emerges from the archives is the beginnings of an interest in sociological methods, but this hardly led to any work on the sociology of religion in those years.[23] The impetus came partly from Bulgarian colleagues. In fact, the Rostock collective was beginning to establish contacts with several socialist "brotherlands", Poland, the Soviet Union and above all, Hungary, thanks to a partnership between the universities of Rostock and Debrecen. This cooperation proved long-lasting throughout Klohr's changing career.[24] From 1963 onwards, he continued his work publicly under the title "Scientific Atheism" at Jena University.[25]

Scientific atheism, from the Soviet Union to Jena

In December 1963, the East German academic and ecclesiastical world witnessed, with varying degrees of approval and apprehension, the founding of the first and only university chair in East Germany devoted to "scientific atheism". The term came from the Soviet Union, and the rise of what it referred to is linked to the Khrushchev era.[26] As Victoria Smolkin explains, after the secret speech to the 20th Congress of the CPSU on 25 February 1956, it was necessary to give new life to the communist project (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 178). The Khrushchev era saw two violent anti-religious and atheist campaigns. The first, known as the "Hundred Days", was launched through two decrees in July and October 1954 but was quickly cancelled. The second campaign, which lasted from 1958 to 1964, had major and lasting repercussions on the religious landscape and the legal and administrative framework, but it also represented a whole "process of rethinking" atheism and religion (Tesař 2019, 312). The content was revisited and no longer seen as a "box full of preordained and already completed facts and spheres of knowledge", but as something to be developed (Tesař 2019, 313). The desire to learn more about the Soviet spiritual landscape so as not to fight against an imaginary

form of religion also meant taking into account the emotional aspects of religion, lived religion and religiosity, traditions and folklore, as well as existential questions, independently of dogmas and institutions (Smolkin 2018; Thrower 1983; van den Bercken 1989, 138). Some members of the "atheist establishment" called for a personalised approach, involving encounters with individual believers. As part of "the Soviet Union's 'religiological Renaissance'" (Klimova and Molostova 2013, 170), they made greater use of ethnography, psychology and sociological methods – particularly through lengthy interviews – as tools for gathering information, but not only that. The interview was at the same time "missionary (transforming the believer into an atheist)" and supposed to comfort the investigator in his or her sense of superiority (Dobson 2015, 88). In the reality of fieldwork, which had become "creative and unpredictable" (Dobson 2015, 102), the descriptive and prescriptive functions did not always come together without difficulty. Taking into account the psychological, aesthetic and emotional dimensions and the individual facing existential questions made it more urgent to propose alternative responses to religion and to formulate an atheism with positive content. According to Victoria Smolkin's thesis - James Thrower was already moving in the same direction - this was needed to fill the void left by religion and to set out "in Search of Spiritual Atheism" (Smolkin 2018, 149, passim; Thrower 1983, 154, 162).

This change in method and focus led to the institutionalisation of so-called scientific atheism at the academic level in the USSR, with the creation of specialised departments and even chairs in many universities. A new Institute of Scientific Atheism (*Institut nauchnogo ateizma*, INA) centralised the work. Created in 1964, its mission was "the supervision and co-ordination of all scientific work in the field of religion and atheism" (quoted in Thrower 1983, 147). Other means were specialist journals, a handbook, regular articles in the press and courses in scientific atheism at universities.

In the USSR, the structure of the Institute of Scientific Atheism combined the academic side, presided over by the State (Ministry of Higher Education), with Party bodies, including the Ideological Commission. The Scientific Council of the Institute of Scientific Atheism reported directly to the Central Committee of the CPSU, which instructed it much more directly and closely than was ever the case in the GDR. The third group of actors present on the board of directors, in the Soviet Union, was the "Znanie" association: a federal-level Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge, whose name was changed to "Znanie" in 1963. Founded in 1947, its aim was to "enlighten" the masses and destroy the remnants of the past. Equivalents existed in Romania (1949, see Turcescu 2020), Czechoslovakia (1952), Hungary (1953, see Balogh and Fejérdy 2020), Lithuania (1959, see Ališauskienė 2020), Ukraine (1963, see Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020), Bulgaria (Denkov, Vulchev and Gueorguieva 2020) and also the GDR (Urania created in 1954, see Schmidt-Lux 2008). In Poland, a number of associations claimed – rightly or wrongly – to promote free thought and a "secular

culture" (Hoffmann and Tyrała 2020). Atheism and religion were not always an important part of these associations' activities (Smolkin 2018, 146 for the Soviet Union; Tesař 2019, 328, 334 against Tížik 2020). In the Soviet Union, Znanie nevertheless played an important role by editing the periodicals *Nauka i religija* and *Nauka i zhizn'*, and from 1959 directed the Moscow Planetarium, the importance of which Victoria Smolkin has shown. Above all, Znanie reached a considerable audience (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 118–119) and covered the whole Soviet territory.

The scholars of scientific atheism knew how to take advantage of such a network. Indeed, the discipline was able to draw on long-standing and powerful actors and resources that were out of all proportion to the East German context, what historians of the USSR call the "atheist cadres", "atheist establishment" or "the atheist apparatus" (Smolkin 2018, 50). Over the course of Soviet history, this apparatus encompassed both the League of the Militant Godless and its successor, Znanie (Husband 2000; Peris 1998), as well as newspapers, reflections and decrees of the Central Committee, museums, clubs, the Komsomol, evening classes, seminars and "people's universities", socialist rituals, bookshops, publishers, theatre and other artistic forms, and already the beginnings of research with a scientific ambition, promoted by Bonch-Bruevich from 1946 but insufficiently taken up by others (van den Bercken 1989; Smolkin 2018, 28). As van den Bercken put it,

> the thoroughness is striking: each and every institution in society - from the Academy of Sciences to maternity clinics - are given a list of atheist missionary tasks, or as the official jargon has it, 'the formation of atheist consciousness among the people'.
>
> (van den Bercken 1989, 131–132)

However, this whole establishment was not always effective and did not always achieve the expected results. A distinction between scientists (representatives of scientific atheism grouped together at the INA) and propagandists would be far too simplistic, even if some have wished for a division of tasks (Dobson 2015, 101), and Tesař distinguished two different "thought styles" using Ludwik Fleck's term (Tesař 2019, 15–16, 29–30). The expression "scientific atheism" perfectly included aspects of propaganda. The INA itself had two departments devoted respectively to scientific research and the practical aspects of atheist work; its great challenge was to combine the two sides of the work in a fruitful way (Smolkin 2018, 145–146; Thrower 1983). For its fieldwork, it had a vast network of local bases across the country (Smolkin 2018, 146–147; Tesař 2019, 339). Heise even mentioned over 200 collaborating scientists at the INA (Heise 1998), but it worked with all kinds of people: Propagandists, lecturers, club managers, teachers and many students (Dobson 2015, 87). This did not preclude different visions, which, as Smolkin reminded us, differed more in means than in objectives (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 186).

Other socialist countries drew inspiration from the Soviet Union and began to develop university research into religious phenomena or atheism. This was the case in Czechoslovakia, for example, as early as 1955 (Bubík and Václavík 2020). In January 1959, the Czechoslovak Politburo called for a truly atheist offensive, which quickly had institutional repercussions (Matějka 2011, 114).[27] Contributions on 12 Central and Eastern European countries to a recent collective volume directed by Bubík, Remmel and Václavík have documented the existence of scientific atheism as a common phenomenon, but with various accents and levels of success (2020). Comparative research on what different Eastern Bloc countries have referred to by the same term of "scientific atheism" is still at its beginnings, notably with Jan Tesař's recent PhD. The latter analyses developments in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic as a "deviation" from a Soviet paradigm and attempts to demonstrate "the emergence of a unified, international thought collective, its main characteristics and rules of survival" under Soviet domination (Tesař 2019, 31). Over and above the more or less well-informed associations it provoked, taking on the term "scientific atheism" in 1963 could merely offer sketches rather than a "toolbox" and even less ready-made hypotheses. We will go on to consider to what extent Olof Klohr took this on board and how he intended to approach a task in which everything remained to be done.

At Jena, Olof Klohr soon established "scientific atheism" as one of the dominant themes at the Institute of Philosophy, even before the creation of the dedicated university chair.[28] His work on Ernst Haeckel provided an argument for institutionalising atheism in Jena rather than elsewhere.[29] The house of Haeckel, who taught at Jena from 1862 to 1909, became a centre for documentation and research on the history of science, especially under the direction of Georg Uschmann (1959–1979, see Hoßfeld and Breidbach 2007). A speech by the SED's First Secretary, Walter Ulbricht, on a visit to Jena in October 1960, and several SED decisions to cultivate Ernst Haeckel's legacy, enabled Olof Klohr and his supporters to promote his expertise.[30] However, despite the planned collaboration,[31] contacts with the Ernst-Haeckel-Haus as reconstructed from the archives were very occasional.

In addition to this promising local context, the more global political context was also favourable to the institutionalisation of scientific atheism. In 1963, the SED's new programme included among its main tasks to "spread the scientific world-view" and insisted on "the scientifically based atheistic world-view with full respect for the religious feelings of people of faith" (quoted in Hoffmann 2000, 184). An Ideological Commission was set up. The Central Committee's resolution on "The improvement of world-view and atheistic work" (*Die Verbesserung der weltanschaulich-atheistischen Arbeit*, 5 August 1964) was not adopted until after the Jena chair had been founded. Nonetheless, the desire for ideological work that would be tighter in form and more sophisticated in content was palpable and did not fail to be invoked to promote the project. There had been numerous and effective publications, albeit not always of satisfactory quality, in the 1950s. Yet the

"complete edification of socialism" was said to require a higher level, and the chair in Jena aimed "to establish a scientific and organisational centre for work in the field of atheism and religious criticism in the GDR".[32]

The chair's launch event was an international colloquium on "Modern Natural Science and Atheism" on 5 December 1963.[33] In an interview, Klohr presented the conference and the chair as a perfect continuation of work already well underway. He mentioned an existing working group that met regularly and coordinated all the scientific work.[34] Scientific atheism had indeed been included in the research plan for 1963[35] and was valued as one of the dominant themes (*Schwerpunkte*) of the Institute of Philosophy in the following years. Being responsible for coordinating all research on religion and atheism in East Germany, the chair had set up a "scientific atheism" working group (*DDR-Arbeitskreis*) as early as March 1963. It oscillated between openness to any East German researcher interested in the subject – "If you know of any comrades who also work in this field but have not received an invitation, these comrades are also cordially invited to join us" – and a select club.[36] At times, it was divided into sub-groups devoted to collective work in different fields: "The Youth and atheism" (under the responsibility of Walter Berg and Olof Klohr), "Problems of State policy in Church matters" (with Johann Klügl and Olof Klohr), "Marxist sociology of religion", history and "Theory of atheism and religion". Other key contributors were Dietrich Alexander, Siegfried Kirschke and Wolfgang Masula. As far as can be reconstructed from the archives, in 1964 the research group on scientific atheism had five members.[37] In 1965, there were nine members in religious sociology and six in scientific atheism. These numbers were supposed to increase, and new collaborators were to enable the chair to broaden the scope of its research by studying the links between atheism, astronomy and physics, or by looking into ethics.[38] In 1966, Klohr was able to count on seven members of the Chair of Scientific Atheism and six members of the Department of Dialectical and Historical Materialism that had no topics of its own.

The work seems to have started from scratch, without transferring the documents already collected under Klohr's direction at the University of Rostock. Thanks to exchanges of publications, the members of the Jena collective had access to the work of their counterparts in other socialist countries; access to Western literature, while undoubtedly more difficult, was not impossible (Preuß 2007, 254–256). Unfortunately, the archives reveal only a small part of the reading and references: Religious psychology, religious sociology – contemporary and classic Western authors – and ethics.[39] Although some publications still used somewhat dated references, the scientific atheists, led by Klohr, embarked on theological reading, sometimes with a certain perplexity. Klaus-Peter Hertzsch recounted how Klohr complained to his father, then professor of Practical Theology at the University of Jena:

> The Christian religion is not seizable at all. I asked theologians, what shall I read? And they said, read Karl Barth. So I read Barth. But then others

> said: Yes, that's Barth, but Tillich is something completely different. And then I read Tillich. Then others said, yes, that's Tillich, but read Elert, he's a real Lutheran. I don't know what applies to you at all.
>
> (Hertzsch 2005, 47)

Hertzsch established a link between this difficulty and Klohr soon specialising in the sociology of religion, which Hertzsch believed was easier to grasp.

One of the tools that can be crucial in shaping a new group, drawing its boundaries and giving it a shared identity and references is a bulletin or specialist journal. It may open up a common scientific space in addition to colloquia and seminars (Szöllösi-Janze 2002, 73). Unlike its colleagues in the USSR and Czechoslovakia, the GDR working group on atheism did not have a dedicated publishing house, but it soon published its own bulletin called *Atheistische Forschungen* ("Atheist Research"). Its eight issues were printed and distributed by the Chair of Scientific Atheism. Being grey literature, it also oscillated between its vocation to disseminate and share information and restricting access to selected recipients, thereby tightening links within the group. Between 1966 and 1968, it was complemented by a second periodical, *Religionssoziologie. Internationale Forschungsberichte* ("Sociology of Religion. International Research Reports"). However, the research carried out was not confidential on principle, and the members of the collective also published in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (see Hoffmann 2000), *Einheit* and the academic journals published by their institutions, the latter again on a semi-public basis. These publications played less of a role in the internal configuration of the group and were more a means of asserting themselves as experts in the eyes of a wider public.

Jena therefore seemed to offer the best conditions for providing oneself with the material and intellectual means to train and acquire knowledge in the new field of scientific atheism. And Klohr, gifted with "restless intellectual curiosity", "intellectual zeal and 'hyperactivity'" (Ploenus 2008, 376, 278), was determined to take advantage of all this. His situation was quite different from that of the neighbouring Institute of Marxism-Leninism: Ploenus described its lack of time, a teaching overload and a lack of consideration, even mistrust, for its members' efforts to acquire scientific degrees (Ploenus 2007). Not only was the teaching load considerably lighter for the Chair of Scientific Atheism, but there was also a genuine desire to develop research and put the new discipline on a firm footing. A 12-month sabbatical for Olof Klohr in 1964–1965 was to help him do so. It was justified as follows:

> The long-term sabbatical results above all from the need to theoretically grasp and work out the completely new subject area 'Scientific Atheism' in the GDR […]. The 13 years of uninterrupted work of Comrade Prof. Dr Klohr in the compulsory courses in Marxism-Leninism and in party functions require systematic study and thorough thinking

> through of new problems in his special field, so that he can serve with higher scientific quality in teaching, education and research.[40]

Indeed, success was not yet a given: Klohr had to "find a thorough scientific way of working" and "at last carry out systematic and accurate research", so it was important to "protect him from superficiality".[41] The SED leadership at the university categorically – and successfully – opposed the idea of Klohr being sent to Cuba to teach for two years because "if no serious scientific work is carried out by this chair, the undertaking must be regarded as an imposture".[42] The creation of the chair had attracted a great deal of attention and had not failed to provoke numerous reactions outside the milieu of Marxist-Leninist academics, both east and west of the Iron Curtain. Men of the Church saw it as a new element to be integrated into the relationship between Church and State. A number of articles, quotes and summaries of Klohr's statements or relating to his new chair were circulated within the Protestant Church.[43] The question very quickly arose of what attitude to adopt towards the scientific atheism institutionalised in Jena.[44]

Thus, under observation, the work of the Chair of Scientific Atheism took off but proved to be short-lived, an evolution that nothing had foreshadowed when it was created. There was no shift in financial resources away from scientific atheism – on the contrary.[45] As late as January 1968, a secretary position for the Chair of Scientific Atheism was approved.[46] But the chair was losing its staff. In 1967, scientific atheism went from 11 researchers to three.[47] Above all, staff members who were essential to the smooth running of the working groups and publications left for other horizons. Some left for family reasons or personal convenience (e.g. Siegfried Kirschke and Egon Oetzel)[48]; others answered an injunction from the SED for an interlude in "practice" or in the Party apparatus (Wolfgang Masula, Johann Klügl)[49]; while still others shifted their attention to different themes without leaving the Institute of Philosophy. The lack of formalism in the internal structures that had allowed scientific atheism to draw on researchers not formally attached to this specialisation eventually backfired, making it easier for Walter Berg, Dietrich Alexander, Almut Häusler and Karl Freese to turn away from this research interest.[50] Another former collaborator seems to have suffered from health problems, while yet another regularly carried out missions in Western Germany.[51] These losses could not be compensated for by new recruits, neither from outside nor from among the few philosophy students in Jena.

This weakening of Olof Klohr's research topic coincided with the culmination of a vast process of reform in East German higher education, which profoundly upset traditional structures.[52] Klohr was fully involved in the discussions on the general reorganisation of the social sciences in Jena, which lasted several years and were particularly intense in 1967–1968.[53] Among the successive and competing projects that were hotly debated,[54] a variant that did away with scientific atheism eventually prevailed. Dieter Fricke, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy since January 1966 and one of the driving forces

behind the reform at Jena, was no stranger to this process.[55] The "chaotic" nature of the reform and the role played by local players have been highlighted by recent historiography (Kaiser, Stutz and Hoßfeld 2005, 67; see also Jessen and John 2005, 17–18). The "*Profilierung*", or concentration on a few dominant areas, gave pride of place to economics, technical and technological subjects, natural sciences and mathematics, cybernetics and data processing; it had dramatic repercussions on other disciplines, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. The reform and its instruments were not designed for disciplines with no immediate link to economics, industry or technology. As Ploenus put it, "in some cases, entire subjects were 'profiled away'" (Ploenus 2007, 225), just like scientific atheism.

Olof Klohr's university chair ceased to function in 1968 when the philosophy faculty was dissolved. As for the professor himself, he was assigned to the new Marxism-Leninism section of the same university, which was taking advantage of the general reorganisation to expand its staff.[56] Initially, Klohr hoped to continue his research on scientific atheism there.[57] A document from the end of 1968 gives his name as the possible future director of the Marxism-Leninism section.[58] But in September 1969, the man from Hamburg preferred to return to the Baltic coast, joining the Naval and Shipping Engineering College in Warnemünde-Wustrow.

These changes have often been referred to as a "punitive transfer" (*Strafversetzung*) (Pawelzik 1994 and 1998; Ploenus 2008, 377–378; Schuster 2017, 95, and 2020), or at best resituated in a changed political context in which a supposedly aggressive scientific atheism became embarrassing.[59] The university archives provide a welcome counterpoint by proving that maintaining scientific atheism was very much a possibility for a very long time. Although nothing remained of the scientific atheism collective at the end of the 1960s, a number of researchers at the University of Jena took a renewed interest in the subject over the following two decades, including Franklin Borrmann, Susanne Grjasnow, Johann Klügl and Karl Freese. Michael Ploenus even mentioned the following for the Marxism-Leninism section after 1975: "There were also smaller areas of work that did not require a university lecturer as their head. These included questions of scientific atheism" (Ploenus 2007, 286). Nevertheless, Olof Klohr's impetus played a key role in Jena, as it had previously in Rostock, both in establishing and maintaining a new specialisation and in shaping its content.

Quoted archives

Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BArch)
Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (BStU)
Thuringia Land Archives – Rudolstadt Public Archives (ThStA Rudolstadt)
Jena University Archives (UAJ)

Leipzig University Archives (UAL)
Rostock University Archives (UAR)
Protestant Central Archives (EZA)
Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research (BISKF)

Quoted periodicals

Navigator (Ingenieurhochschule für Seefahrt Warnemünde-Wustrow)
Sozialistische Universität (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena)

Notes

1 Quoted in Hoffmann 2000, 145. The experience of a common struggle with Christians against Nazism nourished hopes. Other examples are the KPD Central Committee's appeal of 11 June 1945, the SED's first congress of 21–22 April 1946 and the SED's "clarification" of 27 August 1946.
2 Biographical information based on: UAL StuA 65868, p. 1; UAL StuA 83929; UAL PrüfA 17963; UAL PA-A 37491; UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof; UAR PA W/W: 472; UAJ Bestand D, Nr. 3216 Personalakte Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Olof Klohr; UAJ M 656/4, p. 408; *Navigator* 14, 1 October 1981, pp. 4–5; *Navigator* 8, 25 April 1986, p. 5. The spelling of his first name is sometimes incorrect in favour of 'Olaf'. Interview with Simone Mönch and her husband, Tempel, 29 July 2019.
3 UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof, p. 7.
4 UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof, pp. 3–4.
5 UAR SML/128 Oberländer, Protokoll der Semesterauswertung der Fachrichtung Philosophie, 16 December 1961, p. 1.
6 The fate of the atheist topic at the University of Rostock has been summarised on the basis of numerous documents contained in UAR SML boxes no. 5, 8, 50, 52, 80, 85, 103, 128, 129, 130, 149; UAR R 814 Heidorn to SHF, 23 November 1962; Bahl 1966.
7 UAR SML/128 2. Abt. Sitzung [sic], 18 September 1957 [?].
8 UAR SML/61 Klohr, Entwurf eines Minimalprogramms zum Studium des Marxismus-Leninismus, 1958, p. 5; UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof, p. 41; several documents in UAR SML/85; UAR SML/130 Stahl, Bericht über die Arbeit der Fachgruppe im Frühjahrssemester 1961, 8 June 1961, p. 1.
9 UAR SML/103.
10 UAR SML/129 Klohr, Forschungsplan der Fachrichtung Philosophie 1960/1961, 12 February 1960.
11 Stahl's project, see UAR SML/130 s. t., undated, 2 p.
12 UAR SML/85 KMU, Entwurf eines Vorlesungsprogramms "Historischer Materialismus", 1 August 1956, p. 3, and Rolle und Formen des gesellschaftlichen Bewußtseins und seine Beziehungen zu Basis und Überbau.
13 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/169, pp. 138–147.
14 Various documents in UAR SML 85, 92, 103, 128, 129, 130 and 149.
15 UAR SML/85 Giese, Oberländer, Seminarplan "Die Materialität der Welt"; UAR SML/103 Seemann, Jahresbericht 1957, 30 January 1958, and IfG, Entwicklung der Forschung, 1959; several documents in UAR SML/128 and 130; UAL R 158 Bd. 17, pp. 7–9, 19–22, 23–28.
16 UAR SML 85, 128 and 129; UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof, pp. 26–27.
17 UAR SML/128 Peine, Protokoll der Abteilungssitzung vom 19.11.1958, p. 1.

18 UAR SML/128 Peine, Protokoll der Abteilungssitzung vom 19.11.1958.
19 UAR SML/85 Einige Bemerkungen zur Frage: Orientiert der Entwurf des Themenplanes und des Vorlesungsprogrammes für DHM im gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Grundstudium ausreichend auf die Praxis?, received 31 December 1958; UAR SML/128 Bahl, Protokoll, Kolloquium zum Thema "Die geistige Situation der Gegenwart", 23 September 1961; UAR SML/129 Ideologisch-politische Schwerpunkte der Vorlesungen im Studienjahr 1959/1960.
20 UAR SML/128 Peine, Protokoll der Abteilungssitzung vom 19.11.1958, p. 1.
21 UAR SML/128 Richter, Bericht über die Tagung des wissenschaftlichen Beirats für DHM vom 5.-6.1.1959 in Berlin.
22 UAR SML/128 Stahl, 16. Protokoll, Abteilungssitzung am 12.5.1958, and 2. Abt. Sitzung [sic], 18 September 1957 [?]; UAR SML/130 Arbeitsplan, Abteilung DHM, Frühjahrssemester 1958, 20 January 1958.
23 UAR SML/5 Richter, Protokoll der Institutsratssitzung vom 10.3.1962, and Richter, Protokoll der Institutsleitung vom 25.11.1961, pp. 1–2.
24 UAR SML/5 Minutes of meetings of the head of the Institute of Social Sciences [Marxism-Leninism] of 25 November 1959, 28 May 1960, 5 March 1960, 14 May 1960, 15 October 1960, 5 November 1960, 2 February 1961; UAR SML/52 Telex from Heidorn to Engelstädter, 25 November 1959; UAR SML/103 Krüger, Jahresbericht des IML für das Studienjahr 1960/1961, 28 September 1961; UAR SML/128 Vogel, Protokoll der Abteilungssitzung vom 6.5.1959; UAR SML/130 Klohr, Arbeitsplan der Fachrichtung Philosophie, Herbstsemester 1961; UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof page without number between p. 6 and p. 7 and pp. 51–53, 55, 62–63.
25 On his transfer, see: UAJ Bestand D, Nr. 3216 Personalakte Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Olof Klohr; UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof; UAR SML/52 Krüger to Parteiorganisation der SED, Universität Rostock, 11 July 1961; UAR SML/149 Krüger to Kaussmann, 9 December 1962; UAR PA W/W: 472, pp. 22–23.
26 The historiography on scientific atheism in the USSR and, more broadly, atheist propaganda, confrontation with religions and religious policy, is well furnished, see in particular: Blakeley 1964; Beemans 1967; Thrower 1983; van den Bercken 1989; Kääriäinen 1989 and 1993; Walters 1993; Klimova and Molostova 2013; Dobson 2015; Smolkin 2014 and 2018; Tesař 2019; Gleixner 2020.
27 For the Yougoslav example, see Bošnjak 1975, 35.
28 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1178, p. 198 and 2520, pp. 57–78.
29 For instance, in UAJ M 825, pp. 281–282.
30 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1625/9, pp. 61–67, 75–79; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/909, pp. 12–18, 29–33, 89–93; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1805, pp. 1–5; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1967, pp. 70–74, 83–85.
31 Hoßfeld and Breidbach 2007; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1178, pp. 111–127.
32 UAJ M 872, p. 36.
33 The official documents relating to the creation of the university chair and Klohr's appointment as director can be found in UAJ M 825, p. 285; UAJ M 872 Sondermappe, p. 2; UAJ Bestand D, Nr. 3216 Personalakte Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Olof Klohr Drefahl, 16 Decembre 1963. Further related documents in ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2468, p. 50; UAJ M 776, pp. 163–165; UAJ M 872, p. 34. On the opening conference, see ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1226, pp. 1–3; UAJ BC 235 Klohr to Drefahl, 21 May 1963.
34 *Sozialistische Universität* 6 (23), 22 November 1963, p. 2.
35 BISKF Kaul 14 Methfessel to Klohr, 5 October 1963.
36 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Einladung zur 1. Tagung des Arbeitskreises "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus", for 22 March 1963, and Klohr, Tagungskalender Herbstsemester 1966/1967, and Colloquia des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, 1967.

37 The figures are based on a large number of documents in BISKF Kaul 14 and BISKF Klohr 314; UAJ BC 85, 235, 635 and 628; UAJ M 776/1, pp. 74–84; UAJ M 779, pp. 9–22; UAJ M 795, pp. 7–13; UAJ M 796, pp. 83–84; UAJ M 803, pp. 11–13; UAJ M 895, pp. 118–119, 160; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1625/23; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/27 (pp. 1–122), 148 (p. 14), 205 (pp. 10–13), 727 (pp. 93–112) and 1179 (pp. 146–154).
38 UAJ BC 144 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Studienjahr 1964/1965.
39 BISKF Kaul 14; BISKF Klohr 91.
40 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2086, p. 71.
41 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2468, pp. 159–160. Difficulties and bad quality in a recent work are cited to justify this assessment of Klohr's work.
42 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2468, p. 159. On the abandonment of the project, see UAJ Bestand D, Nr. 3216 Personalakte Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Olof Klohr Helbing to Drefahl, 8 September 1964.
43 Several documents in EZA 102/471 and EZA EKU Kirchenkanzlei 107/327. The Stasi obtained some of these internal documents from the Protestant Church, see BStU Archiv MfS HA XX Nr. 25163, pp. 2–9.
44 EZA 102/471 Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Erweiterten Referentenbesprechung am 20.2.1964; EZA 107/327 Haak, Der "wissenschaftliche Atheismus" als akademisches Studium, 28 February 1965; several documents in EZA 2/2365 and 2366; EZA 2/2368 EZW, Protokoll der Kuratoriumssitzung am 14.3.1964, p. 1. The Protestant Central Office for Worldview Issues EZW continued to monitor Klohr's activity (see *Information*, no. 14 and 17, 1965) before turning to other concerns. A Stasi document reviews various reactions (reported or based on rumours) within the East German Protestant Church (BStU MfS - HA XX/4 2835 Bd. 2, pp. 476–477).
45 UAJ BC 623, 638 and 639; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1226, pp. 83–84.
46 UAJ M 785, p. 143.
47 Reconstructing the evolution of the assignments, the identity and the career of the employees required cross-referencing information scattered in: BISKF Kaul 14; BISKF Klohr 314; UAJ BC 85, 153, 235, 628 and 635; UAJ M 776/1, 779, 785, 795, 796, 803, 840 and 895; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1625/23; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/27, 103, 148, 205, 727 and 1179.
48 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2593 (p. 102) and 1598 (pp. 114–116, 120).
49 BISKF Kaul 14 Rothenstein to Klohr, 31 July 1967, and Klohr, Beurteilung des Herrn Dr. Wolfgang Masula, 4 August 1967; UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967, p. 21; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/440 (p. 10), 460 (pp. 27–31, 36–38), 468 (p. 96), 1600 (pp. 47–51), 2062 (pp. 90–94), 2507 (p. 224) and 2520 (p. 139).
50 UAJ M 0784 (pp. 46–70, 72–81), 785 (pp. 127–234), 779 (pp. 115–124), 840 (pp. 71–72) and 872 (p. 44); UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/440 (pp. 108–111) and 2520 (p. 119); BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für "Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" 1964/1965.
51 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/440, pp. 108–111.
52 On the so-called third university reform, see Fiedler and Riege 1969, Laitko 1998, Wegner 2001, Schirmer 2004, Kaiser 2004, Kaiser, Stutz and Hoßfeld 2005, Jessen and John 2005, Ploenus 2007, Stutz, Kaiser and Hoßfeld 2007.
53 His involvement is very well documented: UAJ BC 623 Klohr to Schönfelder, 17 October 1963; UAJ BC 627 Klohr, Arbeitsprogramm des "Wissenschaftlichen

Rates für Philosophie" der FSU für 1964; several documents in UAJ BC 635 and UAJ M 776/1; UAJ M 779 (pp. 1–7), 795 (p. 3), 796 (pp. 142–143, 148), 803 (pp. 64–78, 97–99, 142–143, 198), 840 (p. 35), 0784 (pp. 82–84), 0772 (pp. 10–11, 15–16), 0792 (pp. 58–59); ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/4 (pp. 2–11, 107–108, 123–126), 5 (pp. 34–44), 6 (pp. 1–2, 7–14, 155–159), 12 (pp. 63–68), 468 (p. 92), 1600 (pp. 1, 32–36), 1183 (pp. 32–41, 47–51, 55–68), 1226 (several documents), 1568 (pp. 54, 102), 1828 (pp. 22–33), 2061 (pp. 24–25, 27–47), 2062 (pp. 21–30), 2265 (p. 116).

54 On the debates and alternative scenarios in 1967–1968, see especially UAJ M 803 and 900, as well as 776/1 (pp. 171–176, 195–201), 779 (pp. 153–184), 785 (pp. 127–234), 785 (pp. 127–234), 795 (pp. 112–114, 133–134), 796 (pp. 153–159); UAJ BC 635 Für die Wissenschaftsorganisation im gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Bereich; UAJ BC 640, pp. 1–2, 13–14; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/103 (pp. 28–36), 104 (Vorschlag zur Entwicklung der FSU bis 1980, [1967]), 727 (pp. 135–139), 1179 (pp. 11–14).

55 UAJ M 776/1, pp. 195–201; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1179, pp. 11–14. See also Kaiser, Stutz and Hoßfeld 2005 and Stutz, Kaiser and Hoßfeld 2007, 300–301.

56 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1183 (p. 99), 1600 (pp. 12–20), 1763 (several documents), 2061 (pp. 71–81), 2086 (p. 68); UAJ BC 413 Bolck to Klohr, 15 November 1968.

57 BISKF Kaul 12 Klohr to Leonid and Klohr to Ugrinovich, 10 February 1969.

58 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/270, pp. 11–21.

59 Heise 1993, 133, and 1994, 37, and 1998, 157; Schäfer 1997, 177; Lutter 1994, 11, and 2001, 76; Ploenus 2008, 378; interviews with Horst Dohle and Joachim Heise at Berlin, 25 November 2015, and Simone Mönch at Tempel, 29 July 2019.

References

Albrecht-Birkner, Veronika. 2018. *Freiheit in Grenzen. Protestantismus in der DDR*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Ališauskienė, Milda. 2020. "The social history of irreligion in Lithuania (from the 19th century to the present). Between marginalization, monopoly and disregard?" In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 155–176. London/New York: Routledge.

Amos, Heike. 2006. *Die Entstehung der Verfassung in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone / DDR 1946–1949*. Münster: LIT Verlag.

Bahl, Heinrich. 1966. "Zum Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik." *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Universität Rostock* 15 (3): 315–323.

Balogh, Margit and András Fejérdy. 2020. "Freethought, atheism and anticlericalism in 20th-century Hungary." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 111–136. London/New York: Routledge.

Basauri Ziuzina, Anna Mariya and Oleg Kyselov. 2020. "Atheism in the context of the secularization and desecularization of Ukraine in the 20th century." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 284–309. London/New York: Routledge.

Beemans, Pierre. 1967. "Scientific atheism in the Soviet-Union: 1917–1954." *Studies in Soviet Thought* 7 (3): 234–242.

Blakeley, Thomas J. 1964. "Scientific atheism: An introduction." *Studies in Soviet Thought* 4 (4): 277–295.

Bošnjak, Branko. 1975. "Reflections on religion." In *Religion and Atheism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe*, edited by Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John W. Strong, 18–36. London/Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Bubík, Tomáš, Atko Remmel and David Václavík. 2020. *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*. London/New York: Routledge.

Bubík, Tomáš and David Václavík. 2020. "Freethinkers and atheists in the Czech Lands in the 20th century." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 58–83. London/New York: Routledge.

Burrichter, Clemens and Gerald Diesener, ed. 2002. *Auf dem Weg zur "Produktivkraft Wissenschaft"*. Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt GmbH.

Dähn, Horst. 1982. "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus und Erziehungssystem." In *Die evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Reinhard Henkys, 144–157. Munich: Chr. Kaiser.

Denkov, Dimitar, Georgi Vulchev and Valentina Gueorguieva. 2020. "Bulgaria. Freethought and atheism in the shadow of ethnophyletism." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 9–32. London/New York: Routledge.

Dietrich, Gerd. 1996. "Karrieren im Schnellverfahren: die HJ-Generation in der frühen DDR." *Hochschule Ost* 5 (2): 25–34.

Dobson, Miriam. 2015. "The social scientist meets the 'believer': Discussions of God, the afterlife, and communism in the mid-1960s." *Slavic Review* 74 (1): 79–103.

Feiereis, Konrad. 1995. "Katholische Theologie in der DDR - Chance, Grenze, Selbstverständnis." *Hochschule Ost* 4 (4): 46–56.

Feige, Hans-Uwe. 1993. "Die Gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Fakultät an der Universität Leipzig (1947–1951)." *Deutschland Archiv* 323: 572–583.

Fiedler, Peter and Gerhard Riege. 1969. *Die Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena in der Hochschulreform*. Berlin: Ministerium für Hoch- und Fachschulwesen.

Fulbrook, Mary. 1995. *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949–1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gleixner, Johannes. 2020. "Beginnings of Soviet sociology of religion and the (anti-) religiosity of muscovite workers (1925–1932): Creating the antireligious subject." In *Communicating Religion and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Jenny Vorpahl and Dirk Schuster, 41–58. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Goerner, Martin Georg. 1994. "Apparatestruktur und Methoden der SED-Kirchenpolitik." In *Staat-Kirche-Beziehungen in der DDR und anderen ehemals realsozialistischen Ländern 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Joachim Heise, 59–70. Berlin: Evangelische Akademie Berlin-Brandenburg.

Grütz, Reinhard. 2004. *Katholizismus in der DDR-Gesellschaft 1960–1990. Kirchliche Leitbilder, theologische Deutungen und lebensweltliche Praxis im Wandel*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.

Hall, Bruce W. 2003. "Stand, Probleme und Erfahrungen eines amerikanischen Historikers bei der Erforschung der Geschichte der 'kleinen' Religionsgemeinschaften

in der DDR." In *Staat und Kirchen in der DDR: Zum Stand der zeithistorischen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung*, edited by Horst Dähn and Joachim Heise, 187–201. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Hartweg, Frédéric and Joachim Heise, ed. 1995. *SED und Kirche: Eine Dokumentation ihrer Beziehungen,* tome 1: *SED 1946–1967*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

Heise, Joachim. 1993. "Kirchenpolitik von SED und Staat: Versuch einer Annäherung." In *Kirchen in der Diktatur: Drittes Reich und SED-Staat: Fünfzehn Beiträge*, edited by Günther Heydemann and Lothar Kettenacker, 126–154. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Heise, Joachim. 1994. "Gab es ein kirchenpolitisches Modell für Osteuropa?" In *Staat-Kirche-Beziehungen in der DDR und anderen ehemals realsozialistischen Ländern 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Joachim Heise, 33–42. Berlin: Evangelische Akademie Berlin-Brandenburg.

Heise, Joachim. 1998. "'… die Arbeit auf dem Gebiet des Atheismus intensivieren und qualifizieren': Zum Wandel in der atheistischen Propaganda und Lehre in der DDR von den Anfängen bis Ende der siebziger Jahre." In *"Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung…" Jugend im Spannungsfeld von Staat und Kirche in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Horst Dähn and Helga Gotschlich, 150–167. Berlin: Metropol.

Heise, Joachim. 2003. "Persönliche Erfahrungen bei der wissenschaftlichen Beschäftigung mit dem Thema Geschichte der Kirchenpolitik der SED bzw. der DDR vor und nach dem Systembruch 1989/90." In *Staat und Kirchen in der DDR: Zum Stand der zeithistorischen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung*, edited by Horst Dähn and Joachim Heise, 55–67. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Hertzsch, Klaus-Peter. 2005. "Interview mit Prof. Dr. Klaus-Peter Hertzsch." In *Universitätserfahrung Ost. DDR-Hochschullehrer im Gespräch*, edited by Matthias Steinbach with Michael Ploenus, 41–69. Jena/Quedlinburg: Dr. Bussert & Stadeler.

Hoffmann, Alfred. 2000. *"Mit Gott einfach fertig". Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Leipzig: St. Benno.

Hoffmann, Henryk and Radosław Tyrała. 2020. "Secularist social movements in Poland. History, institutionalization, repertoire of actions." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Non-religion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 177–206. London/New York: Routledge.

Hoßfeld, Uwe and Olaf Breidbach. 2007. "Biologie- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte in Jena: Das Ernst-Haeckel-Haus der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität." In *Hochschule im Sozialismus. Studien zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (1945–1990)*, edited by Uwe Hoßfeld, Tobias Kaiser and Heinz Mestrup, t. 2, 1181–1206. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.

Husband, William B. 2000. *Godless Communists: Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.

Jessen, Ralph. 1999. *Akademische Elite und kommunistische Diktatur. Die ostdeutsche Hochschullehrerschaft in der Ulbricht-Ära*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Jessen, Ralph and Jürgen John. 2005. "Wissenschaft und Universitäten im geteilten Deutschland der 1960er Jahre. Editorial." *Jahrbuch für Universitätsgeschichte* 8: 7–23.

Kääriäinen, Kimmo. 1989. *Discussion on Scientific Atheism as a Soviet Science 1960–1985*. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakateimia.

Kääriäinen, Kimmo. 1993. *Atheism and Perestroika*. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.

Kaiser, Tobias. 2004. "'Sowjetisierung', 'Reform' und Konflikt. Zur Geschichte der Universität Jena von der Wiedereröffnung 1945 bis zur sogenannten 'Dritten Hochschulreform' 1968." *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Thüringische Geschichte* 58: 161–186.

Kaiser, Tobias, Rüdiger Stutz and Uwe Hoßfeld. 2005. "Modell- oder Sündenfall? Die Universität Jena und die 'Dritte Hochschulreform'." *Jahrbuch für Universitätsgeschichte* 8: 45–69.

Kiope, Māra, Inese Runce and Anita Stasulane. 2020. "The trajectories of atheism and secularization in Latvia. From the German Enlightenment to contemporary secularity." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 137–154. London/New York: Routledge.

Klimova, Svetlana M. and Elena S. Molostova. 2013. "'Scientific Atheism' in action. Soviet sociology of religion as an agent of Marxist-Atheist propaganda from the 1960s to the 1980s." *Forum philosophicum* 18 (2): 169–190.

Laitko, Hubert. 1998. "Umstrukturierung statt Neugründung: die dritte Hochschulreform der DDR." *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 21 (2–3): 143–158.

Laitko, Hubert. 2002. "Wissenschaftspolitik und Wissenschaftsverständnis in der DDR - Façetten [sic] der fünfziger Jahre." In *Auf dem Weg zur "Produktivkraft Wissenschaft"*, edited by Clemens Burrichter and Gerald Diesener, 107–139. Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt GmbH.

Lutter, Hans. 1994. "Marxismus – Atheismus – Religionskritik." *Berliner Dialog-Hefte* 5 (2): 2–17.

Lutter, Hans. 2001. "Zur Geschichte des Atheismus in der DDR." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 43 (2): 72–83.

Maser, Peter. 1992. *Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften in der DDR 1949–1989. Ein Rückblick auf vierzig Jahre in Daten, Fakten und Meinungen*. Konstanz: Christliche Verlagsanstalt.

Matějka, Ondřej. 2011. "Between the academy and power. Czech Marxist sociology of religion (1954–1970)." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 107–132. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Mechtenberg, Theo. 1999. "Zwischen 'Bengschkurs' und gesellschaftlichem Engagement. Zur inneren Konfliktlage der katholischen Kirche in der DDR in der zweiten Hälfte der sechziger Jahre." *Deutsche Studien* 141 (1): 47–60.

Neubert, Ehrhart. 2000. *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949–1989*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

Pawelzik, Ralf. 1994. "Der Lehrstuhl für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus an der Universität Jena." In *Staat-Kirche-Beziehungen in der DDR und anderen ehemals realsozialistischen Ländern 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Joachim Heise, 81–86. Berlin: Evangelische Akademie Berlin-Brandenburg.

Pawelzik, Ralf. 1998. "Zum Säkularisierungsprozeß der DDR-Jugend." In *"Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung…" Jugend im Spannungsfeld von Staat und Kirche in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Horst Dähn and Helga Gotschlich, 184–192. Berlin: Metropol.

Peris, Daniel. 1998. *Storming the Heavens. The Soviet League of the Militant Godless*. Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell University Press.

Ploenus, Michael. 2007. "… *so wichtig wie das tägliche Brot" Das Jenaer Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1945–1990*. Cologne: Böhlau.

Ploenus, Michael. 2008. "'… einmalig von Eisenach bis Wladiwostock'. Olof Klohr (1927–1994)." In *Ketzer, Käutze, Querulanten. Außenseiter im universitären Milieu*, edited by Matthias Steinbach and Michael Ploenus, 366–380. Jena: Bussert & Stadeler.

Preuß, Franziska. 2007. "Die Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena und der Mauerbau 1961. Reaktionen und Auswirkungen." In *Hochschule im Sozialismus. Studien zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (1945–1990)*, edited by Uwe Hoßfeld, Tobias Kaiser and Heinz Mestrup, t. 1, 239–266. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.

Schäfer, Bernd. 1997. "Die KPD/SED und ihr Umgang mit religiösem Brauchtum und kirchlichem Leben im Alltag von SBZ und DDR - unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Mecklenburg-Vorpommerns bzw. der ehemaligen drei Nordbezirke." In *Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung,* volume VI: *Zur Arbeit der Enquete-Kommission: "Leben in der DDR. Leben nach 1989 - Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung". Expertisen und Forschungsstudien zum Thema "Kultur und religiöses Brauchtum"*, edited by Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 158–194. Schwerin.

Schirmer, Gregor. 2004. "Gedanken zur III. Hochschulreform." In *Alma Mater und moderne Gesellschaft. Hochschulpolitische Reformansätze in jüngerer und jüngster Zeit unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Jenaer Erfahrungen aus den 50er-70er Jahren*, edited by Thüringer Forum für Bildung und Wissenschaft e.V., 27–44. Jena: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Thüringen.

Schmidt-Lux, Thomas. 2008. *Wissenschaft als Religion: Szientismus im ostdeutschen Säkularisierungsprozess*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.

Schuster, Dirk. 2017. "Das Postulat vom baldigen Ende der Religion. Die DDR-Religionssoziologie über eine Zukunft ohne Gott." In *Zurück in die Zukunft. Die Bedeutung von Diskursen über "Zukunft" in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, edited by Klaus Freitag and Dominik Groß, 91–102. Kassel: Kassel University Press.

Schuster, Dirk. 2020. "The rise and fall of the 'Marxist sociology of religion' in the GDR." In *Communicating Religion and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Jenny Vorpahl and Dirk Schuster, 25–39. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Seidel, Jürgen J. 1994. "Die sozialistischen Staaten (UdSSR, Ungarn, Polen, DDR) und ihr Verhältnis zur Kirche in der Anfangsphase." In *Staat-Kirche-Beziehungen in der DDR und anderen ehemals realsozialistischen Ländern 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Joachim Heise, 43–58. Berlin: Evangelische Akademie Berlin-Brandenburg.

Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014. "The ticket to the Soviet Soul: Science, religion, and the spiritual crisis of Late Soviet Atheism." *The Russian Review* 73: 71–97.

Smolkin, Victoria. 2018. *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty. A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Sparschuh, Vera and Ute Koch. 1997. *Sozialismus und Soziologie. Die Gründergeneration der DDR-Soziologie. Versuch einer Konturierung*. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

Stutz, Rüdiger, Tobias Kaiser and Uwe Hoßfeld. 2007. "Von der 'Universitas litterarum' zum 'Kombinat der Wissenschaft' - Jena als Experimentierfeld der sogenannten 'Dritten Hochschulreform' 1968/69." In *Hochschule im Sozialismus. Studien zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (1945–1990)*, edited by Uwe Hoßfeld, Tobias Kaiser and Heinz Mestrup, t. 1, 288–319. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.

Szöllösi-Janze, Margit. 2002. "Die institutionelle Umgestaltung der Wissenschaftslandschaft im Übergang vom späten Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik." In *Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftspolitik. Bestandsaufnahmen zu Formationen, Brüchen und Kontinuitäten im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Rüdiger vom Bruch and Brigitte Kaderas, 60–74. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

Talandier, Catherine. 1994. *Au delà des murs: Les Églises évangéliques d'Allemagne de l'Est, 1980–1993*. Geneva: Labor et Fides.

Tesař, Jan. 2019. *The History of Scientific Atheism. A Comparative Study of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union (1954–1991)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Thrower, James. 1983. *Marxist-Leninist "Scientific Atheism" and the Study of Religion and Atheism in the UdSSR*. Berlin/New York/Amsterdam: Mouton Publisher.

Tížik, Miroslav. 2020. "Slovakia as a country without atheism but with a history of atheization." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 258–283. London/New York: Routledge.

Turcescu, Lucian. 2020. "Romania. Between freethought, atheism and religion." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 207–232. London/New York: Routledge.

van den Bercken, William. 1989. *Ideology and Atheism in the Soviet Union*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Vogel, Heinrich. 1956. "Die Stellung Max Plancks und Albert Einsteins zur Religion." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 4 (5–6): 584–604.

Walters, Philip. 1993. "A survey of Soviet religious policy." In *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, 3–30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wegner, Michael. 2001. "Die gescheiterte Modernisierung. Anmerkungen zur Hochschulreform von 1968 in Jena." In *Erinnerung an die Zukunft. Jenas Aufbruch in die Moderne. Anspruch und Scheitern eines komplexen Reformversuchs am Ende des NÖS*, edited by Jens F. Dwars, 85–93. Jena: quer Verlag.

Wustmann, Markus. 2004. *Die Gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Fakultät in Leipzig 1947–1951. Experimentierfeld kommunistischer Hochschulpolitik in SBZ und früher DDR*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Zimmermann, Hartmut. 1994. "Überlegungen zur Geschichte der Kader und der Kaderpolitik in der SBZ/DDR." In *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, edited by Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka and Hartmut Zwahr, 322–356. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

2 East German scientific atheism unveiling its contents in the 1960s

Despite East German planning habits, the concept of scientific atheism developed by the Jena University chair from 1963 onwards was initially somewhat fluid. The envisaged projects ranged from the relationship between the natural sciences and Christianity to the criticism of religious morality and ethics, the study of sects, the history of religion and atheism, the sociology of religion, and the atheist education of the younger generation, as well as propaganda issues. Political clericalism, although still considered important, was left to a research group in Halle.[1] The East German university took over the term "scientific atheism" from the USSR but did not have comparable resources that would have enabled it to reproduce the full range of activities under this heading. University traditions, a very different ecclesiastical context and a different history of atheism and free thought also made it necessary to rethink the subject. No East German researcher had yet been taught scientific atheism, so the collaborators necessarily came from other specialities, and the group was characterised from the outset by a certain interdisciplinarity, which did not help to quickly establish a precise content for the new discipline. By tracing the work carried out under the aegis of the Jena chair, it is possible to identify what those involved, led by Olof Klohr, meant by "scientific atheism" (as the title of their discipline), "atheism" and "religion". Although the creation of the university chair followed several years of work on the question of religion and atheism in Klohr's former group at Rostock, the new collective took several years to find its path. During an initial trial-and-error phase, a number of directions were explored, only to be closed down or pushed to the margins. A working group on "history of religions" (*Religionsgeschichte*) was set up inside the GDR-wide group headed by Olof Klohr, but it quickly moved away from scientific atheism by focusing on the invention of a "Marxist historiography of religions" (*marxistische Religionsgeschichtsschreibung*).[2] Unlike what scientific atheists did in the Soviet Union (Thrower 1983; Remmel and Friedenthal 2020), no atheist tradition, whether French, German or Russian, has been used to give depth to so-called scientific atheism. Hermann Ley, a specialist in the history of atheism, had occasional contacts with the scientific atheism network but conducted his research independently.[3] As to the analysis of "Christian sects in the GDR"

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322-3

under the responsibility of Johann Klügl, a member of the Chair of Scientific Atheism, it was quickly abandoned.[4] A planned working group on "ethics, religion and atheism" was not able to materialise.[5] Two specialisations gave the East German variant of scientific atheism its own character until the early 1970s: "Natural sciences and atheism" on the one hand and the massive use of sociological methods on the other.

The opposition between natural sciences and religion

As the advocates of its institutionalisation argued in 1963, the field of "scientific atheism" could be seen as a continuation of projects already underway. These focused in particular on the relationship between the natural sciences and atheism or religion. Joachim Heise later recalled the strategy widely used in the 1960s, and often successful, of intensifying science teaching and thus leading people to the atheism that was supposed to follow naturally from it.[6] Klohr and his colleagues, however, wanted to make explicit the link between natural science and atheism, as opposed, in their view, to any religious belief. It was in this field that Olof Klohr had defended his doctoral and habilitation theses.

The first, in 1956, was on "The law of biogenetics and its philosophical interpretation". It was part of a movement very much in evidence at East German universities, which aimed to study the "philosophical problems of the natural sciences" (*philosophische Probleme der Naturwissenschaften*). The title of the 1962 habilitation went further, making explicit the expertise of young Klohr in the religious field: "Catholic philosophy and theology on some fundamental questions of life", subtitled "An examination of idealistic errors and misinterpretations in West German Catholic literature". Both were directed by the philosopher Georg Mende with biologists as second assessors. Mende emphasised above all the usefulness of the habilitation work in training and equipping biology teachers. The biologist and second assessor O. Schwarz told Klohr that he had achieved an "applied philosophy", combining polemical intransigence with the gentleness needed when dealing with people of faith.[7] In an exchange about the best way to break the Jesuits' power of persuasion that these scholars perceived, Klohr declared that disseminating knowledge of the natural sciences was more effective than philosophical polemic.

Between these two theses, which remained confidential, Olof Klohr made a name for himself with a book for the general public entitled *Natural Science, Religion and the Church* (*Naturwissenschaft, Religion und Kirche*, 1958a). Initially planned for 10,000 copies, the print run was doubled and the procedure accelerated to ensure its rapid publication. In a country often lacking print capacities, this may be taken as proof of its perceived importance and political support. A 40-page brochure, *On the Opposition between Science and Religion* (*Über den Gegensatz zwischen Naturwissenschaft und Religion*, Klohr 1958b), followed the same year, aimed at a young audience with no prior knowledge. Another work on biology and religion (or Catholic theology) was planned for 1960.[8] As early as 1957, Klohr gave specialised

courses on the relationship between knowledge and religion and a seminar on philosophical problems linked to biology. Several people around him were also working in this field, including Heinrich Vogel and Karl-Heinrich Oberländer of Rostock University, Dietrich Alexander, H. Bischoff and Cimutta, who were doctoral students at the University of Jena, and several other students from Jena.[9] The founding of the Chair of Scientific Atheism as part of a conference on "Modern Natural Science and Atheism", followed by a much-publicised publication (Klohr 1964), suggested a continuity in the work for the new chair, an orientation confirmed by an article by Klohr in the university magazine, *Sozialistische Universität,* in 1965.[10] Interest in the December 1963 conference exceeded expectations, with 427 participants, including 34 from abroad: The Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Austria.[11] On this subject, the new Jena chair converged with the work underway in the Soviet Union – where the promotion of science was combined with a passion for the conquest of space (Smolkin 2014) – Romania (Turcescu 2020), Czechoslovakia (Tesař 2019) and elsewhere.

The inaugural conference brought together philosophers from Olof Klohr's entourage at Jena and former colleagues from Rostock, lecturers specialising in "philosophical problems of the natural sciences" (including Hermann Ley), a number of Soviet specialists working in the field of scientific atheism, as well as researchers in the natural sciences and numerous "propagandists" from the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge (*Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse*). In addition to providing mutual information on current research and its results, establishing contacts between philosophers and scientists in the natural sciences (an "alliance"), and between researchers from different countries in the socialist Bloc, the colloquium aimed to "provide suggestions for the improvement of scientific-atheistic propaganda".[12] More broadly, as the organiser, Klohr stated that the aim of the conference was to disseminate "the scientifically-based atheistic world-view", quoting the 1963 SED programme.[13] However, the conference made up for the wide publicity it received and for its composite nature by including events for a restricted audience, which were only accessible by invitation. Each actor had their own domain, and not just anyone could join the group of researchers in scientific atheism. The Jena chair never organised a similar "cross-disciplinary colloquium" again. Encompassing all the disciplines of the natural sciences and bringing together audiences with such different expectations around a programme that was deemed too long and not always well organised was not convincing[14]; especially as the theme did not acquire the importance for the new Jena chair that its contemporaries had expected.

Following the international conference in December 1963, "natural sciences and atheism" or "natural sciences and Christianity" was one of the aspects to be developed in the new Chair of Scientific Atheism and was announced and perceived as such.[15] In addition to the publication of the conference proceedings – 10% of which were intended for export – and a number of articles and individual works on Teilhard de Chardin, Ernst Haeckel or opposing

Christianity and science on a particular issue, a collective work of 600–700 pages entitled "Natural Science, Christianity, Atheism" was due to be published in June 1964.[16] From 1964 onwards, the publication of this major work constituted the only collective project, but its publication was postponed until 1966, then 1967, then 1968, and never came to fruition. The importance of in-depth work to refute theological opinions and counter them with an alternative interpretation of scientific knowledge continued to be emphasised. Yet the complex topic of "science and atheism/Christianity" was clearly losing importance and consistency in research programmes from 1964 onwards, to the benefit of sociology. The budget of DM 1,500 available to the group in 1963 and 1964 was not renewed.[17] The planned cooperation with the Chair for Philosophical Problems of the Natural Sciences at the neighbouring Institute of Marxism-Leninism, headed by Helmut Korch, as well as with Soviet partners, did not develop.[18] In 1964, the leadership of the small working group passed from Klohr to Kirschke, who in the same year defended a thesis on the evolution of the human species. Instead of expanding as planned in 1965 with the arrival of a doctoral student, the group, which then consisted of Olof Klohr, Dietrich Alexander, Almut Häusler, P. Jacob and Siegfried Kirschke – a far cry from the eight members and ambitious plans of 1964[19] – lost one of its linchpins with the departure of Kirschke in Autumn 1965. Subsequently, the subject came up again in the context of youth education[20] and as part of a course given in Autumn 1965 on "Science - Christianity - Atheism" by Klohr and Alexander. The last traces of Klohr's specialisation on Ernst Haeckel date back to 1963: He participated in a commission to cultivate Haeckel's legacy; gave a lecture and published an article on the "philosophical importance of Ernst Haeckel"; gave an expert opinion on a film project about the famous zoologist; and received a request for the evaluation of a manuscript.[21] Only Almut Häusler, an assistant at the Institute of Philosophy since 1959, attached to the Chair of Scientific Atheism, continued to work on Haeckel as part of her PhD.

As to knowledge production and argumentation, the complex topic of "natural sciences and atheism/Christianity" did not offer any notable advances between the first works at Rostock in the 1950s, the collective work of 1964, which was the last major publication Klohr contributed to in this field, and "Natural Science and World-View" (*Naturwissenschaft und Weltanschauung*, 1970) by Heinrich Vogel, Klohr's former colleague from Rostock. While the tone of these works may have varied, the approach from the outset never pretended to be neutral. In addition to the abundant use of adjectives such as "would-be" (*angeblich*) and "so-called" (*sogenannt*) and inverted commas to refer to religious assertions, it labelled them "fairy tales" (*Märchen*), "speculation" (*Spekulation*), "plain invention" (*reine Erfindung*) and "nonsense" (*Unsinn*). However, the proceedings of the colloquium, published in 1964, also made room for the notion of atheism; It was a matter of

> proving that modern natural science and Christian faith are incompatible and cannot be harmonised, be it in any form whatsoever; to prove

> that natural science leads to materialistic-atheistic consequences that leave no room for a God […] An attempt is made to scientifically analyse the relationship of modern science to atheism and the Christian faith.
>
> (Klohr 1964, 9–10)

This did not prevent the project titles from associating atheism, religion or Christianity with science, proof that the notion of atheism was not considered to be at the centre of reflections.

In 1964, for the first time, explicit consideration was given to possible Christian readers, who were asked to acknowledge the efforts and honesty of the approach. Without abandoning its partisan objectives, the proclaimed aim was to be moderate and respectful (Klohr 1964, 10). The rationale often opened with, or included, a historical section, presented as a history of the oppositions between the Church and theology and the natural sciences (Klohr 1958a, 1958b, 1964; Vogel 1970). But the position was clear: "Nothing significant has changed in the relationship between faith and knowledge" (Klohr 1964, 42); the Church "has not learnt much from the past, except to skilfully conceal its anti-scientific views from the faithful" (Klohr 1958a, 33). The opposition between science and religion was considered part of the very nature of religion, and therefore it could not disappear (Klohr 1958b, 13, 16–17, 22; Vogel 1970, 12–13). Assigning them two independent domains in human life was seen as a false solution, and the only possible solution in the eyes of the authors was "to overcome the opposition between science and religion by overcoming religion" (Korch 1964, 13).

In this sense, the opposition constructed by the East German scientific atheists in the 1950s and 1960s corresponded to what Georg Simmel called a "conflict", i.e. aimed at eradicating the adversary (Simmel 1908). Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein and Schmidt-Lux have already argued using this notion that the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) aimed to defeat an opponent to whom it denied any legitimacy as a matter of principle. It succeeded in bringing the Churches into a "membership logic" *(Mitgliedschaftslogik*) where the individual had to choose sides. The constructed and constantly reaffirmed opposition between science and science-based politics on the one hand and religion on the other was one of its salient features (Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein and Schmidt-Lux 2009, 125–128, 350; see also Schmidt-Lux 2008, 26–28, 382). This logic of face-to-face conflict between two alternatives structured the early content of East German scientific atheism, which can therefore be seen as one of the areas in which this configuration of conflict was established and constantly reaffirmed. This logic subsequently faded from the 1970s onwards, partly as a result of a reconsideration of religion and partly in the face of growing indifference to both religion and atheism, which threatened to render the conflict obsolete. East German sources did not use the concept of conflict, and Georg Simmel was not one of the authors widely read by scientific

atheists. They preferred to speak of "*Auseinandersetzung*" (confrontation) or "*Gegensatz*" (literally: contradiction).

The opposition between science and religion was explored using a shared repertoire of examples and subjects, recurring also in the periodical *Atheistische Forschungen* published by the Jena chair: Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and sometimes Giordano Bruno were among the figures of the past cited. Conflicts over the theories of Darwin, Huxley and Haeckel, the birth of life and, in particular, of Man, were among the obligatory passages, often preceded by polemics against the idea of the creation of the world. The idea of an afterlife was also debunked. Among more contemporary scientists, it was above all Max Planck who was called upon, often in the context of the thorny question of how there could be believing scientists (Klohr 1958a, 1958b, 1964; Vogel 1970).

Publications by East German authors were limited to Catholicism and German Lutheran and Reformed Protestantism, in that order and with unequal attention. Only from the 1970s did East German scientific atheists specialise in Protestantism, which they said was expected by foreign colleagues, as the GDR was the only socialist country with a predominantly Protestant population. In his 1964 book, Klohr rejected the accusation often levelled against Marxist researchers of polemicising against a theology that was already out of date. Consequently, although the Church Fathers and great theologians of the past were occasionally quoted, the discussion was essentially based on contemporary authors. For Catholicism, official documents were used: Vatican I, later Vatican II, the encyclical *Humani generis* and speeches by Pope Pius XII. Among other Catholic theologians, the reader will look in vain for the Council Fathers or those whose mark has been lasting, apart from an isolated reference to Hugo Rahner (Klohr 1958a, 114). Our authors' horizons extended partly over East Germany and mostly over West Germany, so they often entered into polemics with Catholic theologians on the other side of the Iron Curtain, but always German-speaking theologians. The only exception to this strong focus on West Germany was Otto Spülbeck, Bishop of Meißen. The inclusion of Teilhard de Chardin in the arguments came late, even though his work and the polemics it triggered would have been perfectly in line with the interests of the East German authors, and Klohr published an article on him in 1962 (Klohr 1962).

As far as Protestantism was concerned, Klohr claimed that there was a general approach to the natural sciences. Protestant references were drawn more from both sides of Germany. There was a tendency to refer to works and authors who had recently published not fundamental theological works but on the more specialised subjects in question. Diatribes against authors who were particularly hated by the East German politicians, such as the Bishop of Berlin and Chairman of the EKD Council Otto Dibelius, were absent or less prevalent than in other Marxist publications of the time (only in Klohr 1958a, 44, and 1958b, 21).

Because of its political implications, the opposition between science and religion was considered to be very serious and could not leave the observer

indifferent. In the scientific atheists' view, there had been harmful political alliances between the religious powers and the ruling classes, with religion being used to oppress the people. The remnants of these past alliances were also pointed out in contemporary Western Germany. But religious beliefs, as understood by our authors, constituted in themselves an objective obstacle to political progress. They resented the idea "that the purpose of thought and life for a religious person is not mainly in this worldly real life, but in the life beyond, in the divine life, and that he therefore regards the events on our earth as relatively unimportant" (Klohr 1958b, 7).

According to the scientific atheists, this lack of fighting spirit in this world came with a lack of consideration for scientific knowledge, conveyed by Churches, which, in the event of disagreement, gave precedence to revelation and the spiritual life. But building socialism required both the mobilisation of the entire population and the harnessing of increasingly sophisticated scientific knowledge. Socialism and the natural sciences were thus seen as allied, with dialectical materialism as the corresponding worldview. Indeed, "a socialist social order requires a socialist world-view of its people" (Klohr 1958a, 136), and the worldview was thought to have a direct influence on human actions. For these authors, it included the answer to the question of the meaning of human life, a meaning given by Man himself:

> Since the emergence of Marxism, therefore, the meaning of life for *labouring* people must consist in the struggle for socialism […]. […] This struggle for the liberation of Man in socialist society also characterises […] the meaning of the life of the individual.
>
> (Klohr 1958a, 89–90)

In doing so, morality and heroism had to be on the agenda, without recourse to religion. The conception of the religious (Christian in this case) that emerged did not retain from Karl Marx's definition – not systematically quoted – the revolutionary potential of religion as "Protest against the real misery" (quoted in Klohr 1958a, 84). Two decades later, the situation would be quite different. But at the time, Christianity was summed up as follows:

> Its teachings are not based on earthly things, its essential content is the relationship between Man and God. According to Christian teaching, Man is completely dependent on God and without God he is weak and in need of help […]. For the Christian, earthly life is only a temporary stage, a time of preparation for the Last Judgement, for redemption and eternal salvation.
>
> (Klohr 1958a, 10)

The total dependence came with certain beliefs considered mandatory by the scientific atheists, such as miracles and the creation of Man by God. Religion conceived in this way placed Man in a state of "enslavement", contrary

to his purpose, which was to use his intelligence. Although the authors were careful to emphasise that this was not to be seen as a particular malice on the part of theologians or Church leaders and that they did not intend to offend anyone (Klohr 1958a, 6, 12, 136, 138), they nonetheless made numerous distinctions between the leaders and "basic believers". The latter, for better or for worse, were said to be in little agreement with what theologians had to say or with official documents. Sometimes it was a question of demonstrating that the official declarations did not correspond to practice. More often, it was a question of setting themselves up as the defenders of believers who had had "blinkers" imposed on them, who had been deceived, surrounded by a "medieval" way of thinking. In short, religious claims were supposed to "violate the dignity of the free-spirited and upright human being" (Klohr 1958a, 117). The "simple believer" (*einfacher Gläubiger*) could not be satisfied with that (Klohr 1964, 38), unless he was gullible – and what reader would want to be gullible? The "reasonable people" (*vernünftig denkend*), "close to reality" (*wirklichkeitsnah*), with "sound judgement" (*gesundes Empfinden*) and "insight" (*Einsicht*), or even equipped with a certain scientific culture – who wouldn't want to identify with that? – would prefer evidence and science to the fabrications of religion. The "differentiation" policy so popular in East Germany to stigmatise some believers in order to win over others was perfectly applied.

If the scientific atheists had their way, all people should therefore turn away from religious beliefs and ecclesiastical institutions. The alternative proposed was a conception of the world based on the "evidence" provided by science, on "facts", whereas religion was said to be based on "speculation" and unproven, immutable dogmas. Religion had no place, no domain of its own, because everything could be studied by science. But then, could "atheism" claim to be anything more than a methodological principle of the natural sciences, a materialism that reduced all phenomena to material causes and laws of nature? A similar question was posed at the same time to colleagues in other countries. For early Czechoslovak scientific atheism, for instance, Tesař has also shown the paramount importance of the dissemination of scientific knowledge. Definitions of atheism were attempted but did not appear to have priority for the discipline of scientific atheism as a whole (Tesař 2019, 108–110; Bubík and Václavík 2020, 70–73). Similarly, as Tesař argued, "the Soviet atheist specialists almost always linked atheism not only to the critique of religion but also to scientific knowledge" (2019, 109–110). In the mid-1960s, however, the call for a more substantial "life-affirming content" of Marxist atheism began to be heard among Soviet scientific atheists (Remmel and Friedenthal 2020, 98–99; Kiope, Runce and Stasulane 2020). As Aleksandr Okulov, director of the Moscow Institute of Scientific Atheism, assessed in 1966:

> the general problem has to do with the contribution which atheism can make to the spiritual life (*dukhovnaya zhizn'*) of society, the growth

> of culture, social consciousness, its form and standard, the all-round development of the personality, to questions of work, of being, of the family, of tradition, etc.
>
> (quoted in Thrower 1983, 154)

In this country, as Smolkin argued, scientific atheism entered into "the battle *for* Soviet spiritual life" (Smolkin 2014, 175, see also Smolkin 2018).

East Germany in the 1960s wasn't there yet. In the writings on science, religion and atheism, in fact, nothing more was usually spelt out to define atheism. At most, it could be pointed out "that the premise of scientific theory to explain all natural phenomena from the point of view of regularity is intrinsically atheistic" (Korch 1964, 20). Philosophical conclusions and generalisations drawn from scientific results would be equally atheistic.[22] In 1964, atheism was given greater prominence and was intended to be positive and constructive, not a simple negation of religion (Korch 1964, 24; Klohr 1964, 9–11). However, the avenues suggested remained thin. Helmut Korch, for example, admitted "that the atheism of our world-view cannot be justified by the natural sciences alone" (Korch 1964, 14). Heinrich Vogel went further in his 1970 book, contrasting atheism with nihilism and linking it to values and ideals:

> The Marxist-Leninist world-view […] teaches and educates its people […] to respect everything that concerns Man. […] Marxism-Leninism believes and trusts in the good in Man. Marxism-Leninism trusts in the power and ability of humanity to build a peaceful, humane life on our planet.
>
> (Vogel 1970, 17)

One of the characteristics of the worldview being promoted as early as 1958 was that it evolved in response to scientific discoveries and social circumstances: "Scientific world-view is therefore by no means a fixed and unchanging dogma in which one must believe, but a system of views that changes through the development of science and with it" (Klohr 1958a, 134–135). Heinrich Vogel emphasised the same evolving nature and assigned a constructive role to atheism characterised in this way without having specified any content (Vogel 1970, 19).

The polemical opposition between science, or knowledge, and religion experienced a few more outbursts in the 1970s, once again under the impetus of Olof Klohr.[23] He was responsible for a 1978 document entitled "The 'Reconciliation' between Theology and the Natural Sciences" and, in the same year, the book *Marxismus-Leninismus, Atheismus, Religion* (Klohr 1978). The latter devoted a first part to the opposition between atheism and religion on the "fundamental question of philosophy" (*Grundfrage der Philosophie*, opposing materialism and idealism) and a second part to the opposition between knowledge and religion. It has to be said that these writings did not

offer any changes or new elements compared to the publications of the 1950s and 1960s. They feature the same names, the same issues and questions, starting with the "Galilei case" and ending with Darwinism, with at most a stronger emphasis on Teilhard de Chardin. Most of the references were once again West German, taken from the 1950s and 1960s. Only the tone had been more virulent in the past.[24] Other works, such as those by Heiner Steinberg presented at the VIIth Warnemünde Colloquium in 1979 and the IXth Warnemünde Colloquium in 1983, were also concerned with the issue of natural sciences/religion or theology, a sign that the subject was never completely neglected.[25] In the 1980s, Jürgen Scholze and Joachim Poppe renewed the approach by moving away from the binary vision to study recent Protestant theological positions on topical issues such as the scientific and technological revolution and ecology. For a new generation of researchers, the frontal and systematic opposition eventually seemed outdated.

The "sociology of religion and atheism": a major line of research from 1964

The stagnation of the "natural sciences and religion" theme went hand in hand with the development of a new specialisation that was to leave a lasting mark on East German scientific atheism up to 1990. The short and revealing title most often used, "sociology of religion" (*Religionssoziologie*), was in danger of obscuring the fact that it was supposed to be the "Marxist sociology of religion and atheism" (*Marxistische Soziologie der Religion und des Atheismus*).[26] It was included in some of the programmes as early as 1963 and began to really blossom in 1964 with concrete and ambitious projects: International colloquia, field surveys, the publication of a dedicated periodical and other publications.[27] Among the many researchers and students involved were Johann Klügl, who later became Professor of Sociology at Jena, and Wolfgang Masula, author of a PhD on the Church withdrawal. A book accessible to the general public was published in 1966. Klohr became known as one of the pioneers of the sociology that was then being institutionalised in the GDR, as in other Eastern Bloc countries (Steiner 1997, 226; Pollack 1994, 188; Sparschuh and Koch 1997).

Researchers from different socialist countries were facing the same challenges. The emergence of sociology was situated in a fundamental tension between the irreconcilable needs of the political elites (Laitko 2002, 130; Duller and Pawlak 2017, 10). On the one hand, "the technocratic understanding of society prevalent in state socialism required sociological analysis" (Brunnbauer, Kraft and Schulze Wessel 2011, 4; see already Marquardt 1985, 107), especially as the scientific nature of politics in the socialist and then communist regimes was strongly advocated. The function assigned to sociology can be described as threefold: To develop knowledge about the current situation; to specify the values to be inculcated in the population; and to establish diagnoses and proposals to help solve the problems (according

to Markiewicz and Kasprzyk, quoted in Mespoulet 2007a, 5). On the other hand, sociology had considerable critical potential, thanks to its empirical knowledge of society, and could reveal the inadequacies and failures of the policy pursued by the socialist regime (Weinberg 1974; Meyer 1994; Steiner 1997); hence the use of concepts such as "bourgeois residues" (Brunnbauer, Kraft and Schulze Wessel 2011, 8, 11). Fieldwork was subject to authorisation and the data collected were often impossible for researchers to publish (Marquardt 1985, 107; Schimunek 2002, 46). These restrictions hit the Jena scientific atheists hard. At the end of 1965, for example, Klohr was summoned by the SED leadership at the University of Jena and harshly criticised for not keeping the data from Masula's work confidential.[28] Today, it is easy to see that the data produced by Masula had indeed been disseminated and taken up by other authors. Klohr and his colleagues were in no position to try to evade these restrictions. There is a consensus in historiography on the loyalty of East German sociologists to socialism in general and to the SED in particular, unlike their Polish, Czechoslovakian and Hungarian colleagues (Duller and Pawlak 2017, 10; Mergel 2012; Steiner 1997, 233; Bafoil 1991; Peter 1997, 343). Similarly, in the GDR, there was no struggle for the independence of sociology from historical materialism. East German sociology was content to be an "empirical auxiliary science" (Sparschuh and Weiß 1997, 306), highly descriptive and not very theoretical.

For Olof Klohr, who was not a great theoretician in general, historical materialism simply constituted the foundation of Marxist religious sociology (Klohr 1966b, 13). Sociology of religion remained largely confined to his own group and apart from the rest of East German sociology. His group's primary motivation was to gain a better understanding of society as it was, "to be able to grasp the real situation".[29] More specifically, in a 1964 document taken up again in 1968, the stated aim was to provide proof and specify the ways in which religion was withering away.[30] Several areas of work emerged. The first was devoted to theoretical and methodological issues, since it was necessary to define religion and atheism and to know how to observe and measure them.[31] This also included criticism of bourgeois religious sociology – the subject of Klügl's habilitation – which was always also a way of familiarising oneself with it. While it was rare to find references to traditions in religious sociology or religious science,[32] East German scientific atheists were curious and open to certain foreign influences. The concept of secularisation, for example, was widely embraced.

The other axes focused on a given geographical area, a specific population or a specific Church, mostly in the GDR. The Jena researchers relied on the same types of sources as their colleagues in other countries. Alongside the use of statistics compiled by the public administration and data provided by the Churches, they carried out field observations and, above all, implemented essentially quantitative surveys.[33] Compared to their Soviet colleagues, interviews and qualitative surveys were rarer. Under the aegis of the Chair of Scientific Atheism, the group aimed to accumulate comparable

data that could document changes over several years.[34] In doing so, it did not always avoid asking close-ended or even suggestive questions or using negative wording likely to influence responses, which would not necessarily prevent respondents from going against the suggested direction.[35] Unfortunately, it has proved impossible to trace with any certainty the evolution between the different versions of questionnaires and to ascertain whether or not the methods were refined.[36]

These surveys made it possible to define the subject of the "sociology of religion and atheism". The scientific atheists defined religion as an exclusively social phenomenon, determined by the conditions of production and class (Klohr 1966b, 13, 15–16). It was up to Marxist researchers to ensure "that religion as a whole, without any rest, is treated as a social phenomenon". In a 1966 article, Martin Robbe placed greater emphasis on the "gnoseological aspect", reviewing numerous authors including Otto, Husserl, Jung and Eliade. The "All Other", the "numinous", was reduced to a feeling of powerlessness due to alienation (Robbe 1966). Meanwhile, Olof Klohr warned against separating *a priori* sociologically observable aspects from beliefs or thoughts and stressed the possibility and necessity of reducing the latter to their social causes. For him, thought and behaviour went hand in hand.

From this point of view, the social upheavals of the post-war period were supposed to have had a massive impact. The conceptual tools used to describe developments in the GDR gave pride of place to the term "secularisation". The scientific atheists spoke of an "unstoppable process of secularisation" (Klohr 1966b, 30), "fading away of faith" (*Glaubensschwund*), "lack of religion" (*Religionslosigkeit*), "lack of relationship" to faith or the Church, "irreligiosity", "indifference" (Robbe 1966, 181–182), and "worldisation process" (*Verweltlichungsprozeß*).[37] In his 1965 PhD thesis on "Secularisation in the socialist city demonstrated by the example of the city of Magdeburg", directed by Olof Klohr, Hans Lutter defined secularisation as "the process of turning away both of the individual and the masses from religious faith". From the point of view of East German society, "social secularisation consists in the progressive elimination of religion from social consciousness" and can be "understood as a social process of the withering away of religion".[38] This process is said to have begun under capitalism, thanks in particular to the working class, but accelerated and reached its culmination under the socialist regime.[39] In a narrative of progress, "these facts confirm, from a very specific point of view, that social development in the GDR is a whole epoch ahead of that in West Germany".[40]

One of the tasks assigned to the sociology of religion was to clarify the laws according to which secularisation progressed under socialism.[41] Contrary to the "completely unscientific" insinuations of Western sociologists,[42] secularisation in the GDR was not conceived as "the result of coercion, but the result of the new social conditions under socialism", neither as "a declaration of war against religion and the Church, nor an ideological 'addition' to a certain socio-economic form of society" (Klohr 1966b, 22, 25).[43] In the eyes of

East German scientific atheists, the reality was, on the contrary, one of new economic conditions, scientific and technical progress controlled by Man and industrialisation.[44] Even if the importance of propaganda, and in particular the *Jugendweihe*, was not denied, "the turning of ever larger sections of the masses towards ideological-atheistic thinking and the turning away from religion and the Church are ultimately determined by the socio-economic structure and class relations of socialist society in the GDR".[45] Talking about the Gera region, Klohr, Klügl and Masula concluded:

> The number of people leaving the Church is determined by the economic, political, cultural, etc. level of development of the respective district. There is a clear correlation between the number of people leaving the Church and the level of economic development.[46]

Similarly, atheism was not to be understood as a philosophical posture or the negation of beliefs. According to the scientific atheists, it was "primarily a social phenomenon", and "scientific atheism is only the theoretical expression of this practical atheistic behaviour that is immanent in the economic, social and political sphere" (Klohr 1966b, 22). Work was supposed to play a key role there.[47] In the mid-1960s, Klohr had no doubt about the outcome of the process: "The constantly evolving social conditions of socialism necessarily lead to a *mass spread* of atheistic thinking" (Klohr 1966b, 26). This conviction was gradually called into question and then abandoned at the end of the 1980s. A much more restrained voice was already coming from Robbe (Robbe 1966).

The researchers around Olof Klohr were well aware that secularisation could be slow and did not necessarily resemble an automatic and spontaneous linear process. Also, the conviction that it was inevitable and due to objective causes did not prevent them from thinking of methods to facilitate it, particularly at the individual level. Although the East German definition of secularisation took different scales into account, the elimination of religion at the macro level received little attention from the Jena researchers. They especially focused on individuals who left religion, using data and indicators that were broadly comparable to the sociography of (Christian) religious practices practised at the time on the other side of the Iron Curtain. These included being a member of a religious community or having left it; taking part in its celebrations, other activities or rites of passage; and having had a religious education or wanting to give one to one's children.[48] This led to a proliferation of statistical studies, particularly on withdrawal from the Church (*Kirchenaustritt*, which required an active administrative process), the most accomplished and general of which was Masula's PhD thesis (Masula 1966). These data were cross-referenced with age, sex, size of commune, social stratum and socio-professional category.

The archives bear witness to a strong desire to learn as much as possible about the organisation and activities of the various religious communities and

to systematise this knowledge in order to present real expertise based on field observations.[49] While the least sophisticated surveys only offered three alternatives (Protestant/Catholic/other religious communities),[50] a large table summarising the religious affiliation of the entire population living in the district of Jena listed a total of 286 religious communities, divided into seven categories, down to extremely small numbers: 21 Catholics independent of Rome, 30 "free religious" and members of other "idealistic" worldview communities out of a population of 82,652. Certain points of methodology remain unresolved, such as the source of the data, the treatment of multiple memberships attested for the GDR, the count of people who professed no religion, and the classification of certain communities in one of the seven categories; but the work shows the concern to embrace the entire local reality as closely as possible.[51]

The conclusions drawn were easily sustainable in a socialist regime. Against a backdrop of a general decline in the number of Church members, churches were said to lose ground, particularly among 18–25-year-olds, among men more than women, especially among the working class, the intelligentsia and teachers, and in cities more than in rural areas.[52] It should be noted that it was sometimes up to the researcher to decide whether an individual "actually" (*eigentlich*) belonged to the working class, the peasantry or the intelligentsia.[53]

Alongside participation in religious activities and Christian rites of passage, socialist rites of passage – the socialist naming ceremony for newborn babies (*sozialistische Namensgebung*), *Jugendweihe*, weddings and funerals – were also investigated.[54] They were seen as "an alternative to the people's church (*Volkskirche*) […]. The socialist celebrations are to be seen as filling a vacuum".[55] However, there was admittedly little public enthusiasm for them. The scientific atheists' criticism was sometimes softened during the drafting process;[56] the most important thing was to make these celebrations more attractive. Hans Lutter, however, considered the relevance of this indicator and saw in it "a *further step* after secularisation".[57] These indicators only made it possible to define the degree of closeness to the Church as an institution (*Kirchlichkeit*). It remained to be clarified what the population believed at its core (*Gläubigkeit*) and to what extent it adhered to a belief system considered normative for being Christian. This distinction between *Kirchlichkeit* and *Gläubigkeit* was not specific to the GDR (see Rendtorff 1993; Pollack 2015, 288). In the 1960s, East German scientific atheists gave priority to faith. Their Soviet colleague Ugrinovich also emphasised this dimension at the colloquium on religious sociology in Jena in 1965 (Ugrinowitsch 1966, 48). But how to grasp the "thought" (*Denken*, not feeling) of "believers" (*Gläubige*) and "religiously bound" people (*religiös Gebundene*), how to circumscribe "religious consciousness" (*religiöses Bewußtsein*)?

The surveys conducted under the responsibility of the Jena chair sometimes elicited direct responses on the importance or future of religion. Respondents were asked to give their views on a range of questions, such as: "Do you consider yourself religious or Christian?", "Do you believe in God/in Jesus

Christ?", "Do you believe in the existence of God?", "Do you believe in the statement: Jesus Christ died for us and redeemed us?", "Do you believe that people in our time need a religion or the Christian faith?", "Do you believe that religion will die out one day?", "Do you see the meaning of your life above all in the use of your personal energies for the interests of your fellow human beings and the earthly interests of mankind as a whole?" and "Do you see the most important meaning of life in the preparation for an eternal existence in the hereafter?". There was no option to answer anything but "yes" or "no" to these questions.

Among the spiritual (*geistig*) elements to be studied, Klohr also identified the authority governing life, the course of the world and the place of Man (Klohr 1966b). A series of questions raised the issue of human freedom and mastery of the laws of nature and society. Student surveys also asked whether the studied science could be reconciled with the Christian faith. They included the question: "Do you consider yourself a Marxist?" with the possible answers not only "yes", "partly", "no" and "don't know" but also "I am endeavouring to become one". The designation of a person as religious, believing or Christian did not fail to raise questions at times. For example, a confidential document on the "development of atheist thought in the district of Gera" cites a "Protestant student" as an example of someone who has left the Church and considers science and religion incompatible. Another, although a member of the Protestant Church, admitted that he did not believe in God.[58]

Typologies developed on the basis of the surveys provide a clearer picture of what, in the eyes of scientific atheists, defined a religious person. Numerous typologies were drawn up at the same time by researchers across the Eastern Bloc as part of a larger "sociological turn" in scientific atheism (Tesař 2019; Klimova and Molostova 2013; Dobson 2015; Bauquet 2013; Hazdovac Bajič et al. 2020; Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020; Remmel and Friedenthal 2020). The categories and breakdowns did not meet with consensus. Unlike the Western model that had long prevailed, which arranged populations in concentric circles according to their distance from the Church, in the GDR the individual was thought of as following a trajectory between one extreme and another. His or her position was assessed as progress along this path at a given moment. The typology thus became a "sequence of steps" (*Stufenfolge*) whose dynamic was signified by the omnipresent terms "still" and sometimes "already" (Klohr 1966b). The question mark proposed as a response in one of the surveys did not refer to a simple indecision or refusal to answer: "Throughout this survey, the '?' stands in for 'I can't decide that, I still have certain doubts about it.'"[59] The vision was thus also optimistic, since the individual was supposed to progress in knowledge and understanding. In most of the studies, the aim was to replace standardised religiosity with a different lifestyle and different beliefs. The Jena researchers were less interested in finding out *what* people believed in than in measuring the extent to which they *still* believed in what the scientific atheists considered to be the

definition of Christianity.[60] So they did not avoid an inverted pastoral perspective and the risks associated with the paradigm of secularisation (see, for instance, Gorski and Altınordu 2008).

In the typologies, the gradations were not uniform. The spectrum passed through different types of atheists and more or less religious or undecided people, more or less linked to the Church, in whom the categories of "churchliness" and "faith" were dissociated. While the most accomplished atheists were expected to reject both personal beliefs and Church membership and the core believers associated both, the intermediate categories were shown to lack coherence (*Inkonsequenzen*) or solidity (*gefestigt sein*). The time lag was always supposed to be in one direction: the often gradual abandonment of beliefs (in the sense of adherence to dogmas but also of personal faith) was expected to precede the initiative to officially leave the Church, often out of consideration for one's family.[61] The arguments of the East German researchers could therefore be described as "belonging without believing" by inverting Davie's formula (Davie 2007, 138–140). Imagining religiosity outside the established Churches was none of their concern.

This way of dissociating "churchliness" and "faith" can also be interpreted as a particular use of the highly malleable concept of secularisation. As Gorski and Altınordu wrote:

> all too often, debates about secularization degenerate into vehicles for partisan debates about the future of religion, with those who wish religion would finally disappear defining secularization in the most expansive possible way, so that they can accumulate as much evidence as possible that it is occurring.
>
> (2008, 75–76)

In the politically constrained context, this argument largely defused the critical potential inherent in the sociological approach. Whatever the membership figures put forward by religious institutions, researchers were able to produce more reassuring estimates.[62] The prediction that the rate of religious adherence would fall below 10% in the next 10–20 years was enough for them to declare the withering away of religion a reality.[63] Pawelzik preferred to emphasise the critical potential of the sociological method and saw this as the reason for a crackdown on researchers (Pawelzik 1994, 85). However, the work that the scientific atheists were able to complete and that has been preserved in archives and publications did not attack the classics of Marxism-Leninism, nor did it call into question the policies pursued. According to their criteria, they counted 3%–4% of "strictly devout Christians" (*strenggläubige Christen*) in one sample, 2%–5% in another, certainly less than 10% of the population in the Gera district,[64] and five out of 242 students at the Erfurt school of civil engineering.[65] As for the vast majority of the population, again in the Gera district, Klohr, Klügl and Masula regularly estimated that 70% held an "atheistic basic attitude" (*atheistische Grundhaltung*), and 30%–40% "thought atheistically" (*atheistisch denkend*).[66]

However, according to the authors, it would have been premature to conclude from this that atheism was triumphant among the East German people. The majority of the population, whom they thought had left the Church and religion behind, deserved a closer look. As in other national and political contexts, atheism was not necessarily the only alternative to religion (see, for instance, Gorski and Altınordu 2008, 63; Brown 2013). Indifference was already being perceived as a problem in Hungary, at the end of the 1960s in Estonia, and later massively in Soviet scientific atheism more generally, as well as in Czechoslovakia (Bauquet 2013; Remmel and Friedenthal 2020; Smolkin 2018; Bubík and Václavík 2020, 74). On the other side of the Berlin Wall, taking their cue from Max Weber, Luckmann and Wilson at the same time defined secularisation as a loss of interest in the supernatural or the spiritual and a movement to turn to affairs here on earth; Bobineau and Tank-Storper spoke of "mondianisation" (from *monde*, the world, Bobineau and Tank-Storper 2012, 60). Klohr insisted that "it is […] necessary to also analyse the nonreligious content of world-view" (Klohr 1966b, 20).

Here again, Martin Robbe was more sceptical. Emphasising the negating nature of atheism, the lack of relationship to religion and the Church, indifference and what he called "unconscious atheism" – in which clear-cut choices were "alien" because its holders did not reflect upon these questions – he ended up arguing for the broader and more neutral term "*Religionslosigkeit*" ("being without religion", Robbe 1966, 181–182). His proposal was hardly taken up in the GDR. In some writings, the group around Klohr used the more administrative expression "without denomination", sometimes confusing it with faith in God.[67] In the above-mentioned large summary table on the religious affiliation of the population of the Jena city district, numerous designations were given to those who were not members of any religious community. Category 1, "not bound by a denomination" (*nicht konfessionsgebunden*), included 14 sub-categories with very different connotations: "Atheist"; "Dissident"; "exited" from Church (*ausgetreten*); "free of religion" (*Religionsfreie*); "-less" referring to faith, religion and twice to denomination (*konfessionslos* and *bekenntnislos*); "no denomination" (*keine Konfession*); "without" denomination, faith or religion (*ohne*); and "incredulous" or "unbelieving" (*ungläubig, nicht gläubig*). Some referred to religious affiliation, some to personal belief. The origin of these designations is unclear. The title suggests that they were public or ecclesiastical statistics, but other clues suggest that the people questioned were free to enter what they felt was most appropriate. At the risk of distorting the figures for category 1 by adding the number of refusals to answer, the instructions stated: "If no information on affiliation to a religious community was provided or if a dash (-) was entered, it should be signed with 1 (non-denominational)". The result was that people with "no religious affiliation" came first and, by 44 people, overtook members of religious communities (41,348 compared to 41,304).[68]

Whatever the designations and figures, researchers in scientific atheism did recognise a gradation between different types of atheists, with an ideal

to be achieved. Unlike their Soviet colleagues, they showed little interest in organisational forms, especially as East Germany had no equivalent of the League of the Militant Godless (on the importance of enlistment in the Soviet Union, see Peris 1998, 8–9). Although they did not always deny that "Marxist-scientific" atheism amounted to a rejection of religion, in the end, it was more than that. For them, it was to be distinguished from "spontaneous atheism" (*spontaner Atheismus*) or the fact of being spontaneously without religion (*spontane Religionslosigkeit*). By contrast, "*Marxist-atheistic thinking and behaviour* is the qualitatively most highly developed form of non-belief and non-churchliness that has become conscious and is consciously expressed".[69] Even more than the conscious character of Marxist atheism, however, Klohr emphasised its positive and active force; it was "the affirmation of the world in theoretical thought and practical action" (Klohr 1966b, 20). Atheism should make you active and confident and give you strength and optimism.[70] We return to the idea that religion and atheism were above all social behaviours. For Olof Klohr, "affirming life" and the world did not refer to personal life but opened up the classification of individuals to the political dimension. This dimension was systematically present and in fact constituted the central preoccupation of researchers when they studied religious phenomena.

The survey questionnaires bear witness to this concern. Respondents were asked about politics in the GDR, the international situation, the West German Christian Democratic Union (CDU), their own commitment, their interest in political issues, the media they consulted and, in many cases, to project themselves into the future, not only professionally but also in terms of society and even globally. As Klohr explicitly stated, "this atheism […] is also 'political' atheism" (Klohr 1966b, 26). According to the scientific atheists, advancing socialism presupposed a "socialist consciousness" that was incompatible with religion and that included atheistic convictions of a certain type. One of Klohr's doctoral students was interested in the "political maturity level", implying that a mature person would commit themselves to socialism (Volprich 1969, 171). Religious convictions, far from simply causing a loss of earnings, constituted a political obstacle to be taken seriously.[71] The relationship between philosophical (*weltanschaulich*) and political opinions was a common thread in the sociological work produced for the Jena chair, a relationship based on empirical data:[72]

> There is a clear, statistically measurable connection between socialist political thinking and scientific-atheistic attitudes. Similarly, the connection between negative political attitudes and religious thinking can be clearly demonstrated statistically. It should be emphasised here that this is a statistically relevant correlation, i.e. that there are also, and in increasing numbers, religious people who hold a clear socialist viewpoint.[73]

Conversely, political criteria were used to define whether a given individual had "already" arrived at Marxist atheism, the final stage of the trajectory. In Klohr's criteria for the sociological understanding of atheism, philosophical and political positions went hand in hand.[74] Not all types of atheists were considered politically reliable; being an atheist was therefore not enough, nor was it an objective in itself. This method, which gave as much room to political criteria as to philosophical questions, was defended by the Jena scientific atheists in lively debates with their colleagues from other socialist countries in Prague in 1967. By arguing for political positions to be taken into account, they were already opening the door to differentiation, for not all religious people had the same political attitude.[75] This idea was to become more prominent in scientific atheism later. In her thesis, Volprich also introduced, in addition to the polarisation between atheists and theists, a political axis which no longer pitted believers against Marxist atheists but the latter against the proponents of "other world-view opinions" (*andere weltanschauliche Auffassungen*). It gave more positive points to believers and pushed the often-proclaimed political primacy to the limit (Volprich 1969). The questionnaires themselves could have contributed to giving respondents the idea that it would be necessary to "fight together against militarism and imperialism and war" and "against the misuse of religion for reactionary political purposes". The studies did not go so far as to distinguish "progressive Christians" from others, with a few exceptions. Only Martin Robbe, a specialist in the Middle East, took an interest in religion, which, "as in various countries fighting for their national independence, involves masses of people in a liberation movement" (Robbe 1966, 164). Studying the role or function of religious communities and religion in socialist society was only just beginning to appear in the work programmes of the Chair of Scientific Atheism.[76] In the meantime, all scientific atheists remained convinced of the political necessity of bringing everyone to Marxist atheism, since religion necessarily, in their view, placed limits on the individual's full understanding and action. A better knowledge of the population's state of consciousness should help to better target the policies pursued, and in particular to fine-tune *weltanschaulich* and atheist propaganda.[77] The utilitarian function assigned to sociology in the socialist regime was fully assumed.

Recommendations for the education of the younger generation and propaganda remained largely imbued with a negative view of believers. Socioeconomic conditions were supposed not to be immediately and automatically reflected in people's consciousness. A subjective factor (*subjektiver Faktor*) had to be taken into account and offered a foothold for the work of social scientists, propagandists and educators.[78] "There is a clear correlation between the quality and quantity of atheist propaganda and the trend of people leaving the Church", which could be seen in the statistics according to the Jena scientific atheists.[79] The work from now on would consist of making people aware of the contradictions in their positions, or between their positions

and their social environment, and thus moving them along the path leading to an atheist and Marxist position.[80] The Jena Scientific Atheism Collective proposed propaganda measures more suited to the situation by which "the prerequisite for the detachment from faith is created".[81] Education that was primarily political was bound to have an effect on beliefs. According to Volprich, believing East Germans had already begun to integrate elements of socialist ideology (Volprich 1969, 155, 159). According to Klohr, it was easier and quicker to come to political opinions that were more favourable to socialism; the abandonment of beliefs that were incompatible with the new political ideas was to follow in a second phase.

The sociological research on which the Jena group embarked from 1964 onwards seemed to increase its appeal abroad and bring it closer to the West, at a time when religious sociology was developing in many countries. In April 1965, Klohr and Klügl accepted an invitation to take part in the Fifth European Colloquium on the Sociology of Protestantism in Sigtuna near Stockholm, which gave Klohr the opportunity to present East German sociology of religion to an international audience of specialists.[82] It is not known from the archives whether they also went to the World Congress of Sociology, in the section on religious sociology, which they had also been invited to attend. Professor Norman Birnbaum from Strasbourg, secretary of the Sociology of Religion Committee of the International Sociological Association, appears in the list of international contacts for the Chair of Scientific Atheism. The archives mention contacts with Strasbourg, Paris, Oxford, Lausanne, Münster, Brussels, the United States, Austria, Stockholm and Western Germany, and invitations to London, Den Haag and Italy. This was a source of satisfaction, but clearly not a priority.[83]

It was within the socialist countries that the most promising relationships were forged, sometimes leading to genuine cooperation. International contacts were promoted[84] and encouraged by the public and university authorities, sometimes by means of "friendship contracts" between higher education or research establishments in different Eastern Bloc countries in order to "gradually reconnect with the international scientific community" (Schulz 1994, 127). The Chair of Scientific Atheism, for example, was part of a cooperation between the University of Jena and the University of Budapest, where there was a working group on atheism.[85] Debrecen, Olof Klohr's partner for many years, was also a destination favoured by the universities of Rostock, Jena and later even Halle.[86] An agreement with the University of Krakow also facilitated contacts.[87] Furthermore, contacts were established with the Polish Academy of Sciences by Klügl in 1964[88] and with the Soviet equivalent. Klohr spent two weeks in the Soviet Union in 1963 and two months in 1966.[89] His assistant Almut Häusler also discovered the methods of Soviet scientific atheism.[90] Other trips led to meetings with Bulgarian and Hungarian colleagues,[91] while relations in Yugoslavia and Romania were not very close.[92] Jena researchers published in Russian, Hungarian and Polish, made an effort to learn about the work of their counterparts, and exchanged writings.[93]

In the mid-1960s, the inspiration and initiative for Marxist religious sociology came mainly from Czechoslovakia. The development of scientific atheism in this country has been well studied in recent scholarship (Nešpor 2011; Matějka 2011; Tesař 2019). The Department of Scientific Atheism at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, created following a resolution of the Political Bureau of the Czechoslovak Communist Party on 27 January 1959, provided the framework for new research into religious phenomena, due mainly to the dynamism of its director, Erika Kadlecová. Not much of a theoretician, Kadlecová developed above all empirical research and statistical analysis and acquired a reputation well beyond Czechoslovakia and the socialist countries thanks to a large-scale survey of religiosity in northern Moravia in 1963 (Nešpor 2011, 74; Matějka 2011, 119–120; Kadlecová 1966). Alongside this dynamic and internationally known department, scientific atheism was institutionalised at the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, with Jaroslav Čelko, Jan Biel'čik, Michal Kolárik, Bohumír Kvasnička, Jozef Lamoś, and Peter Prusák (Tesař 2019, 180–181). This group defended a much more conservative approach, not intending to get involved in the ferment of the Prague Spring.

The Chair of Scientific Atheism at the University of Jena claimed to have good relations with both research centres in Prague and Bratislava.[94] Both were represented in Jena for the "First International Colloquium on the Sociology of Religion in Socialist Countries" from 24 to 26 June 1965. Fifteen researchers from Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia attended, and a sixteenth sent a paper. The symposium was introduced by Olof Klohr and the Moscow researchers Levada and Ugrinovich. The largest foreign delegations came from Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, in equal numbers. The aim of the colloquium was, as Klügl put it, above all to strengthen theoretical reflection on the Marxist analysis of religious phenomena. Particular attention was to be paid to the concept of secularisation. The definition of atheism, and with it the object of sociological work, did not meet with consensus: "It was precisely around these statements that a lively discussion took place as to whether one should speak of a sociology of atheism at all, especially since atheism [according to some] is not an independent form of consciousness".[95] If Klohr had had his way, it would have been a "Colloquium on problems of the sociology of atheism and religion in the European socialist countries".[96] The two Soviet speakers, on the other hand, emphasised the study of religion. The themes for subsequent colloquia also included only religion and religiosity in their titles, excluding atheism as a main topic.[97]

Thanks to this Jena initiative, academics working in the sociology of religion, who were a minority in their respective countries (Voříšek 2011, 44; Weinberg 1974, 35, 39, 48, 79–81), created a forum for scientific exchange and cooperation on the scale of the Eastern Bloc. They intended to ensure its continued existence by creating an Advisory Council (*Konsultativrat*) for the Sociology of Religion in the Socialist Countries. It was chaired in its first year by Olof Klohr before Kadlecová took over.[98] The Soviet Union was

represented by Filimonov. Perhaps archives located in today's Russia would enable us to find out the attitude of the main Soviet professors of scientific atheism towards this structure, which was clearly promoted by others. German was the second language of communication alongside Russian; the Jena Chair centralised information and published a new periodical entitled *Sociology of Religion: International Research Reports (Religionssoziologie. Internationale Forschungsberichte*). However, the overwhelming majority of its five issues were supplied by the Jena collective. The Advisory Council was also responsible for organising subsequent colloquia, which were to be held annually. After a brief hesitation between Warsaw, Prague and Moscow, the next colloquium was held in Czechoslovakia from 6 to 9 December 1966, and a third one in Budapest in April 1968.[99] A fourth was due to be held in Moscow in 1969. According to Pawelzik, it did not take place because of a lack of Soviet will (Pawelzik 1994, 83, against Balogh and Fejérdy 2020, 124). The invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968 severely punished sociologists who had supported the reform movement (Mespoulet 2007b, 74), including Erika Kadlecová, Ladislav Prokůpek and Jaroslav Hranička (Dohle 1994, 29; Voříšek 2011; Matějka 2011, 129; Nešpor 2011, 78–79).

Beyond the concrete projects, the institutionalisation of a forum for regular exchange can be interpreted as an attempt to shape an international scientific community specific to the socialist world. This would be important for a young discipline that had little foothold, except in the Soviet Union.[100] The conditions for forming an "epistemic community" could have been favourable because of shared political objectives and values and because of mobility – albeit controlled – between socialist countries. East German science has been much criticised for its lack of professionalism and for phenomena of "incest" and "provincialism" (Jessen 1994, 233). The active search for a higher and additional scale for measuring the quality of research may therefore document a desire to professionalise the young discipline. However, as Godard reminded, "there is nothing self-evident about 'joining forces'" (Godard 2016, 12). The construction of this international scientific community remained, to say the least, incomplete. Political manipulation was a constant threat to scientists (Niederhut 2007), including in their relations with other socialist countries. For the second colloquium, the scientific atheists in Jena received a directive outlining the ideas to be defended. Rather than studying religiosity as was done elsewhere:

> the primary task of Marxist research in the field of atheism is above all to investigate the spread of the materialist-atheist world-view in the GDR, both in terms of its [quantity] and in terms of its quality. […] It is from this point of view that the comrades will talk in Prague.[101]

What was at stake, starting with the second colloquium, was the formation of a common front between the various East German researchers invited to

speak in Prague (Klügl, Masula, Berg and Klohr) and the State Secretariat for Higher Education. The Jena academics were intransigent, even driven by a desire to teach their colleagues how to do their work.[102]

Prior to this, and as early as 1965, there had been talk of coordinating the work for an international comparative survey covering the various socialist countries. It was to focus on young people living in large cities, with uniform methods and questionnaires, under the scientific direction of Erika Kadlecová (Matějka 2011, 120). In the GDR, however, Klohr failed to obtain the necessary authorisations. The survey was banned by the State Secretariat for Higher Education on 15 April 1966.[103] Another major survey carried out by the Jena chair among around 2,000 university students in the spring of 1965 under Berg's direction also gave rise to concern and criticism.[104]

In 1966, the development of sociology within scientific atheism was suddenly called into question. Financial resources were blocked, and discussions began with a number of bodies at the university, the State, the SED and the academic world. The State Secretariat for Higher Education was hostile to the concentration on sociology, tried to redefine scientific atheism as an "essential trait" and not a "philosophical specialism" and stated:

> We do not agree with the establishment of a so-called Marxist 'sociology of religion' [added, then crossed out: as the main direction] in the Chair of Scientific Atheism […] a Chair of Scientific Atheism and not a Chair of 'Marxist Sociology of Religion' was founded.[105]

It ended up setting as the chair's new priority "the atheistic education of young people" or "the atheistic philosophical [*weltanschaulich*] education of young people".[106] This had already been part of the chair's programme in 1963, but Klohr and his team had done little to promote it.[107] Youth policy was at the forefront of the political scene at the time, and initiatives, youth research groups and periodicals multiplied during the 1960s (Braun and Schlegel 2014; Pawelzik 1998; Friedrich 2002; Krenzlin 2000; Wierling 2000). The scientific atheists saw their task primarily as training future secondary school teachers; they wanted to look at textbooks, syllabuses and in-service teacher training and study the "ideological-atheistic penetration" (*weltanschaulich-atheistische Durchdringung*) of various disciplines. Concrete sociological surveys, now focusing on young people, were to complete the scheme. They were perfect examples of the sociological approach developed up to that point. In this way, sociological methods were simply redirected towards a different audience.

Despite its short-lived existence, the Chair of Scientific Atheism at the University of Jena laid the foundations for the development of scientific atheism in the GDR and gave it official, recognised status and visibility. With its strong emphasis on research, in contrast to many areas of Marxism-Leninism, its substantial resources up to 1967 enabled it to break new ground and produce work and reflections on which it would later be

possible to build. The theme of "modern natural sciences and atheism", which was entirely confined to the head-on conflict with religion, was a continuation of Klohr's earlier research, particularly at the University of Rostock, which meant that the symbolic date of the creation of the university chair should not be overestimated. Despite its high profile at the time, the importance of the subject needs to be qualified: On the one hand, there was no development of new ideas compared to the work carried out before 1963; on the other hand, the field was quickly abandoned in favour of the sociology of religion and atheism. With the latter, Olof Klohr had found his main method of practising scientific atheism, and one that would accommodate the successive reorientations imposed on his discipline until 1990. The content could change, but the method returned.

Quoted archives

Federal Archives (BArch)
Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BArch)
Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (BStU)
Thuringia Land Archives – Rudolstadt Public Archives (ThStA Rudolstadt)
Jena University Archives (UAJ)
Protestant Central Archives (EZA)
Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research (BISKF)
Private Collection (PC) Düsing

Quoted periodicals

Das Hochschulwesen
Nauka i Religija
Religionssoziologie. Internationale Forschungsberichte
Sozialistische Universität

Notes

1 BISKF Kaul 12; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/50, p. 10. The Halle centre then abandoned the subject, which was to fall to the Chair of Scientific Atheism (ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 46–55), but this was not implemented.
2 UAJ M 872 (pp. 35–39) and 0783 (pp. 143–161); ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 117, 125; BISKF Kaul 14; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für den Zeitraum Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966.
3 Hermann Ley, Professor of Philosophy at the Humboldt University in Berlin between 1959 and 1977, published a History of Enlightenment and Atheism (*Geschichte der Aufklärung und des Atheismus*) from 1966 onwards, comprising some 5,500 pages in five volumes, which remained unfinished at his death in 1990. See for instance Laitko 2005.

4 Abandonment explained in BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968, p. 5. On this specialisation, see BISKF Kaul 14; UAJ BC 117 Entwurf, Programm des Instituts für Philosophie 1963/1964; UAJ BC 623 Philosophisches Institut: Forschungen und Publikationen; BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Forschungsplan des Instituts für Philosophie; interview with Olof Klohr in *Nauka i religija* 12, 1963.
5 BISKF Kaul 14; BISKF Klohr 314; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 46–55.
6 Interview with Horst Dohle and Joachim Heise, Berlin, 25 November 2015.
7 UAJ M 656/4, pp. 415–419, 422–423.
8 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/21585.
9 UAJ Bestand S Abt. XXV Akte 82 IML, Aufstellung der außerhalb von Forschungsaufträgen laufenden Dissertationen, 4 p.; BISKF Kaul 14 Grundwald, Klohr, Beurteilung der Diplomarbeit, 2 December 1964, and Lehrstuhl für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, Jahresarbeiten im Fernstudium Philosophie; BISKF Klohr 314 Verzeichnis der Jahresarbeitsthemen (vorläufige Fassung), 4. Studienjahr.
10 *Sozialistische Universität*, FSU Jena, 8, 22 April 1965, pp. 4, 6.
11 BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968; BISKF Kaul 14 Einschätzung der Resultate der internationalen wissenschaftlichen Konferenz über "Moderne Naturwissenschaft und Atheismus", draft, p. 1.
12 BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für den Zeitraum Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966, p. 5.
13 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Moderne Naturwissenschaft und Atheismus, Internationale wissenschaftliche Konferenz, p. 1.
14 BISKF Kaul 14 Einschätzung der Resultate der internationalen wissenschaftlichen Konferenz über "Moderne Naturwissenschaft und Atheismus", draft, p. 4.
15 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 93–112; BISKF Kaul 14; UAJ M 872, pp. 35–39; BStU Archiv MfS HA XX Nr. 25163, pp. 5, 6; EZA 107/327 Gesamtkirchliche Forschungsstelle, "Die Aufgaben des neugegründeten Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus in Jena", March 1964.
16 UAJ M 872, pp. 35–39; UAJ BC 623 Klohr, Mende, Volkswirtschaftsplan 1964.
17 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für den Zeitraum Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966; UAJ M 779 (pp. 9–22) and 785 (pp. 127–234); ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727 (pp. 65–83, 131–134) and 818 (pp. 54–63); UAJ BC 117 Entwurf, Programm des Instituts für Philosophie 1963/1964; UAJ BC 144 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Studienjahr 1964/1965; UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967; UAJ BC 623; UAJ BC 628 Entwurf, Perspektivplan der Philosophischen Fakultät der FSU (Schwerpunktplan), [1965]; UAJ BC 635 Besondere Ergebnisse und Vorhaben von Forschungsschwerpunkten, 1965/1966.
18 UAJ BC 117 Entwurf, Programm des Instituts für Philosophie 1963/1964.
19 BISKF Kaul 14.
20 BISKF Kaul 14 Programm zum Forschungsschwerpunkt III./6; BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968.
21 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/468 (pp. 7–8, 13–14) and 2140 (pp. 185–195); UAJ BC 236 Uschmann, invitation, 19 April 1963; an article by Klohr in *Das Hochschulwesen*, 1963.
22 *Sozialistische Universität* 8, 22 April 1965, p. 4.
23 BISKF Klohr 310 and 311.

24 PC Düsing Klohr, Die "Versöhnung" von Theologie und Naturwissenschaft, in: Tendenzen der evangelischen und katholischen Theologie, 1978.
25 BISKF Klohr 96 and 98; see Steinberg n.d.
26 UAJ BC 635 Gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Forschung - Erläuterung der Schwerpunktthemen, 16 March 1966.
27 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960; BISKF Kaul 14; BISKF Klohr 314; UAJ M 872, pp. 35–39; UAJ BC 117 Entwurf, Programm des Instituts für Philosophie 1963/1964; UAJ BC 623; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/200, 727 and 818 (pp. 54–63).
28 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1598, pp. 49–50.
29 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, p. 50.
30 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Programm zum Forschungsschwerpunkt "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" (überarbeiteter Plan - November 1964), p. 2; BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968, p. 6.
31 Examples include a symposium on "socio-empirical methods in the social sciences" involving researchers in scientific atheism (ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1226, p. 89), and a plan showing an interest in sociology and statistical methods as early as 1962 (ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1525, pp. 109–115).
32 Examples in BISKF Kaul 14; UAJ BC 635 Klügl, I. Internationales Colloquium über Religionssoziologie in sozialistischen Ländern, p. 8; Robbe 1966; Klügl 1970.
33 A wealth of examples in BISKF Kaul 14; BISKF Klohr 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 116, 118, 129 and 314; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 74–92.
34 BISKF Klohr 113 Klohr, Beurteilung zu Manfred Eichel, 1 February 1965; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 34–35; Volprich 1969.
35 Examples in BISKF Klohr 109 Heidel, Diplomarbeit, June 1967, pp. 22–23, 46; BStU MfS - HA XX/4 2835 Bd. 2, p. 483.
36 The versions have been preserved in BISKF Kaul 12 and BStU MfS - HA XX/4 2835 Bd. 2, pp. 482–484.
37 BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage: Einschätzung der Ergebnisse, 3 February 1965, p. 3.
38 BISKF Kaul 13 Lutter, Thesen zur Dissertation, July 1965, p. 1.
39 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion, and Lutter, Thesen zur Dissertation, July 1965; Robbe 1966.
40 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion, p. 8.
41 BISKF Kaul 14 Anlage zum Formblatt 1510, Arbeitsplan; Klohr 1966b.
42 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion, p. 12.
43 Same idea in BArch DR 1/3678/a, pp. 371–374; UAJ BC 635 Klügl, I. Internationales Colloquium, pp. 8–9.
44 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 54–73; BISKF Klohr 110 Geier, Die katholische Kirche, presents therefore a map with economic and a map with religious activities.
45 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion, p. 10.
46 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien über die Entwicklung atheistischen Denkens im Bezirk Gera, p. 2.
47 BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage: Einschätzung der Ergebnisse, 3 February 1965, p. 2.
48 Among the wealth of examples, see BISKF Kaul 12; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/468, pp. 34, 36–46; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 52–53.
49 BISKF Kaul 13.
50 BStU MfS - HA XX/4 2835 Bd. 2, pp. 482–484.

51 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 10–17.
52 For a summary of these assertions, repeated time and again, see BISKF Kaul 13 Lutter, Thesen zur Dissertation, July 1965, and Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 54–73; BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage: Einschätzung der Ergebnisse, 3 February 1965.
53 BISKF Klohr 109 Heidel, Diplomarbeit, June 1967, pp. 15, 53.
54 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien über die Entwicklung atheistischen Denkens im Bezirk Gera.
55 BISKF Kaul 14 Masula, Klohr, Protokoll der Verteidigung von Hans-Joachim Lutter, p. 2.
56 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 42–51.
57 BISKF Kaul 13 Lutter, Thesen zur Dissertation, July 1965, p. 4.
58 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien über die Entwicklung atheistischen Denkens im Bezirk Gera.
59 BStU MfS - HA XX/4 2835 Bd. 2, p. 482.
60 The same phenomenon existed, of course, also elsewhere, see for instance Peris 1998, 7.
61 See for instance BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien über die Entwicklung atheistischen Denkens im Bezirk Gera, and Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage: Einschätzung der Ergebnisse, 3 February 1965; Volprich 1969.
62 Examples in Robbe 1966; BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien über die Entwicklung atheistischen Denkens im Bezirk Gera.
63 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion, p. 2.
64 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien über die Entwicklung atheistischen Denkens im Bezirk Gera; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 18–33, 42–51, 54–73; BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage: Einschätzung der Ergebnisse, 3 February 1965.
65 BISKF Klohr 109 Heidel, Diplomarbeit, June 1967.
66 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 18–35, 42–51, 54–73; BISKF Kaul 14.
67 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion, p. 7.
68 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 10–17.
69 BISKF Kaul 13 Gottschling, Thesen zur Dissertation, October 1969, p. 1.
70 Klohr 1966b, 21, 25; BArch DR 1/3678/a, pp. 371–374. See also Hoffmann 2000, 53–55.
71 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Programm zum Forschungsschwerpunkt "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" (überarbeiteter Plan - November 1964), p. 1; BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968, pp. 5–6.
72 BISKF Kaul 13; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung; Gottschling 1970.
73 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion, p. 16.
74 Klohr 1966b, 27. BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien, also includes eminently political criteria.
75 Some of the talks of the Prague conference and a summary have been published in *Religionssoziologie. Internationale Forschungsberichte* 3, 1967.
76 BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für das Jahr 1966; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 46–55.
77 See for instance ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 34–35.
78 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion, pp. 6, 14.
79 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien, p. 3.
80 Klohr 1966b, 18–19; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 18–33.

81 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien, p. 11.
82 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 93–112; UAJ BC 962 FSU, Rektorat Ausland, to UPL Jena; BISKF Kaul 14 Untitled document on international contacts; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … für den Zeitraum Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966.
83 UAJ M 0809, pp. 145, 162–164, 232–236; UAJ BC 962 and 966; BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 (Internationale Beziehungen); ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727 (pp. 93–112) and 1894 (p. 99); BISKF Kaul 12 Klohr to Müller, 18 March 1965; BISKF Kaul 14 Untitled document on international contacts; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966.
84 BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968; UAJ M 0809, pp. 162–164; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 93–112; BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Lehrstuhl für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, Internationale Beziehungen.
85 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 93–112; BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Lehrstuhl für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, Internationale Beziehungen; BISKF Kaul 14 Untitled document on international contacts; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966.
86 Last and Schaefer 1992, A37; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1894, p. 4; statement of Viola Schubert-Lehnhardt, 26 April 2017.
87 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1894, pp. 14–15.
88 In addition to the previous documents: UAJ BC 320 Folgende Wissenschaftler besuchten in den Jahren 1963/1964 Krakow, 6 October 1964; UAJ BC 962 Rektorat/Ausland, Betr. Studienreisen, 6 February 1964; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1232 (p. 29), 1591 (p. 1), 1894 (p. 117) and 1962 (pp. 36–40).
89 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Klohr, Die wissenschaftliche Arbeit auf den Gebieten des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus und der marxistischen Religionskritik in der Sowjetunion, and Klohr to Pfoh, 25 April 1966; UAJ BC 962 Betr: Studienreise, 5 March 1963; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/50 (p. 5) and 1894 (pp. 65–66); BISKF Klohr 314 Klohr, Bericht über die Studienreise in die Sowjetunion, 10–26 September 1963.
90 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Häusler, Bericht über eine 14-tägige Studienreise in die UdSSR.
91 See the previously cited documents and ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 131–134.
92 See the previously cited documents. An impression of reticence emerges from BISKF Kaul 12 Werschky to Klohr, 4 July 1968.
93 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion has a summary in Russian. Publications are detailed in ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 106–112; BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Lehrstuhl für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, Internationale Beziehungen.
94 In addition to the previously cited documents on international relations, see BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966; UAR SML/91 Bielčik, Studienprogramm, [1966].
95 UAJ BC 635 Klügl, I. Internationales Colloquium über Religionssoziologie in sozialistischen Ländern, p. 4. On this conference see also BISKF Kaul 14 I. Internationales Colloquium; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für den Zeitraum Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 93–112; Klohr 1966a.
96 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1232, pp. 70–73.
97 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, I. Internationales Kolloquium über Religionssoziologie in sozialistischen Ländern.
98 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, I. Internationales Kolloquium über Religionssoziologie; BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960; UAJ M 0809, pp. 177–178; BISKF Kaul 14

Untitled document on international relations; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966.

99 And not Sofia, as envisaged in UAJ M 0809, pp. 232–236.

100 On the importance of international scientific unions, see for instance Niederhut 2007, 158–160, 317.

101 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Ulinski, Pfoh, Direktive für das Auftreten der Genossen Prof. Klohr, Dr. Berg und Dr. Klügl während des II. Internationalen Kolloquium für Religionssoziologie in Prag (Dezember 1967), 21 November 1966. The document uses "quality" twice, obviously a mistake as made clear by a neighbouring document from which this phrase is quoted and that says "quantity" and "quality".

102 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Klohr to Engelstätter, 11 December 1966.

103 UAJ BC 639 Anlage zu Formblatt 1510, Arbeitsplan, p. 1; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/468, pp. 79–84; UAJ BC 635 Betr: Religionssoziologische Forschung unter ca. 600 Oberschülern, and Klohr to Pfoh, 29 April 1966; BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960; BISKF Kaul 12 Hörnig to Klohr, 8 September 1965, and Klohr to Hörnig, 21 September 1965; BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Aktennotiz.

104 UAJ BC 635 Betr: Religionssoziologische Forschung unter ca. 600 Oberschülern; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/468 (pp. 47–49), 670 (p. 3) and 727 (pp. 84–86); UAJ BC 008 Bernhardt to Drefahl, 3 March 1966.

105 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Abteilung Philosophie/Geschichte, Stellungnahme zu dem Entwurf "Perspektivische Grundrichtungen der Arbeit des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus … bis 1970".

106 BISKF Kaul 14; BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960; UAJ M 872, pp. 40–41, 45–48; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/50 (pp. 10–15), 468 (pp. 72–76) and 727 (pp. 1–14, 129–130a); BISKF Klohr 314 Entwurf, Perspektivische Hauptaufgaben des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus … bis 1970, 1966.

107 Interview with Klohr in *Nauka i religija* 12, 1963; UAJ M 872, pp. 35–39.

References

Bafoil, François. 1991. "A quoi servait le sociologie en RDA." *Revue française de sociologie* 32 (2): 263–284.

Balogh, Margit and András Fejérdy. 2020. "Freethought, atheism and anticlericalism in 20th-century Hungary." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 111–136. London/New York: Routledge.

Basauri Ziuzina, Anna Mariya and Oleg Kyselov. 2020. "Atheism in the context of the secularization and desecularization of Ukraine in the 20th century." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 284–309. London/New York: Routledge.

Bauquet, Nicolas. 2013. *Pouvoir, Église et société en Hongrie communiste, 1944–1964. Histoire intérieure d'une domination*. PhD thesis, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris.

Bobineau, Olivier and Sébastien Tank-Storper. 2012. *Sociologie des religions*. Paris: Armand Colin.

Braun, Karl-Heinz and Uta Schlegel. 2014. *Walter Friedrich und die Jugendforschung in der DDR. Autobiografische und wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Dialoge*. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren.

Brown, Callum G. 2013. "The twentieth century." In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 229–244. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brunnbauer, Ulf, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel. 2011. "Introduction: Sociology and ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe under state socialism." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe: Scientific Self-Description in State Socialist Countries*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 1–27. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Bubík, Tomáš and David Václavík. 2020. "Freethinkers and atheists in the Czech Lands in the 20th century." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 58–83. London/New York: Routledge.

Davie, Grace. 2007. *The Sociology of Religion*. London: SAGE Publications.

Dobson, Miriam. 2015. "The social scientist meets the 'believer': Discussions of God, the afterlife, and communism in the mid-1960s." *Slavic Review* 74 (1): 79–103.

Dohle, Horst. 1994. "Die Rolle der Staatsämtertagungen für die Kirchenpolitik der realsozialistischen Staaten." In *Staat-Kirche-Beziehungen in der DDR und anderen ehemals realsozialistischen Ländern 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Joachim Heise, 23–32. Berlin: Evangelische Akademie Berlin-Brandenburg.

Duller, Matthias and Mikołaj Pawlak. 2017. "Introduction: Varieties of sociology under State socialism." *Stan Rzeczy* 13 (2): 7–18.

Friedrich, Walter. 2002. "Gründung und Entwicklung des Zentralinstituts für Jugendforschung in den sechziger Jahren." In *Auf dem Weg zur "Produktivkraft Wissenschaft"*, edited by Clemens Burrichter and Gerald Diesener, 213–223. Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt GmbH.

Godard, Simon. 2016. "Une autre histoire du CAEM: un milieu transnational d'experts." Unpublished talk at a seminary "Mondes communistes, mondes soviétiques", Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, Paris.

Gorski, Philip S. and Ateş Altınordu. 2008. "After secularization?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 55–85.

Gottschling, Gerhard. 1970. *Die Herausbildung und Verbreitung weltanschaulich-atheistischen Denkens unter Studenten*. PhD thesis, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena.

Hazdovac Bajić, Nikolina, Dinka Marinović Jerolimov and Branko Ančić. 2020. "Anticlericalism, nonreligiosity and atheism in Croatia." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 33–57. London/New York: Routledge.

Hoffmann, Alfred. 2000. *"Mit Gott einfach fertig". Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Leipzig: St. Benno.

Jessen, Ralph. 1994. "Professoren im Sozialismus. Aspekte des Strukturwandels der Hochschullehrerschaft in der Ulbricht-Ära." In *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, edited by Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka and Hartmut Zwahr, 217–253. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

Kadlecová, Erika. 1966. "Kirche und Gesellschaft. Ergebnisse einer soziologischen Erhebung in der CSSR." In *Disputation zwischen Christen und Marxisten*, edited by Martin Stöhr, 235–253. Munich: Chr. Kaiser.

Kiope, Māra, Inese Runce and Anita Stasulane. 2020. "The trajectories of atheism and secularization in Latvia. From the German Enlightenment to contemporary secularity." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 137–154. London/New York: Routledge.

Klimova, Svetlana M. and Elena S. Molostova. 2013. "'Scientific atheism' in action. Soviet sociology of religion as an agent of Marxist-Atheist propaganda from the 1960s to the 1980s." *Forum Philosophicum* 18 (2): 169–190.

Klohr, Olof. 1958a. *Naturwissenschaft, Religion und Kirche*. Berlin: Dietz.

Klohr, Olof. 1958b. *Über den Gegensatz zwischen Naturwissenschaft und Religion*. Schriftenreihe für den jungen Sozialisten, Serie dialektischer Materialismus, Beilage zur Zeitschrift *Junge Generation* 23, edited by Zentralrat der FDJ. Editions Junge Welt.

Klohr, Olof. 1962. "Oppositionelle Strömungen im Katholizismus der Gegenwart." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 10 (12): 1494–1507.

Klohr, Olof, ed. 1964. *Moderne Naturwissenschaft und Atheismus*. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Klohr, Olof, with Johann Klügl and Wolfgang Masula, ed. 1966a. *Religion und Atheismus heute. Ergebnisse und Aufgaben marxistischer Religionssoziologie*. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Klohr, Olof. 1966b. "Theoretische Grundsätze und Aufgaben der Soziologie der Religion." In *Religion und Atheismus heute. Ergebnisse und Aufgaben marxistischer Religionssoziologie*, edited by Olof Klohr, 13–32. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Klohr, Olof. 1978. *Marxismus-Leninismus, Atheismus, Religion*. Rostock-Warnemünde: Ingenieurhochschule für Seefahrt.

Klügl, Johann. 1970. "Die protestantische Ethik und die Entstehung des Kapitalismus. Zur Kritik der Religionssoziologie Max Webers." *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität* 19 (4): 591–596.

Korch, Helmut. 1964. "Der Atheismus im naturwissenschaftlichen Denken." In *Moderne Naturwissenschaft und Atheismus*, edited by Olof Klohr, 13–24. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Krenzlin, Leonore. 2000 (1991). "Vom Jugendkommuniqué zur Dichterschelte." In *Kahlschlag: Das 11. Plenum des ZK der SED 1965, Studien und Dokumente,* edited by Günther Agde, 154–164. Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch.

Laitko, Hubert. 2002. "Wissenschaftspolitik und Wissenschaftsverständnis in der DDR - Façetten [sic] der fünfziger Jahre." In *Auf dem Weg zur "Produktivkraft Wissenschaft"*, edited by Clemens Burrichter and Gerald Diesener, 107–139. Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt GmbH.

Laitko, Hubert. 2005. "In memoriam Hermann Ley." In *Denkversuche: DDR-Philosophie in den 60er Jahren*, edited by Hans-Christoph Rauh and Peter Ruben, 367–378. Berlin: Ch. Links.

Last, Bärbel and Hans-Dieter Schaefer with Renate Gralki. 1992. *Die Wissenschaftsbeziehungen der Hochschulen der ehemaligen DDR mit Osteuropa. Kompendium*. Berlin: Verlag Constructiv.

Marquardt, Bernhard. 1985. *Soziologie und Politik an der AdW der DDR: Fallstudie zur Entscheidungsvorbereitung der Politik der SED*. Erlangen: Institut für Gesellschaft und Wissenschaft.

Masula, Wolfgang. 1966. *Der Kirchenaustritt in Deutschland - eine religionsstatistische und religionssoziologische Studie*. PhD thesis, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena.

Matějka, Ondřej. 2011. "Between the academy and power. Czech Marxist sociology of religion (1954–1970)." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 107–132. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Mergel, Thomas. 2012. "Soziale Ungleichheit als Problem der DDR-Soziologie." In *Das Soziale ordnen. Sozialwissenschaften und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheit im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Christiane Reinecke and Thomas Mergel, 307–336. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

Mespoulet, Martine. 2007a. "Quelle sociologie derrière le 'rideau de fer'?" *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 16: 3–10.

Mespoulet, Martine. 2007b. "La 'renaissance' de la sociologie en URSS (1958–1972). Une voie étroite entre matérialisme historique et 'recherches sociologiques concrètes'." *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 16: 57–86.

Meyer, Hansgünter. 1994. "Soziologie in der DDR. Erfahrungen mit einer erodierten Disziplin." *Hochschule Ost* 4 (*5*): 114–122.

Nešpor, Zdeněk R. 2011. "Czech sociology of religion under the communist regime 1948–1989." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 59–86. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Niederhut, Jens. 2007. *Wissenschaftsaustausch im Kalten Krieg. Die ostdeutschen Naturwissenschaftler und der Westen*. Cologne: Böhlau.

Pawelzik, Ralf. 1994. "Der Lehrstuhl für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus an der Universität Jena." In *Staat-Kirche-Beziehungen in der DDR und anderen ehemals realsozialistischen Ländern 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Joachim Heise, 81–86. Berlin: Evangelische Akademie Berlin-Brandenburg.

Pawelzik, Ralf. 1998. "Zum Säkularisierungsprozeß der DDR-Jugend." In *"Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung…" Jugend im Spannungsfeld von Staat und Kirche in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Horst Dähn and Helga Gotschlich, 184–192. Berlin: Metropol.

Peris, Daniel. 1998. *Storming the Heavens. The Soviet League of the Militant Godless*. Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell University Press.

Peter, Lothar. 1997. "Autonomiedefizit: Soziologische Theorie in der DDR. Kommentar zum Beitrag von Vera Sparschuh und Johannes Weiß." In *Soziologie und Soziologen im Übergang: Beiträge zur Transformation der außeruniversitären soziologischen Forschung in Ostdeutschland*, edited by Hans Bertram, 341–345. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Pollack, Detlef. 1994. *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft: Zum Wandel der gesellschaftlichen Lage der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.

Pollack, Detlef. 2015. "Religionssoziologie in Deutschland seit 1945: Tendenzen - Kontroversen – Konsequenzen." *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 67: 433–474.

Remmel, Atko and Meelis Friedenthal. 2020. "Atheism and freethought in Estonian culture." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 84–110. London/New York: Routledge.

Rendtorff, Trutz. 1993. "Unkirchlichkeit? Historisch-theologische Überlegungen zu einem unklaren Begriff aus Anlaß des Endes der DDR." In *Deutschlands Weg in die Moderne. Politik, Gesellschaft und Kultur im 19. Jahrhundert*, edited by Wolfgang Hartwig and Harm-Hinrich Brandt, 83–94. Munich: C.H. Beck.

Robbe, Martin. 1966. "Marxismus und Religionsforschung." *Internationales Jahrbuch für Religionssoziologie* 2: 157–182.

Schimunek, Franz-Peter. 2002. *Die unheilige Neugier.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Schmidt-Lux, Thomas. 2008. *Wissenschaft als Religion: Szientismus im ostdeutschen Säkularisierungsprozess*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.

Schulz, Hans-Jürgen. 1994. "Recht gut dokumentiert - tendenziös kommentiert." *Hochschule Ost* 3 (2): 125–131.

Simmel, Georg. 1908 (1958). *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014. "The ticket to the Soviet Soul: Science, religion, and the spiritual crisis of late Soviet atheism." *The Russian Review* 73: 71–97.

Smolkin, Victoria. 2018. *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty. A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Sparschuh, Vera and Ute Koch. 1997. *Sozialismus und Soziologie. Die Gründergeneration der DDR-Soziologie. Versuch einer Konturierung*. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

Sparschuh, Vera and Johannes Weiß. 1997. "Soziologische Theorie in der DDR." In *Soziologie und Soziologen im Übergang: Beiträge zur Transformation der außeruniversitären soziologischen Forschung in Ostdeutschland*, edited by Hans Bertram, 305–339. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Steinberg, Heiner. n.d. "Gegenwärtige protestantische Theologie und Naturwissenschaft." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/11: 1–80.

Steiner, Helmut. 1997. "Aufbruch, Defizite und Leistungen der DDR-Soziologie: die 60er Jahre." In *Soziologie und Soziologen im Übergang: Beiträge zur Transformation der außeruniversitären soziologischen Forschung in Ostdeutschland*, edited by Hans Bertram, 223–262. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Tesař, Jan. 2019. *The History of Scientific Atheism. A Comparative Study of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union (1954–1991)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Thrower, James. 1983. *Marxist-Leninist "Scientific Atheism" and the Study of Religion and Atheism in the UdSSR*. Berlin/New York/Amsterdam: Mouton Publisher.

Turcescu, Lucian. 2020. "Romania. Between freethought, atheism and religion." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 207–232. London/New York: Routledge.

Ugrinowitsch, Dmitri. 1966. "Methodologische Fragen der marxistischen Religionssoziologie." In *Religion und Atheismus heute. Ergebnisse und Aufgaben marxistischer Religionssoziologie*, edited by Olof Klohr, 39–48. Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften.

Vogel, Heinrich. 1970. *Naturwissenschaft und Weltanschauung*. Edited by Bezirksvorstand der Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse Neubrandenburg.

Volprich, Elenor. 1969. *Zu einigen theoretischen und empirischen Problemen der Weltanschauung als Ausdruck der ideologischen Position der Persönlichkeit. Eine soziologische Studie über den weltanschaulichen Entwicklungsstand von Hochschulingenieurstudenten*. Dissertation A thesis, Technical University Dresden.

Vořísek, Michael. 2011. "Sociology in Soviet Europe. Perspectives on the historiography of sociology and its problems." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 29–58. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Weinberg, Elizabeth Ann. 1974. *The Development of Sociology in the Soviet Union*. London: Routledge.

Wierling, Dorothee. 2000. "Erzieher und Erzogene. Zu Generationenprofilen in der DDR der 60er Jahre." In *Dynamische Zeiten: Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften*, edited by Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammers, 624–641. Hamburg: Christians Verlag.

Wohlrab-Sahr, Monika, Uta Karstein and Thomas Schmidt-Lux, with Anja Frank and Christine Schaumburg. 2009. *Forcierte Säkularität. Religiöser Wandel und Generationendynamik im Osten Deutschlands*. Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus.

3 Scientific atheists as actors of atheisation in the 1960s

The "reconstruction of the university scholar's profession" (*Neukonstruktion des Hochschullehrerberuf*) in eastern Germany between 1945/1946 and 1968/1969, analysed by the historian Ralph Jessen (Jessen 1999), was based on the ideal of a science that did not claim to be objective but "partisan" (*parteilich*), in line with the interests of the party in power, and applied, with a practical aim, in the service of societal transformation. These academics were all members of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). They studied what their detractors called "ideological" subjects, or "social sciences" (*Gesellschaftswissenschaften*, not *Sozialwissenschaften*) in GDR jargon, and had a dual role as observers and participants in social change. As a result, they have often been criticised as being "not scientists, but Party workers" (Voigt and Gries 1994, 54), "ideological functionaries" (Batygin and Deviatko quoted in Mink 2017, 23) and "propagandists" (Ploenus 2007). Their work is said to have been "widely characterised by propaganda", its sole purpose being to legitimise the regime (Weber 2003, 17). In the case of scientific atheism, the strong link with propaganda – in this case, atheist propaganda – even led Tomáš Bubík, David Václavík, Atko Remmel and Jan Tesař to equate the two (Bubík, Václavík and Remmel 2020, 321–322; Tesař 2019, 123, 311).

This link was undeniable from the outset. One need only think of the Institute of Scientific Atheism in Moscow, which, when it was founded in 1964, had two departments, one devoted to scientific research and the other to practical aspects, claiming from the beginning that propaganda and education were an integral part of the new discipline. However, the ways of serving the Party and the communist project were not limited to propaganda. Conversely, scientific atheists could not monopolise all facets of atheist propaganda. In all the countries where scientific atheism took root, it was part of a set of actors and responsibilities, with a division of tasks and roles. This is what Victoria Smolkin called the "atheist establishment" (Smolkin 2018). In the Soviet Union, there is evidence of difficulties and frustrations in this division (Dobson 2015, 101; Thrower 1983; Smolkin 2018, 145–146). In the end, the historian Jan Tesař distinguished two "thought styles", in Ludwik Fleck's terms, talking about the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. In his

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322-4

analysis, the "exoteric thought style" designates the development of ideas in a discipline such as scientific atheism, while the "esoteric thought style" concerns their inclusion and dissemination in the wider social and cultural context (Tesař 2019). This division of roles within the "atheist establishment" varied from country to country, with positions chosen or imposed that need to be analysed.

In doing so, it should be emphasised from the beginning that the East German scientific atheists in no way saw themselves as victims of a restrictive policy. For the most part, they felt no contradiction in being scientists and serving the Party at the same time. Or, as a document from the Rostock Institute of Philosophy put it in 1962: "We are a scientific Party institute".[1] It did not matter whether they were formally attached to an SED establishment or a public university. Concepts such as *Eigen-Sinn* (Alf Lüdtke, a concept often translated by "stubbornness"), "resistance" (*Resistenz*), "opposition" (*Widerstand*), "dissidence" (*Dissidenz*), "oppression" (*Unterdrückung*), "adaptation" (*Anpassung*) and "instrumentalisation" (*Instrumentalisierung*), which met wide interest in questioning the position of academics in relation to politics under Nazi and later communist rule, do not offer much in the way of keys for studying the group under discussion here (see already Jessen and John 2005, 14–15). This type of concept indeed continues to assume two groups with unequal power facing each other. It presupposes that the "dominant" propose a meaning that the "dominated" appropriate, subvert, adopt or reject. Often, the former are simply referred to as "the Party" or "the SED", more rarely as "the State", or even "the system" that dictates what academics should study.[2] But a party, even the SED, did not act as an individual. It was not a monolithic block but was riven by opposition and controversy. Its members included academics, at least specialists in Marxism-Leninism and therefore in scientific atheism. This fact, though sometimes explicitly stated (e.g. in Sparschuh and Koch 1997, 31), often remained outside the reasoning. Victoria Smolkin has called for emphasis to be placed on internal discussions within the Soviet apparatus (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014); Michel Christian has highlighted individual trajectories within the communist parties (Christian and Droit 2005, 118–133); and Emmanuel Droit has argued for a "socio-history of the Stasi" and a "reconsideration of the monolithic nature of institutions of domination" (Droit 2009, 20).

Internal discussions and negotiations did take place, also involving the scientific atheists. At the end of the 1950s in the GDR, they were heard to say: "We are a Party institute".[3] But Olof Klohr at least once spoke of "cooperation with the Party", a phrase castigated "as if this were not a Party institute!".[4] Finding one's place as a scientific atheist was no easy task. All the more since there was hardly a model to replicate, as atheisation mechanisms varied greatly between countries in the socialist Bloc. Recent research is increasingly showing that a communist government did not necessarily go hand in hand with an active desire, nor with the necessary means, to push the population towards atheism.[5] The GDR lacked several means of

atheisation well established in other socialist countries. The reasons for this remain to be examined, for instance, any attempts to expand the "atheist establishment" (Smolkin 2018), negotiations between actors, and possible resistance encountered by the scientific atheists in the East German context. As it stands, their commitment to the atheisation of society can be broken down into three aspects, corresponding to their activities as propagandists, trainers and experts.

The scholars' involvement in propaganda inside the university and among the population

In addition to teaching, and even before doing research, a scholar in East German Marxism-Leninism had to be in regular contact with a population whose "socialist consciousness" needed to be advanced. For a group of academics, contact with students was a natural opportunity to share their favourite subjects, to contribute to the influence of their discipline and, in this case, to spread atheism as they understood it. The staff of the Chair of Scientific Atheism therefore tried to introduce the theme of religion and atheism into the various courses and programmes of study.[6] In addition to the courses themselves, which had a very limited audience, Klohr had the opportunity to address students from various faculties at one-off events, often on more general themes or linked to current political events.[7] It is difficult to assess how Klohr's work was perceived by students. A report describes them as interested in issues relating to religion and atheism.[8] There is evidence of several controversies with Christian students in the 1960s.[9] Pastor Klaus-Peter Hertzsch, then at the University of Jena, later stated that "as a student pastor, I had no contact with Mr Klohr. We were too much of a 'collective non-person' for the State" (Hertzsch 2005, 46). It is true that after some hesitation, Olof Klohr refused invitations by various Christian groups and East German pastors, declaring "that it is not at all part of my duties as head of a scientific and State institution to hold discussions with pastors in Church institutions".[10] Nevertheless, at the University of Jena, there is evidence of at least one "fight night" between Klohr and Hertzsch, which attracted a large number of students (Ploenus 2008, 373; Hertzsch 2005). As a general rule, however, as far as can be ascertained, Klohr preferred to steer clear of the dialogue between Marxists and Christians that was developing in the Czech lands at the time and on an international level thanks to the Paulus-Gesellschaft (Guigo-Patzelt 2022). The East German scientific atheists did not conduct lengthy interviews with believers like in the Soviet Union, and there was no forum for debate where believers could also have their say like the Soviet newspaper *Nauka i religija* (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014).

Thus, East German scholars very much stuck to traditional conference formats and discussion groups in academic settings or with carefully chosen partner organisations. For a more established academic audience in Jena, questions relating to scientific atheism were introduced into various

colloquia, even giving rise to a controversy with a theologian in front of specialists from different disciplines in 1965.[11] In 1966, the Chair of Scientific Atheism was asked to organise an event on "20 years of SED policy towards religious communities", and in 1967, a conference on "The decline of religion and attachment to the Church in the USSR from 1917 to 1967" given by Professor Chakhnovich from Leningrad.[12]

All higher education establishments hosted many training courses, and all Party members at the university, young and old, students, academics and employees of all occupations, had to attend the "Party training year" (*Parteilehrjahr*). At Jena University, the "Colloquium Jenense" was aimed at all academics, including those who were not members of the SED. Young researchers, whether doctoral candidates or habilitation candidates, were already required to undergo compulsory training in Marxism-Leninism on pain of not being able to defend their work. At the end of 1967, this system was supplemented by a "Marxist-Leninist evening school for university teachers", which offered an intensive immersion course for the most senior academics. As for students, they were still the target of the SED's youth organisation, *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ).[13] Running this system on a day-to-day basis was a huge task, generating hundreds of hours of work for those responsible for leading the various conferences, training courses and discussions. As Michael Ploenus pointed out,

> the [Marxism-Leninsm] section had [...] the largest share in its realisation. Doctoral seminars and circle discussion groups alone accounted for an additional 650 hours in 1970, and 50 hours of evening classes had to be completed in addition to other duties.
>
> (Ploenus 2007, 238)

Colleagues of the Institute of Philosophy also gave their time. From 1962 onwards, Olof Klohr, Lange and Johann Klügl ran study circles on Marxism-Leninism.[14] Over the years, the training courses brought the specialists in scientific atheism into contact with mathematicians, botanists, zoologists, microbiologists, doctors, paediatricians and ophthalmologists, literary scholars and theologians, as well as people from the Faculty of Sports Education and the Zeiss optical company.[15]

However, the Chair of Scientific Atheism was not represented on the bodies responsible for designing the activities. It has to be said that despite the well-known existence of the specialised chair – the only one in the GDR – atheism was not a priority in any of the programmes at Jena. The moderator did not have the liberty to choose the themes; therefore, even researchers in scientific atheism did not necessarily speak on their own research subject. On rare occasions, they did address religion and atheism. In 1966, Klohr presented a paper on "Atheism - Christianity - National Politics" at two meetings, and four other members of the Institute of Philosophy spoke at a meeting on the same subject.[16] Also in 1966, a round table was held on

"The Party - Atheism - Religion" in front of around 40 members of the SED, presumably including Klohr.[17] In February or March, a conference by Klohr on "New aspects of scientific atheism" was planned.[18] The audience for these events was always limited to SED members. For students, the FDJ offered to organise a debate and a lecture on philosophical problems relating to the relationship between the natural sciences and atheism.[19]

While specialists in scientific atheism did not necessarily raise the issue, other academics sometimes did so and even stressed the importance of atheism for the education of students.[20] Atheism was at times hotly debated in the SED's "GO [*Grundorganisation*] Philosophen I" basic unit, which included the researchers of the scientific atheism chair.[21] A December 1966 meeting is worth mentioning because the report shows that questions relating to religious phenomena – believing scientists, *Jugendweihe*, and relations between Party, State and Church – were raised by specialists in other fields. Indeed, the unit in question included Slavists, historians, psychologists, physical education specialists, Germanists and Anglicists.[22] At least these colleagues had the opportunity to hear the expert opinions of the scientific atheists.

Beyond the university, a vast field awaited those who wanted to contribute to atheist education, as the rest of the population was by no means considered to have already attained a sufficient level of "socialist consciousness" (Wierling 2000). Academics were expected to go to other educational establishments, companies, schools and districts to work hand in hand with mass organisations and the organs of the SED and the State.[23] According to a document probably dating from 1963, the University of Jena was appointed responsible for providing lecturers in 3 of the 15 East German districts.[24] "Links with practice" and "partners from practice" (*Praxisverbindungen*, *Praxispartner*) were among the categories expected in reports on their work. As Mestrup explained, the university and its members were seen as beneficiaries of the environment; housing, infrastructure, cultural activities and so on were at their disposal. In return, they were obliged to provide services in a variety of forms, depending on the university's disciplines and resources (Mestrup 2007).

This expectation was not born in the 1960s. From the end of the 1950s, the researchers Klohr had brought together around atheism at the University of Rostock travelled the country giving lectures, publishing articles in the press and talking on the radio. Klohr even dreamt of making a film entitled "Superstition". The majority of their interventions concerned the field of "religion, the Church and superstition", with only topical political themes featuring more prominently. The preferred partner for this fieldwork was the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge (*Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse*, also called Urania, see Schmidt-Lux 2008). Other activities outside the university were carried out in cooperation with the FDJ youth organisation, the SED, Party schools and the *Jugendweihe* committee. At Jena in the 1960s, the collective of the Chair of Scientific Atheism also fully embraced this requirement to be useful outside

the university. "Under the leadership of Prof. Dr. O. Klohr, the staff thus took on the obligation [...] to contribute to the dialectical-materialistic education of the students and beyond that of the population, without offending the religious feelings of believers".[25] Their involvement as "circle" leaders easily extended to businesses, residential areas, and even to some SED leaderships in the surrounding circumscription.[26] Olof Klohr gave lectures to employees in part of the VEB Carl Zeiss company, from which his collective obtained valuable technical assistance for its sociological research[27] – a limited but positive example of "socialist cooperation". The scientific atheists sometimes raised questions on topics such as "Natural science - scientific world-view and religion" and "What is the meaning of our lives?". Unfortunately, it is impossible to know to what extent.[28] The SED's regional leadership organised meetings for various sections of the intelligentsia with members of the Friedrich Schiller University, at which the Church, religion and even the Chair of Scientific Atheism were sometimes mentioned.[29]

Apart from the intelligentsia, the people of Jena were invited to attend a programme of courses for students from all faculties[30] and benefitted from the lectures of Olof Klohr and his colleagues. Statistics do not always distinguish between scientific, popular or propaganda lectures and media appearances. However, Klohr subordinated this request to political expediency and knew how to refuse.[31] Even without articles in the press, the members of the Institute of Philosophy had 227 lectures to their credit in 1965; Klohr's share amounted to 35 (11 abroad or at international conferences).[32] Once again, not all the lectures given outside the scientific conferences dealt with atheism or religious issues. But this was on purpose. Indeed, Olof Klohr argued against concentrating too exclusively on specialities and advocated: "The social scientist must be required to take his own stand on the fundamental political issues of our time. Withdrawal to the specialised field is no longer appropriate to the tasks".[33] The members of the Chair of Scientific Atheism therefore also spoke on other themes of Marxist-Leninist philosophy and current political events.[34] For example, a list of themes found in the archives includes ten titles relating to atheism or religion out of 29.[35] For occasional lectures to a wide audience, lecturers were given a certain amount of freedom to propose subjects within their area of expertise. In 1966, for example, they included a whole series of questions on atheism and religion when mobilising for elections.[36] According to figures provided by the Chair of Scientific Atheism, in 1966, 68 lectures and articles for the general public focused on their main area of research, compared with 73 on more general philosophical questions (14 and 46, respectively, in 1967).[37]

Given these figures, it is hardly surprising that the obligation to propagandise the population was sometimes felt to be a heavy duty and gave rise to tensions. These tensions are reflected in statements such as: "The institute management will ensure that all employees are deployed as evenly as possible".[38] The time-consuming nature of these tasks was well known. Also, Olof Klohr was formally forbidden from indulging in these activities without

express authorisation during a sabbatical in 1964–1965.[39] Academics offered their services less than they received requests.[40] The Director of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, whose members were naturally in great demand and even more so, in his view, because of the unwillingness of the historians, complained that not everyone was sufficiently responsive and that the work was not shared out fairly.[41]

Besides these dysfunctions, which were annoying for those concerned, several analyses from the mid-1960s acknowledged that the influence of social science academics in the region still needed to be improved. At the Friedrich Schiller University Institute of Philosophy, the "permanent practice relationships" (*ständige Praxisbeziehungen*) box remained empty in the 1966 report,[42] and the Department of Dialectical and Historical Materialism was tasked with drawing up concrete proposals.[43] As to the efficiency of such academic or public lectures and discussion groups, little can be said. Generally speaking, as Borowik, Ančić and Tyrała put it, "we do not know how the atheism as experienced by people living under the Communist regime was understood" (2013, 635). Smolkin made the same point: "We still know very little about the lived experience of state atheism" (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 174). In the Soviet Union studied by Smolkin, the "religiological Renaissance" (Klimova and Molostova 2013, 170) of the mid-1960s aimed to gain a better understanding of lived religion and religiosity and to take better account of the existential questions of the individual. This psychological turn was followed in Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland, but not in the GDR (Balogh and Fejérdy 2020; Denkov, Vulchev and Gueorguieva 2020; Hoffmann and Tyrała 2020). And even in the Soviet Union, according to Smolkin, the promoted atheism failed people in everyday life and in providing answers to existential questions (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014).

The need to train intermediaries to spread atheism more widely

Being aware of their limited capacity to intervene in the field themselves, East German specialists in scientific atheism chose to work upstream and, from 1965 onwards, to concentrate on the training of those responsible for implementing propaganda.[44] As Olof Klohr put it, "an essential link in the chain of education is the education of educators".[45] All that remained was to identify the best possible intermediaries and, above all, to convince them to play the role of multipliers. Before the creation of the GDR Freethinkers' Association in June 1989, there was no organisation specialising in atheism. The comrades in Jena could not call on a League of the Militant Godless on the Soviet model, but even this had ceased in 1947. Other socialist countries were hardly better off. For instance, Czechoslovakia and Poland saw their freethought movement abolished, and generally speaking, "all other atheistic ideologies were de facto marginalized" as incompatible with Marxist-Leninist atheism (Bubík, Vaclavik and Remmel 2020, 320). But even the latter rarely had its own dedicated organisations. Poland seems to have

been an exception where new atheist, freethought and secular associations could emerge in the 1950s (Hoffmann and Tyrała 2020). East Germany did not even have an atheist museum or planetarium, as existed in Moscow, Leningrad, Vilnius, in at least nine places in Ukraine, and also in Slovakia (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014; Tesař 2023; Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020; Tížik 2020; Ališauskienė 2020). Compared to the Russian and Ukrainian facilities and creations – antireligious posters, films, media, comic magazines, popular science series, theatre and other art forms, specialised as well as popular journals focusing on atheism, publishing houses (also in Slovakia) and young atheist clubs – the East German landscape looked rather poor in its means and stern in its forms. Only once did Klohr state, at the time of the establishment of his university chair, that "we are thinking of creating a unified atheist organisation";[46] this went unheeded. Therefore, it was up to the researchers to find allies among the existing organisations and to give an atheistic colouring to their activities. The Chair of Scientific Atheism's work programme for 1966 listed three possible relays, namely the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge (*Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse – Urania*), teachers and state officials responsible for Church policy, without claiming to be exhaustive.[47]

The Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge (Urania) had begun to engage in this endeavour. Comparable organisations, bearing more or less the same names, existed in Romania since 1949, in Czechoslovakia since 1952, in Hungary since 1953, in Lithuania since 1959, and are also documented in Latvia, Ukraine and Bulgaria (Turcescu 2020; Bubík and Václavík 2020; Balogh and Fejérdy 2020; Ališauskienė 2020; Kiope, Runce and Stasulane 2020; Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020; Denkov, Vulchev and Gueorguieva 2020). Atheism and religion were only involved in part of the activities of these organisations: Tesař, for example, has shown that in Czechoslovakia, this subject should not be overestimated, whereas Tížik emphasised it as the main activity (Tesař 2019; Tížik 2020). As for the GDR Urania society, as Thomas Schmidt-Lux summarised:

> the propagation of a mutually exclusive competition between 'science' and 'religion' was to represent a kind of positive motivation for the final replacement of Church and religion. The Urania was committed - albeit not exclusively - to precisely this task, the dissemination of the scientific world-view.
>
> (Schmidt-Lux 2008, 383)

Olof Klohr emphasised this role and outlined a sharing of tasks and collaboration with the newly created chair.[48] When it came to publishing works for the general public, the Urania publishing house was the designated contact for researchers in scientific atheism.[49] Olof Klohr had already been active in this association in Rostock. In 1964, he was a member of its executive committee, but was temporarily relieved from this responsibility in 1964–1965 and does

not seem to have renewed it in 1966.[50] In 1967, Heinz Malorny and Johann Klügl were members of the Urania Board in the city district of Jena. An assistant of the Chair of Scientific Atheism was a member of the philosophy section of the Urania Board in the district of Gera and a member of the Urania Board in the district of Eisenberg.[51] Occasionally, a document from the Chair of Scientific Atheism mentioned propaganda activities in cooperation with Urania as well as with the Cultural League and other organisations.[52] As part of an overall discussion with Jena's specialists on the promotion of atheism, the SED's regional leadership also identified Urania as a possible intermediary in the districts and instructed it to draw up a resolution for 1965 on the measures to be taken. In the work carried out up to that point, the "world vision" dimension of the Urania conferences was still judged to be weak.[53] Moreover, the very form of the conferences no longer seemed adequate to meet needs.[54] However, from the very incomplete archives of Urania in the Gera district in the 1960s and those of the university chair, Olof Klohr's intention to use Urania as a powerful relay for atheist propaganda could not be demonstrated over time. Schmidt-Lux already warned against such an image of Urania, pointing out that "there is no evidence that the Urania was founded for the purpose of atheist propaganda" (Schmidt-Lux 2008, 23, against Maser 1992).

From the point of view of the Chair of Scientific Atheism, a change of method can be observed after the initial enthusiastic declarations. A conference on "Problems of atheism and atheist propaganda" in May 1963 in Jena was attended by speakers from Urania.[55] The aim of the major conference on "Modern Natural Sciences and Atheism", at which the chair was officially created in December 1963, was to disseminate "the scientifically based atheistic world-view". An internal document lists propaganda support as the last of three objectives and mentions "around 75 specialists" from Urania expected to attend it. They were to be joined by ten representatives of publishing houses and newspapers and ten officials from the SED and mass organisations.[56] They were then to report on the colloquium in various districts of the GDR, acting as multipliers. The conference proceedings included an article by a representative of the Czechoslovak Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge; the 3,000 copies quickly sold out.[57] The propaganda objective disappeared, however, in a report on the work carried out by the Chair of Scientific Atheism between 1963 and 1968; the mention of the representatives of the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge became less emphatic.[58] The colloquium was intended to provide an opportunity for a discussion reserved for Urania members, but the opportunity was rather missed, according to Olof Klohr.[59] The injunction to contribute to propaganda through popular publications disappeared from the work programmes of the university chair.

Subsequent conferences organised by the Chair of Scientific Atheism did not admit propagandists. From then on, their training intensified but took other forms. The report on the work of the Chair of Scientific Atheism for

the period 1963–1968 cites around 150 presentations in the 1966/1967 academic year alone, many of which were aimed at training propagandists, State or Party officials responsible for Church policy, and teachers.[60] Many of these activities were carried out in cooperation with the SED's regional leadership, such as a seminar in July 1964 on issues of atheist education.[61] In June, a conference and discussion took place at the SED regional leadership's school in Burgkemnitz.[62] The scientific atheists' influence was also evident in a more general partnership with the various Party schools in the Gera district, and in particular with the Gera district Party school (*Bezirksparteischule*) in Bad Blankenburg, where Dietrich Alexander lectured.[63] He was also responsible for the centralised annual training (*Zentrales Parteilehrjahr*) at the SED's regional leadership around 1965 and trained journalists.[64] Johann Klügl spoke at the FDGB trade union school in Lobeda on the outskirts of Jena in March 1966 on the "Influence and development tendencies of religion in capitalism and socialism"; Karl Freese lectured on "The shared humanist responsibility of Christians and atheists in the GDR" in Gera, Jena and Schleiz.[65] These lectures were not always a success, however, as a report on a week-long seminar in July 1964 for around 700 teachers suggests: "The lecture by Prof. Klohr on the subject of 'atheism and school' did not meet the sympathetic understanding of Christian teachers".[66]

For the teachers who were more inclined towards socialist ideology, the Jena Institute of Philosophy was responsible for the in-service training of secondary school civics teachers (*Staatsbürgerkunde*).[67] Ten of its members were involved.[68] The leadership of the SED in the Gera district, advised by the scientific atheists, expected the pedagogical office to work on strengthening the philosophical (*weltanschaulich*) message in its teacher training courses.[69] However, there do not appear to have been any systematic lessons on the subject. There is evidence for a course on *Jugendweihe* in 1968, but attendance was below average.[70] Compared with other socialist countries, the lack of influence in secondary education is striking. The USSR experimented with classroom instruction, pressure on parents, and even optional courses in atheism (documented in Estonia but which soon died out, see Remmel and Friedenthal 2020). Elsewhere, there was a two-year course for lecturers (in Latvia), a secondary school manual, and handbooks for an atheist upbringing (also in Latvia; see Kiope, Runce and Stasulane 2020). The effects of this "scientific atheist socialization" (Ališauskienė 2020, 165), which was palpable in schools in particular, remain debated.

The East German context may have been unfavourable in several respects. Firstly, the more general religious and political situation was characterised by strongly established and still officially recognised Churches, which had to be spared under the watchful eye of the West, and by the alliance with the Christian Democratic Party (CDU). From the outset, the USSR established "scientific atheism as a research project and educational discipline" (Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020, 304), with two dedicated divisions within the Moscow Institute of Scientific Atheism in 1964 (Thrower 1983). In the

GDR, interest in youth and its education came only later. A comparison with Hungary, where the Educational Council of the Hungarian Young Communist League was concerned with atheism from a very early stage (Bauquet 2013), or with Poland, which also had a youth research laboratory (Pawlica n.d.), would no doubt help to better understand these differences. Finally, in 1966, East German researchers came up against opposition from the Ministry of Popular Education and its minister, Margot Honecker, who was in office from 1963 to 1989. Walter Berg, who headed the youth working group of the Chair of Scientific Atheism, was at one time a member of an advisory board to the Ministry of Popular Education.[71] But the ban on approaching schoolchildren from 1966 onwards redirected their work towards the older age group: Students, apprentices and young workers. Relations with the Office for Youth Affairs at the Council of Ministers were not very regular, even though Klohr commissioned a study on "The education and upbringing of young people in world-view and atheism" in March 1967.[72]

Very early on, the project aimed to reach beyond one-off presentations and organise whole training courses specifically devoted to scientific atheism and atheist propaganda. In 1965, a draft resolution provided for a four-day course on propaganda, a one-week course on the theoretical problems of scientific atheism, contemporary theology, political clericalism and socialist Church policy and a seminar on *Jugendweihe* directed by Olof Klohr.[73] He was particularly keen to equip propagandists with knowledge of contemporary Protestant theology.[74] The only training course from the 1960s of which we have any record took place at the beginning of June 1964, in the neighbouring district of Halle, on atheist propaganda and the "world-view". Four lessons, each lasting three or four hours, were given by Olof Klohr, Siegfried Kirschke, Dietrich Alexander and Johann Klügl, in line with their respective areas of specialisation: More general by Klohr, on the genesis of Man by Kirschke, natural sciences and belief by Alexander, and religious sociology by Klügl. These were interspersed with a lesson from a Central Committee official that was probably more focused on current affairs and the political line.[75]

Very brief notes found at the University of Leipzig provide an example of what may have been the content of a seminar led by Olof Klohr. Klohr developed the relationship between political and "world-view thought" (*weltanschaulich*). Based on a number of questions and the results of a survey, he argued that political thought was part of "world-view thought". The starting point and the horizon for tackling the subject were clearly political: "Whoever has a solid world-view also has a good political stance"; and the other way round, "Political fickleness when world-view is too weak".[76] He spoke of the importance of deepening atheist education. A section on socialist conviction and its effects and attitudes seems to have particularly caught the listener's attention. Two expressions, each with a question mark, might suggest a tendency to attach more importance to worldview than to politics, which may have irritated the author of the notes. The training courses were to be

supplemented by a specialised manual, planned since 1964 and scheduled for 1970, but which never came to fruition.[77]

In addition to the Urania propagandists, Klohr and his colleagues regularly targeted those responsible for the socialist rites of passage, which were perceived as being in direct competition with the ecclesial offer. The weakness of these rites was seen as particularly worrying, for the scholars saw a risk of the Churches gaining ground.[78] The popularity of religious weddings and funerals was attributed to the fact that they were perceived as "more solemn and uplifting" and "more beautiful, more dignified, more comforting for the bereaved". From a perspective that enabled action, one could point out "the lack of opportunity for dignified secular celebrations".[79] From their point of view, the growing participation in Protestant confirmation instead of the *Jugendweihe* alone, whose effects on atheist education were considered to be significant,[80] was due not to the ceremony itself but to inadequacies in its preparation: The State did not make enough effort to attract young people.[81] In addition to a lack of appeal in the form, the preparatory sessions were seen as largely "ideologically [*weltanschaulich*] emptied".[82] To reverse the situation, the scientific atheists were to participate in a regional commission and schedule various courses and conferences in 1965–1966.[83] But here again, the East German scientific atheists were less involved than some of their colleagues from Bulgaria, for instance, where socialist rites and symbolism were a dominant area of research, and to a lesser extent Latvia and Ukraine (Denkov, Vulchev and Gueorguieva 2020; Kiope, Runce and Stasulane 2020; Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020). They did not make it the subject of their own work, nor do the archives preserved show them in direct contact with those responsible for socialist rites. This was to change in the 1980s thanks to new researchers in scientific atheism committed to improving nonreligious funerals, notably Wolfgang Kaul and Hannelore Volland. Olof Klohr's atheism group at the University of Rostock in the late 1950s was more concerned with socialist rites than the Chair of Scientific Atheism in Jena in the 1960s.

State and SED officials in charge of "Church matters" (*Kirchenfragen*), on the contrary, benefitted from the work of the Jena collective. Both the State and the ruling party had officials responsible for this area in every district and circumscription. They could benefit from the proposals open to the various intermediaries already mentioned and from a dedicated training course planned for 1966,[84] and were invited to follow special distance learning courses.[85] A specialised study programme entitled "Theory of Marxist atheism and the critique of religion" lasting one year and open to 30 participants was even envisaged but did not materialise.[86]

Even after the disillusionment of the first colloquia, part of the scientific life of the Chair of Scientific Atheism was still open to outsiders. A number of people working in mass organisations, in SED or State bodies, attended the meetings of the GDR working group on atheism. Among them was Edgar Wieland, a former student of Olof Klohr's working in the Propaganda

Department of the Central Council of the FDJ youth organisation. At that time, the FDJ reached a little over 40% of young people between the ages of 14 and 25/26, and even more among pupils and students: In East Germany, on average, 63.1% in 1965 and 78.6% in 1966 (Dähn 1994, 253–255; Herms 2002, 490). Klohr even said, on facing the challenges of the fight against the Churches: "The most effective antidote is interesting work by the FDJ".[87] Its employees were regularly invited to conferences, courses and training sessions but did not receive any dedicated training.

In 1966, Edgar Wieland's renewed contact with his former teacher met with a warm welcome. Within the youth organisation, Wieland was to form a group on youth and religion. But even more importantly, his initiative served as a gateway for scientific atheists to reach the leadership of the FDJ, which then began to draw on the work produced in Jena.[88] In 1967, Klohr wrote a first analysis, together with Eberhard Habel, for the FDJ Central Council.[89] A document that the FDJ had sent to Klohr a few months earlier had in fact spoken of the need for the FDJ's regional and local branches to have an overview of the ideological situation among young people.[90] With the competent help of Olof Klohr, the FDJ got down to work in late 1967 or early 1968.[91] More exchanges followed. The Jena professor endeavoured to share his own vision of the situation and the measures to be taken. An analysis from 1968 laid out the balance between the need for "intensive and offensive confrontation with religious ideology" and the requirement that "this confrontation [...] should at the same time [...] promote and not hinder constructive co-operation between Marxists and Christians".[92] In other words, the aim was to remedy the weak presence of this theme in the FDJ's work and thus reach young people without provoking aggressive atheist militancy. Klohr summarised the results of sociological research carried out by the Chair of Scientific Atheism and explained the relationship between political attitudes and atheism or religiosity. Among the reasons why the people questioned had taken the road to atheism, the FDJ ranked low. But this was not to be taken as a call to rush headlong into all-out atheist propaganda. Klohr's cautious conclusions set out a whole list of analyses to be done before going any further.

The Central Council of the FDJ took over some of the information and statistics from the expert opinion provided by Klohr in an "Assessment of Church activities among the youth of the GDR". The same applied to the link between worldview and political attitude, which was supposed to justify atheist education. Half of the data in the appendices came from the work of the Chair of Scientific Atheism. The document assessed the influence of the Churches and the (insufficient) activities of the FDJ, and listed concrete measures without taking up Olof Klohr's suggestions to first continue the diagnosis.[93] Despite this impatience, which contrasted with the professor's caution, Klohr could legitimately hope to introduce changes into the FDJ's work by playing the role of an expert – a possibility not to be underestimated in a system that operated from the top down. In line with the conception of

the Marxist-Leninist scholar, this position could fall to him not only for a "sub-organisation" of the SED such as the FDJ was (Hoffmann 2000, 148), but potentially for the leadership of the Party-State itself.

Scientific atheists as experts for political decision-makers

As early as the 1950s, the East German state developed bodies to involve scientists in such a way as to give them "the impression of being able to influence the State" and at the same time benefit from their expertise (Laitko 2002, 136). In this way, they would be "institutionally integrated intellectuals" (*institutionell eingebundene Intellektuelle*), according to an expression by Wolfgang Bialas taken up by Pasternack, who also spoke of an "academic function elite" (*akademische Funktionselite*, see Pasternack 1995; Hübner 1999). This notion refers to the phenomenon of the expert, which goes far beyond the communist world. In line with the "scientificisation of society", experts have recognised specialist knowledge that is made available to a client, used by the State or in public debate (see vom Bruch 2000, 46; Harwood 2002, 162–168; Leendertz 2012). As Mespoulet has shown for socialist regimes, using sociologists as an example, scholars found themselves in an intermediary position between the population and the centres of power, not to mention the delicate issue of possible collaboration with security bodies (Mespoulet 2007, 67).

However, these scholars are not to be seen merely as providers of data, since any knowledge that is shaped and transmitted also conveys the options that have been chosen and may point towards a certain policy – more or less aggressive towards the Churches, for example – rather than another. Speaking of the "sociology of the knowledge society" (*Soziologie der Wissensgesellschaft*), Szöllösi-Janze highlighted the crucial process "when [...] the 'experts' make the flood of existing scientific information available to a growing clientele in government, bureaucracy, companies, associations, etc. in the first place". Scientists are by no means passive or merely the victims of political decision-makers seeking to take advantage of them. They act as intermediaries, and "they themselves create demand for scientific expertise by co-defining social problems and areas of conflict in order to then promise to solve them with the help of their specific knowledge" (Szöllösi-Janze 2002, 74). This process may be illustrated by Olof Klohr creating, at his own initiative, a group on atheism in Rostock years before the institutionalisation of scientific atheism in the GDR. Once scientific atheism was officially recognised, the expert role raised several questions: To what extent was the work of specialists taken into account in order to set a political line, making use of skills that were unique in the GDR for the benefit of a policy that was supposed to be scientific? How far did academics themselves agree to go down this road in the hope of reaping the benefits of collaboration with politicians? Did the role of the expert take precedence over other positions? Combe, for example, has tried to "distinguish, among these intellectuals who were in no way dissidents, the *scientists* [savants] who would

not have renounced science, from the *apparatchiks*" (Combe 1999, 41). Here again, the question is not specific to the GDR, and again, the ways in which scientific atheists were integrated into politics and their positioning varied from one country to another.

During his Rostock period, Olof Klohr made his first steps as an expert in the propaganda committee of the SED's regional leadership, in the committee "for world-view enlightenment" (*für weltanschauliche Aufklärung*) attached to the Central Committee, and in the scientific council attached to the State Secretariat for Higher Education.[94] Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find out more about the role he actually played. Later on, the academics of the Chair of Scientific Atheism established partnerships with local and, above all, regional authorities. Masula was involved in drawing up religious policy in Jena itself,[95] and several of them acted as advisers to the SED leadership in the district. This activity formed an integral part of their work programmes.[96] The SED's regional headquarters in Gera benefitted from the data collection work carried out by the Jena chair in order to gain a better understanding of its residents.[97] Conversely, it also collected and centralised data through the districts or police bodies that could be of interest to Olof Klohr and his colleagues.[98] Other information, some of it confidential, reached the Klohr collective from the Leipzig district on the religious situation there.[99] Socialist cooperation was not an empty word when it came to exchanging information, including sensitive information.

However, it was in the district of Gera, where its university was located, that the Klohr collective forged the most promising partnership. It joined forces with a working group from the SED's regional leadership to produce "an analysis of the atheistic thinking and world-views of different sections of the population in our district". The researchers also played a role in validating a resolution taken at the regional level.[100] The "materials on the evolution of atheist thought in the Gera district" and the various documents that follow it remind us of the correlation established by the Jena university chair between spiritual convictions and political attitudes.[101] They emphasise the importance of atheist propaganda, which has been all too neglected, but above all, they advocate a certain kind of propaganda and warn against "direct atheistic propaganda" and "inadmissible violation of the religious feelings of Christian-oriented citizens".[102] For the moment, Klohr, Klügl and Masula were trying to make their own comrades understand the need for this new way of doing things. "The aim is to educate [Christian citizens] about the principles of socialist politics [...] and to win them over to political co-operation. In the process of co-operation, church ties are also loosened".[103] By passing on scientific knowledge, "the prerequisite for detachment from faith is created".[104] As for two-thirds of the population:

> they are already essentially atheistic and do not believe in God. Leaving the Church is therefore less a question of world-view than a question of personal consistency. Marxist-Leninist propaganda with more

> moral conclusions about consistency in personal behaviour would be appropriate here.[105]

The SED leadership in the Gera district identified a whole range of actors whose work was to form a coordinated system of atheist propaganda.[106] The training work carried out by specialists in scientific atheism found a powerful institutional ally here. They were part of a working group set up by the regional leadership, and the plan was that "the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Jena is developed into a permanent consultation centre for problems of scientific atheism and ideological-atheistic propaganda".[107]

As the only centre dedicated to scientific atheism in the GDR, Olof Klohr's chair could also expect to see its expertise sought by national religious policymakers. Unlike some of their Czechoslovakian colleagues, led by the Prague researcher Erika Kadlecová, the Jena scientific atheists never became so directly involved in politics that they traded in their university posts for an office responsible for religious policy. In Czechoslovakia, in fact, "during the Prague Spring, sociologists of religion exerted a marked influence even on the state policy on religion" (Nešpor 2011, 59). In March 1968, Kadlecová took the head of the Secretariat for Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Culture and Information, bringing with her Ladislav Prokůpek and Jaroslav Hranička. However, getting involved in politics in this way entailed risks, led to battles between "conflicting opinion groups", and Kadlecová lost the chance to pursue her scientific career under "normalisation" (Matějka 2011). Another risk of such political involvement was its compatibility with research work. Kadlecová is said to have "prioritized the religious political outputs of her work [...] over outputs of a narrowly scientific nature" (Nešpor 2011, 75; see also Matějka 2011, 116).

Olof Klohr, on the contrary, accepted, or even sought, cooperation with the national authorities of the SED or the State only as an academic. The Central Committee's resolution of 5 August 1964 on "The improvement of ideological (*weltanschaulich*) atheistic work" left no trace in the archives of his chair. However, a report stated: "There is good co-operation with the relevant departments of the Central Committee of the SED and the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs".[108] Within the Central Committee, the head of the Science Department showed an occasional interest in the research carried out,[109] the Church Affairs Department even more so, and to a lesser extent the Propaganda Department.[110] These bodies could even be involved in defining the chair's work.

Klohr referred to prognoses or information materials produced by his chair "which, according to the governing bodies, were useful".[111] Such work was common in the Eastern Bloc, as the Czechoslovak experience and that of the Department of Scientific Atheism in Ivano-Frankivsk in Ukraine attest (Nešpor 2011, 79–81; Matějka 2011, 122; Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020). Conversely, the Chair of Scientific Atheism benefitted from this privileged link with Berlin authorities to obtain first-hand information on

the political situation and problems in relations with the Churches. Klohr showed great interest in this, emphasising the interest that the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs could also find in closer cooperation. For the researchers, it was a question of knowing the political orientation, for the Office of the State Secretary of receiving "a scientific contribution to the solution of these questions".[112] The Office of the State Secretary offered to open its library to Jena researchers and sent them books and grey literature.[113] The Chair of Scientific Atheism gave the Office of the State Secretary's officials access to its work.[114] Klohr even spoke of a genuine collaboration in the study of sects in East Germany.[115]

Personal contacts were also frequent. Officials from different government departments regularly took part in meetings of the research group, which was a mutual enrichment according to Klohr. This practice continued until 1968.[116] There was even a group on "Problems of State policy in Church matters" under the direction of Klügl and Klohr. In addition to the meetings in Jena, which were sometimes open to students, there were more confidential discussions when Klohr went to Berlin, the content of which has not been documented. In any case, all these contacts gave the Jena academics the feeling that they had access to rare knowledge and that they were part of a privileged group, even if this meant that they themselves had to observe confidentiality. Restrictions on their publications were perhaps better accepted in exchange. Here again, such practices have been documented in Czechoslovakia (Nešpor 2011, 75; Matějka 2011, 113). Klohr did not hesitate to invoke his deeper knowledge of the situation to refrain from publishing any more articles in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* in 1968. This knowledge would have come to him from long discussions with the Church Affairs working group at the Central Committee and at the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs.[117] After several years of contact and cooperation, the Chair of Scientific Atheism and the State Secretariat for Church Affairs had the "intention to make mutual relations closer and more precise for mutual benefit".[118] A framework agreement was to formalise the obligations on both sides, "enable the rapid transfer of scientific findings into State management and thus influence the effectiveness of scientific work".[119] The initiative failed, however, in 1967, due to the reluctance of decision-makers at the University of Jena.

Olof Klohr's collaboration with the Central Committee's Ideological Commission was quite different. The Jena professor did not need the approval of his superiors to be a member of this commission's working group on atheistic propaganda.[120] He worked there alongside officials from the FDJ's Central Council, the Central Committee responsible for *Jugendweihe*, the Church Affairs working group, the Central Committee's Culture Department, representatives from the Dietz publishing house and the SED Party University. The function of the Ideological Commission was to prepare the decisions of the Political Bureau or its secretariat. It could not make decisions on its own but had the ambition to supervise and control a vast network of civil servants and managers of all kinds and at all levels in a field encompassing the social

sciences, culture, the education system and all ideological and propaganda work.[121] Imposing a certain vision of atheism and the measures to be taken could therefore have had a considerable impact – especially if the reality had lived up to the expectations, which wasn't the case. Be that as it may, as far as the incomplete archives allow us to judge, Olof Klohr was just one of many collaborators in this commission. His name, obviously unfamiliar, was once even spelled "Clor".[122] There was no institutionalised cooperation with the Chair of Scientific Atheism, and the commission did not explicitly draw on its expertise. That does not mean atheism was absent from its concerns. In March 1964, for example, a conference of the Ideological Commission brought together 320 scholars in the social sciences from universities and higher education establishments, propagandists, representatives of regional ideological commissions, ministries, the Central Committee, mass organisations and various central institutions.[123] Olof Klohr was also due to take part.[124] A preparatory document for the conference listed modern natural sciences and atheism (point 7) and the philosophy of political clericalism in Western Germany (point 9 out of 9, thus ranking low) as priority topics for future philosophical work.[125] "Clericalism" in Western Germany was also of concern to legal scholars.[126] Ethical reflection and its transmission to students were emphasised, but without necessarily including confrontation with religious opinions.[127] A document summarising the problems and questions raised at the conference recommended examining the possibility of introducing new disciplines of Marxism-Leninism, including scientific atheism, into universities.[128] That was rare enough in the 1960s to deserve a mention. The draft resolution submitted for decision provided for a meeting to be organised with academics in the social sciences, propagandists and representatives of the press on the subject of "scientific and atheist propaganda" and instructed the Propaganda Department of the Ideological Commission to organise it by July 1964.[129]

The Propaganda Department of the Ideological Commission did not wait for this injunction before examining the state and needs of atheist propaganda. At the beginning of January 1964, it submitted a 31-page document on the subject to the Ideological Commission.[130] In it, the authors defended a very broad view of atheism, insisting "that all components of our world-view must contribute to atheistic enlightenment and education" (p. 5), "that ideological-atheistic propaganda has become a task of <u>all</u> propagandists and agitators, of all circles and seminars, of our entire spiritual [*geistig*] life" (p. 6). They were far from it, according to their diagnosis, while the Church was trying to adapt to expectations and needs and to become more attractive. The comrades were said to underestimate "political clericalism", even though it was very serious. They were reproached for their hesitations and lack of combativeness in terms very similar to the analyses of the Jena collective and the material drawn up with the regional leadership of the SED in Gera. Social scientists were said to have failed to provide convincing answers to the existential questions posed by the East Germans, literature was not

selling well, and it was difficult to produce lively, high-quality writing. There had certainly been a recent upturn, according to the authors. But the picture remained lukewarm, and 14 pages of analysis of the situation were followed by 17 pages of measures recommended by the working group on atheist propaganda and worldviews attached to the Political Bureau's Ideological Commission. Unlike documents written by Klohr, the very necessity of atheist propaganda was taken for granted here. The authors did not dwell on the political repercussions of philosophical convictions and only specified the objective of the propaganda:

> It has become the main task of ideological-atheistic propaganda to make people fully and clearly aware of their position in socialist society, to help them shake off the remaining spiritual shackles and thus increase their activity in production and in socialist democracy.
>
> (p. 6)

The authors argued in favour of propaganda that is "factual and sensitive" (p. 4), that does not confuse religion with West German "political clericalism", that holds up certain Christian personalities as examples and that also uses theological arguments in favour of socialism and peace, using, among other things, the encyclical *Pacem in terris*. The aim was to deconstruct any possible identification between East German Christians and West German "political clericalism". To do this, more use needed to be made of atheist literature and films; work needed to be done in neighbourhoods, adapting to the public and starting from people's concerns, experiences and interests, not forgetting hospitals and old people's homes. Socialist rituals needed to be improved to better contribute to "the development of an optimistic socialist attitude to life and for strengthening the self-confidence of the working people" (p. 9).

To implement these instructions, qualification courses were needed, such as Klohr and his colleagues were beginning to run; the FDJ, schools and higher education establishments were to step up atheist education, and cultural players were to follow. The penultimate point – thus ranking low – in the document called for greater use to be made of specialists in the social sciences and mentioned for the first time the Chair of Scientific Atheism at Jena. Its function would be limited to research and publications. This was a far cry from the much more important role assigned by the SED's regional leadership in Gera, which made the chair a place of resources and expertise for conducting joint analyses and implementing the political line. According to this document, the programme for the Chair of Scientific Atheism was simply to be submitted to the Ideological Commission's working group. The next step was to introduce teaching on these subjects at university and to train specialists in research, teaching and propaganda. Here again, the Chair of Scientific Atheism was not the subject of requests outside its university status (research, publications, teaching and training of new researchers), and

none of these requests was new in relation to the work already in progress. Scientific atheism was invoked, but without insisting on its anchoring in a specific group of actors: "In all circles and seminars of the Party teaching year, especially the theoretical seminars at secondary schools, the colloquia at the universities, the questions of scientific atheism are to be discussed in connection with the defined subject matter" (p. 16). The document presented it, on the contrary, as if it were a well-known notion and endeavoured to keep all initiative and leadership at the level of the Ideological Commission.

Unfortunately, there are too many gaps in the archives to retrace the discussions surrounding the work carried out by this working group of the Ideological Commission. In November 1964, the group met to discuss a manuscript by Heinrich Vogel, Klohr's former colleague at the University of Rostock, on "Socialism - Ethics - Christianity".[131] The manuscript in question was judged to have been poorly conceived from the outset, full of errors. The group, setting itself up as judges, asked the author to rework it in depth on the basis of political ideas that he seemed to have difficulty "understanding", according to the author of the minutes.

To what extent did Klohr's approach make an impression on the circle around the Ideological Commission? A comparison with the analyses he himself had written shows that in the documents found in the Ideological Committee archives, there was a strong focus on "political clericalism" and on West Germany, sometimes with mention of neo-Thomism, concerns that were much less prominent in the Jena professor's discourse.[132] This focus can also be found in documents dating from after 1964, such as a booklet entitled *The tasks of the social sciences in developing research work up to 1970 (Material from the Political Bureau's Ideological Commission)*.[133] As for the objectives and methods of atheist propaganda, do the documents of the Ideological Commission follow the same line as the Jena Collective? A programmatic document dating from before the March 1964 conference on the social sciences defined them as follows:

> In ideological-atheistic propaganda, it is important to present our world-view and the new findings of the natural sciences more comprehensively and to intensify the fight against West German political clericalism. The research work should particularly examine the new, more sophisticated forms of political clericalism in West Germany.[134]

That is a long way from Klohr's proposals. A later document came closer:

> The dissemination of the scientifically-based atheistic world-view will help the citizens of the GDR, especially the youth, to become fully aware of their own power and their historical mission. The ideological-atheistic propaganda must be carried out with full respect for the religious feelings of believers.

It is symptomatic that this point was the last in a series of questions to be dealt with. The document did not include atheism in developments on the "new Man", but it did not forget "political clericalism".[135] Even after 1964, atheism and religion remained marginal issues on the Ideological Commission's agenda. A draft of the same document provided for the training of executives and the creation of new university chairs until 1970, none of which had anything to do with atheism.[136] Looking back on the years 1963–1968, Klohr presented his contact with the Central Committee's Ideological Commission as "primarily informative in nature".[137] But even this function was limited; the Ideological Commission had other sources of information on the religious situation.[138]

Not all of Professor Olof Klohr's commitments were visible in the archives or in the eyes of his university hierarchy in the same way. A particularly sensitive issue to study concerns his possible collaboration with the Ministry for State Security, known as the Stasi. It was an integral part of a system that it helped to shape and operate, and can be understood through its interactions with other structures and actors. According to Emmanuel Droit, "the Stasi must above all be considered and analysed as a 'public enterprise' like other State institutions [...], i.e. visible and rooted in society" (Droit 2009, 12). In this respect, its possible links with Olof Klohr deserve to be included in a discussion of Klohr's role as a representative of scientific atheism in the GDR outside the academic world. The possible usefulness of a specialist in scientific atheism in the eyes of the Stasi needs to be examined very carefully: Would it be a question of providing information about colleagues or neighbours, as could be the case for any individual, or of providing a specific viewpoint and information linked to expertise in religious and ideological issues? The "enterprise" referred to by Emmanuel Droit has also been described by Mary Fulbrook as the "nerve system and brain centre" of the East German State (Fulbrook 1995, 53, 214), and a brain feeds on more or less substantial external inputs.

In the literature, Olof Klohr has been linked, with varying degrees of certainty, to an unofficial collaborator known as "Aurora" (Schäfer 1997, 179; Ploenus 2008, 376; BStU 2013, 63). The "Aurora" file and the database as preserved do not allow formal identification with Olof Klohr. The first part of the file, containing the personal information, has been lost or destroyed, and the index card with "Aurora's" number comprises not only Olof Klohr's name. It is true that the description of "Aurora" and his characteristics contain many parallels with Olof Klohr's own career: Origin, places of work and positions, political and associative commitments, subjects of specialisation, acquaintances and journeys undertaken. In the early years, from 1958 onwards, "Aurora's" work focused on trips to Hamburg and contacts with free-thinking and left-wing circles. However, he also provided information from within the University of Rostock, including on the atheism research group.[139] After taking up a post at the University of Jena, "Aurora" reported once more between 1965 and 1968. Some of these reports continued to relate

to trips, including to the Soviet Union, and contacts with Westerners. Others included the names of colleagues working at the Chair of Scientific Atheism, even though monitoring them was clearly not "Aurora's" mission. What was new was that "Aurora" began to make assessments of a number of Christian personalities and circles in the GDR, talked about contacts with believers and referred to sociological surveys conducted by Olof Klohr's chair. Aurora obviously thought that he was sharing a rare knowledge with the Stasi, that the Stasi did not have any knowledge of its own in these matters, and would be inclined to rely on his expert opinion. Through his assessments, "Aurora" thought he was able to guide Stasi officers to identify people or institutions that could be rallied to the cause of socialism without wasting time trying to cooperate with others. Giving an account of his contacts with Christians, including private conversations with some of them, was supposed to give the impression that "Aurora" was being transparent. His assessments justified the past contacts. As for future contacts, the Stasi was indirectly invited to direct them if it so wished, since "Aurora" mentioned pending invitations, which may or may not be taken advantage of.

All that remains of the information provided after 1968 are entries in a database; the reports themselves disappeared. The documents referenced, from 1980 to 1988, were almost without exception devoted to West Germany.[140] The person behind "Aurora" seems to have had quite exceptional knowledge and contacts in Catholic circles on the other side of the Iron Curtain, and in West German CDU circles. In the eyes of Stasi officials, the valuable information he provided over the last decade of the GDR concerned these areas of expertise and not the "local" situation in East Germany, be it life at a university or the Churches present in the country. As for the researcher Olof Klohr, then posted to Warnemünde in the suburbs of Rostock, several of his major analyses of the ecclesiastical situation in the GDR in the 1980s can be found in the Stasi archives, although there is no indication as to whether they were used.[141] The security services also collected the booklet and slides produced to "reinforce the atheistic character" of the teaching of Marxism-Leninism in the mid-1980s, again without any indication of the intention behind this action.[142]

The assessment of the commitments of scientific atheists in East German politics, propaganda and training beginning in the 1950s and especially the 1960s remains ambivalent. They endeavoured to make the best of the existing structures and organisations, none of which was specifically dedicated to atheisation. They did not have a foothold in all areas, for example in secondary education, and not always a decisive influence on the way atheisation was conceived; they first had to make an effort to share their vision of an atheist campaign within their own camp. In doing so, their status as academics was used alternately by the scientific atheists themselves to refuse certain commitments or by other actors that preferred to confine them to such a role. The closest partnership in this decade was with the regional SED leadership and not with national political bodies.

Quoted archives

Federal Archives (BArch)
Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BArch)
Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (BStU)
Thuringia Land Archives – Rudolstadt Public Archives (ThStA Rudolstadt)
Jena University Archives (UAJ)
Rostock University Archives (UAR)
Protestant Central Archives (EZA)
Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research (BISKF)

Notes

1 UAR SML/5 Richter, Protokoll der Institutsratssitzung vom 2.6.1962, p. 1. See other examples of this stance in SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV 2/9.04/169, pp. 138–147 and Ploenus 2007, 133–135.
2 Examples can be found in Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein and Schmidt-Lux 2009, 129–130, 134; Combe 1999, 185; Mazurek 2007, 5; Weinberg 1974, 110.
3 UAR SML/128 Giese, Protokoll der Fachrichtungssitzung vom 25.11.1959, quoted p. 8.
4 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/50, p. 16.
5 An international conference devoted to "Communist Perspectives on Atheism in the 20th Century", in Campus Condorcet near Paris in November 2023, organised by Eva Guigo-Patzelt, has highlighted the wide range of possible articulations between the two notions in concrete historical settings.
6 See the in-depth analysis in Chapter 5.
7 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2772 (p. 11), 1232 (pp. 70–73), 1934 (pp. 18–22), 2654 (pp. 34–36), 727 (pp. 26–33, 60–62) and 671 (pp. 74–81).
8 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, p. 115.
9 An example can be found in ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1068, p. 23.
10 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Aktennotiz, 5 September 1958 [certainly 1968], p. 2. Other documents on the same subject there and: BISKF Kaul 12 Klohr to Engelstätter, 11 December 1966; BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Klohr to Pfoh, 11 October 1966; BStU MfS – HA XX/4 2835 Bd. 1, pp. 203–204, 273–276, 285–287 and Bd. 2, pp. 292–294, 303, 306–309, 318–321, 366–367.
11 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2587, pp. 47–51. Atheism appears in other conferences in: UAJ BC 235 Mende, Programm zur wissenschaftlichen Konferenz "Probleme der Geschichte der marxistischen Philosophie und ihre Bedeutung für die ideologische Auseinandersetzung unserer Zeit", 12 March 1964; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/50 (pp. 25–28), 468 (pp. 24–26) and 1226 (pp. 94–96). This way of slipping atheism in various events was not unanimously supported, see ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/50, pp. 23–24.
12 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 34–35; UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967, p. 17.
13 Documentation is abundant in the collection ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630. See also Ploenus 2007, 138, 237–238, 256–257; Preuß 2007, 239–266, and Dahms 2007, 1593.
14 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1525, pp. 109–115.
15 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/7 (pp. 11–15), 13 (various documents), 257 (pp. 96–101), 727 (pp. 1–14, 93–112), 1126 (pp. 97–101), 2427 (pp. 17–20,

22–35, 116–123); ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1625/9, pp. 88–92; UAJ M 800, pp. 7–8, 24–26; BISKF Kaul 12 large-format index card, 1967.
16 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 20, 31.
17 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1598, p. 67.
18 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1258, p. 77.
19 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/148, pp. 88–95.
20 Examples in ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/282 (pp. 2–3, 5, 49–54) and 2587 (pp. 54–57).
21 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/758 (pp. 3, 5), 282 (p. 90) and 727 (pp. 1–14).
22 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2654, pp. 156–162.
23 Everyone's commitments were listed in BISKF Kaul 12. On this principle, see Ploenus 2007, 138–139.
24 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2265, p. 82.
25 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, p. 131. See also BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für "Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" 1964/1965, p. 1, and Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für das Jahr 1966, p. 1; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 66, 80.
26 BISKF Kaul 12 large-format index card, 1967.
27 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/468, pp. 65–67.
28 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1525, pp. 109–115.
29 On these meetings called "Geraer Gespräch" see ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1760.
30 BISKF Kaul 12 FSU, brochure.
31 See an example in BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr to Grubitzsch, 27 September 1968.
32 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 93–112.
33 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, p. 45.
34 BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966.
35 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 16–17.
36 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 29–30.
37 UAJ M 803, pp. 12–13. Other figures, for part of 1966 only, and examples of topics in ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 19–25.
38 UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967, p. 24.
39 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2086, pp. 71–73.
40 BISKF Kaul 12 large-format index card 1967. It was rare for Klohr to be questioned by letter, for example about the atheist or non-atheist nature of the *Jugendweihe*: BISKF Kaul 12 Colditz to Klohr, 4 June 1969.
41 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/148, pp. 8–9.
42 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 19–25.
43 UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967.
44 BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für "Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" 1964/1965, p. 3; UAJ BC 144 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Studienjahr 1964/1965, p. 17.
45 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, p. 45.
46 Interview with Klohr in *Nauka i religija* 12, 1963, preserved in German translation in BStU Archiv MfS HA XX Nr. 25163, pp. 5–6 and EZA 102/471.
47 BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für das Jahr 1966, p. 2; UAJ BC 635 Entwurf, Programm zur Qualifizierung von Kadern auf dem Gebiet des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus und der marxistischen Religionskritik, 2 p., adds speakers of socialist rites.
48 Interview with Klohr in *Nauka i religija* 12, 1963.
49 BISKF Kaul 14 Forschungsschwerpunkt III./6: "Probleme des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" (handwritten: Offizieller Plan gebilligt 30.11.1962 Akademie), p. 4.

50 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1232 (pp. 103–107) and 2086 (pp. 71–73); UAJ Bestand D, Nr. 3216 Personalakte Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Olof Klohr O. Klohr, Lebenslauf, [not before 1964].
51 UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967, p. 21; BISKF Kaul 12 large-format index card, FS 1967 Gesellschaftliche Funktionen, and index cards Tätigkeit in staatlichen Leitungsgremien u. ä. Funktionen, 1967.
52 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 131–134.
53 BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage: Einschätzung der Ergebnisse bei der weltanschaulichen Erziehung, 3 February 1965; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 18–33, 42–51.
54 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 39–41.
55 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Korch, Kolloquium: Probleme des DHM, 11 May 1963.
56 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Moderne Naturwissenschaft und Atheismus, Internationale wissenschaftliche Konferenz, 5–7 December 1963; *Sozialistische Universität* 6 (23), 22 November 1963, p. 2.
57 BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966, p. 5.
58 BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968.
59 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/468, pp. 15–18; BISKF Kaul 14 Einschätzung der Resultate der internationalen wissenschaftlichen Konferenz über "Moderne Naturwissenschaft und Atheismus", draft.
60 BISKF Klohr 314.
61 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/148, pp. 4–6.
62 BISKF Kaul 14 BL Halle, Referentenauftrag, 18 May 1964.
63 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/272 (p. 41), 468 (p. 107), 1258 (p. 77) and 1525 (pp. 109–115).
64 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1258 (p. 77) and 2512 (p. 7).
65 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 38–39.
66 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1962, pp. 37–42.
67 BISKF Kaul 12 large-format index card [1967?]; UAJ BC 118 Steinbach, Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1966; UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727 (pp. 19–25, 65–83) and 1962 (p. 132).
68 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 93–112.
69 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 18–33.
70 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/272, pp. 8–30.
71 UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967.
72 Correspondence between Klohr and Korn in BISKF Kaul 12.
73 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 34–35; BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage: Einschätzung der Ergebnisse bei der weltanschaulichen Erziehung, 3 February 1965.
74 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 18–35.
75 BISKF Kaul 14 Lehrplan zum Qualifizierungslehrgang über weltanschauliche und atheistische Propaganda an der Sonderschule der SED BL Halle/S, 1–6 June 1964.
76 UAL NA Handel 087 Handwritten notes, Seminar 25.4. Referat Günter, Leitung Gen. Prof. Klohr, p. 2.
77 BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für "Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" 1964/1965; UAJ BC 144 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Studienjahr 1964/1965. Other materials intended for teachers were planned in ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 46–55.
78 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 18–35.

79 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien über die Entwicklung atheistischen Denkens im Bezirk Gera; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, p. 50.
80 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, p. 20.
81 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien über die Entwicklung …
82 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, p. 47.
83 BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage: Einschätzung der Ergebnisse bei der weltanschaulichen Erziehung …, 3 February 1965; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 38–39; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 18–33, 42–51, 54–73.
84 BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für das Jahr 1966, p. 2; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, p. 56. Schäfer mentions a presentation given by Klohr in Brandenburg in February 1968 to SED and State officials responsible for religious affairs in all the districts (Schäfer 1997).
85 BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für den Zeitraum Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966, p. 2; BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für "Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" 1964/1965.
86 SAPMO-BArch DY 24/20972 Entwurf, Spezialfernstudium "Theorie des marxistischen Atheismus und der Religionskritik", [not before 1967].
87 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, p. 34.
88 Correspondence in SAPMO-BArch DY 24/20972.
89 BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968. Entitled "Der Säkularisierungsprozess in der DDR, gemessen an den Ergebnissen der Volkszählung 1964", it was due in November 1967 but has not been preserved in the archives.
90 BISKF Kaul 14 Über die Aufgaben der FDJ in der Arbeit mit den christlich orientierten Jugendlichen nach dem VII. Parteitag der SED und VIII. Parlament der FDJ, 8 August 1967, and Weiß to Klohr, n.d.
91 SAPMO-BArch DY 24/20975 Vorlage an das Sekretariat, Abt. Wohngebiete, Jugend und Stadt, 13 February 1968, p. 2.
92 SAPMO-BArch DY 24/20972 Klohr, Die weltanschaulich-atheistische Bildung, pp. 2–3.
93 SAPMO-BArch DY 24/20975 Einschätzung über die kirchlichen Aktivitäten unter der Jugend der DDR and appendices.
94 Detailed documentation in UAR SML 5, 80, 128, 129 and 130; UAR SML/5 Protokoll der Arbeitsbesprechung vom 4.5.1959; UAR SML/51 Folgende Angaben werden benötigt; UAR SML/52 Krüger to Schick, 21 July 1959; UAR SML/60 Arbeitsplan des IfG, Frühjahrssemester 1958; UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof; UAJ Bestand D, Nr. 3216 Personalakte Olof Klohr; UAJ M 656/4, pp. 422–423; UAJ M 825, p. 294.
95 UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967, p. 21; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966.
96 Conserved in BISKF Kaul 14; BISKF Klohr 314; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 131–134.
97 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 4–15; several documents in BISKF Kaul 14.
98 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735 (pp. 1–3, 39–41, 52–53) and 1859 (pp. 68–69).
99 Several documents in BISKF Kaul 14.
100 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/1771, p. 151; BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage: Einschätzung der Ergebnisse bei der weltanschaulichen Erziehung, 3 February 1965.
101 BISKF Kaul 14; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 18–35, 42–92.
102 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 62–63.

103 BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage …, p. 34.
104 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr, Klügl, Masula, Materialien, p. 11.
105 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, p. 34.
106 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, pp. 39–41; BISKF Kaul 14 Ideologische Kommission, Gera, Sekretariatsvorlage …, 3 February 1965.
107 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1735, p. 68.
108 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, p. 131; see also BISKF Kaul 14 Forschungsschwerpunkt III./6.
109 This was the case for the international youth survey: BISKF Kaul 12 Hörnig to Klohr, 8 September 1965, and Klohr to Hörnig, 21 September 1965, and Klohr, Aktennotiz.
110 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 46–55.
111 BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968, p. 7. On commissioned work see also UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967.
112 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr to Seigewasser, 23 September 1964.
113 BArch DO 4/2503, p. 371; BISKF Kaul 12 Dohle to Klohr, 2 February 1968, and Klohr to Dohle, 9 February 1968. The same is documented for Czechoslovakia, see Matějka 2011, 113.
114 BISKF Klohr 314 Auswertung der Forschungen für die Praxis.
115 BISKF Kaul 14 Forschungsschwerpunkt III./6.
116 BISKF Kaul 12 Colloquia des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für den Zeitraum Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966, p. 3; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 26–33, 38–39, 46–55. Guests included Wolle, Wilke and Seigewasser (Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs), Bellmann (Church Affairs working group) and Günter Wirth (CDU, Union Publishing).
117 BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr to Grubitzsch, 27 September 1968.
118 BISKF Kaul 14 Seigewasser to Drefahl, 8 August 1967.
119 BISKF Kaul 14 Rahmenvereinbarung zwischen dem Staatssekretariat für Kirchenfragen und der FSU, p. 1. Other documents on the subject in the same box, UAJ BC 008 and 635.
120 No archives of this working group could be found, only references in more general documents to the Chair of Scientific Atheism and traces in the *Ideologische Kommission* collection at the Federal Archives. Klohr's membership is documented in ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2086, pp. 71–73; BISKF Kaul 14 Klohr to Tietge, 30 July 1963; BISKF Kaul 12 large-format index cards, FS 1967 Gesellschaftliche Funktionen; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966; UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967, p. 21.
121 Several documents in SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV A2/9.01/7; SAPMO-BArch DY 30/82593 IK beim PB, Vorlage, Betr. Aufgaben und Struktur der IK, 5 March 1964.
122 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/82617 Information an die IK beim PB des ZK, Betr. Gen. Dr. Vogel, Sozialismus - Ethik - Christentum, p. 1.
123 Several documents in SAPMO-BArch DY/30/IV A2/9.01/16.
124 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/2468, p. 92.
125 SAPMO-BArch DY/30/IV A2/9.01/16 Handwritten title: Material f. Konferenz Gewi 13–14 March 1964, Philosophie.
126 SAPMO-BArch DY/30/IV A2/9.01/16 VII. Auseinandersetzung mit westdeutschen Staats- und Rechtsfragen.
127 Several documents in SAPMO-BArch DY/30/IV A2/9.01/16; SAPMO-BArch DY/30/IV A2/9.01/31 Booklet, Die Aufgaben der Gesellschaftswissenschaften zur Entwicklung der Forschungsarbeit bis 1970, p. 18; SAPMO-BArch DY 30/

IV A2/9.01/7 Das Programm unserer Partei und die Rolle der Gesellschaftswissenschaften in der DDR.

128 SAPMO-BArch DY/30/IV A2/9.01/16 Probleme der Konferenz der Gesellschaftswissenschaftler, p. 2.

129 SAPMO-BArch DY/30/IV A2/9.01/16 Beschlussentwurf: Massnahmen, die sich aus der Konferenz … ergeben, 31 March 1964, and Hörnig, Vorlage an die IK beim PB, 3 April 1964, p. 7.

130 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/82593 Circular by Hörnig, 2 January 1964; see also Hörnig, Protokoll Nr. 1/64 der Sitzung der IK beim PB am 6.1.1964 and related documents.

131 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/82617 Tiedke to Hager, 12 November 1964, and Information an die IK beim PB des ZK, Betr. Gen. Dr. Vogel, Sozialismus - Ethik - Christentum.

132 See an example in SAPMO-BArch DY 30/82593 on a Marxist philosophy textbook.

133 SAPMO-BArch DY/30/IV A2/9.01/31 Die Aufgaben der Gesellschaftswissenschaften zur Entwicklung der Forschungsarbeit bis 1970 (Material der IK beim PB), versions of 22 April 1965 and 11 May 1965.

134 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV A2/9.01/7 Das Programm unserer Partei und die Rolle der Gesellschaftswissenschaften in der DDR.

135 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV A2/9.01/7 Entwurf der Konzeption über die Aufgaben der Partei- und Massenpropaganda bis 1970 und die Grundsätze für das System der wissenschaftlichen Führung auf dem Gebiet der Propaganda, pp. 12–13.

136 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV A2/9.01/7 Entwurf, Die Aufgaben der Gesellschaftswissenschaften zur Entwicklung der Forschungsarbeit bis 1970 und das System ihrer einheitlichen Planung und Leitung.

137 BISKF Klohr 314 Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968, p. 15.

138 Its archives offer some glimpses in SAPMO-BArch DY 30/82593 and SAPMO-BArch DY 30/82617.

139 BStU MfS BV Rst AIM 906/71, Bd. 1 and 2.

140 BStU MfS HV A/MD/3, SIRA-TDB 12.

141 BStU MfS HA XX/4 Nr. 2217, pp. 1–71; MfS – HA XX/4 Nr. 3039, pp. 1–65; MfS BV Rostock Abt. XX Nr. 405, pp. 1–87.

142 BStU MfS HA IX Nr. 11070.

References

Ališauskienė, Milda. 2020. "The social history of irreligion in Lithuania (from the 19th century to the present). Between marginalization, monopoly and disregard?" In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 155–176. London/New York: Routledge.

Balogh, Margit and András Fejérdy. 2020. "Freethought, atheism and anticlericalism in 20th-century Hungary." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 111–136. London/New York: Routledge.

Basauri Ziuzina, Anna Mariya and Oleg Kyselov. 2020. "Atheism in the context of the secularization and desecularization of Ukraine in the 20th century." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 284–309. London/New York: Routledge.

Bauquet, Nicolas. 2013. *Pouvoir, Église et société en Hongrie communiste, 1944–1964. Histoire intérieure d'une domination*. PhD thesis, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris.

Borowik, Irena, Branko Ančić and Radosław Tyrała. 2013. "Central and Eastern Europe." In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 622–637. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BStU, ed. 2013. *Hauptverwaltung A (HV A). Aufgaben - Strukturen - Quellen*. Berlin: BStU.

Bubík, Tomáš and David Václavík. 2020. "Freethinkers and atheists in the Czech lands in the 20th century." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 58–83. London/New York: Routledge.

Bubík, Tomáš, David Václavík and Atko Remmel. 2020. "Nonreligion in the CEE region. Some remarks." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 310–324. London/New York: Routledge.

Christian, Michel and Emmanuel Droit. 2005. "Écrire l'histoire du communisme: L'histoire sociale de la RDA et de la Pologne communiste en Allemagne, en Pologne et en France." *Genèses* 61 (4): 118–133.

Combe, Sonia. 1999. *Une société sous surveillance. Les intellectuels et la Stasi*. Paris: Albin Michel.

Dahms, Hans-Joachim. 2007. "Philosophie an der Universität Jena 1945 bis 1989." In *Hochschule im Sozialismus. Studien zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (1945–1990)*, edited by Uwe Hoßfeld, Tobias Kaiser and Heinz Mestrup, t. 2, 1568–1626. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.

Dähn, Horst. 1994. "Jugend, FDJ und Religion am Vorabend des 21. August 1968. Empirische Befunde zur Mitglieder- und Sozialstruktur der FDJ, zu politischen Einstellungen sowie Verhaltensweisen von DDR-Jugendlichen in der zweiten Hälfte der sechziger Jahre und die Reaktionen der Machteliten." In *"Links und links und Schritt gehalten…" Die FDJ: Konzepte - Abläufe - Grenzen*, edited by Helga Gotschlich, 251–267. Berlin: Metropol Verlag.

Denkov, Dimitar, Georgi Vulchev and Valentina Gueorguieva. 2020. "Bulgaria. Freethought and atheism in the shadow of ethnophyletism." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 9–32. London/New York: Routledge.

Dobson, Miriam. 2015. "The social scientist meets the 'believer': Discussions of God, the afterlife, and communism in the mid-1960s." *Slavic Review* 74 (1): 79–103.

Droit, Emmanuel. 2009. *La Stasi à l'école. Surveiller pour éduquer en RDA (1950–1989)*. Paris: Nouveau Monde.

Fulbrook, Mary. 1995. *Anatomy of a dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949–1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guigo-Patzelt, Eva. 2022. "'An inner-Marxist dialogue on the dialogue': Stumbling blocks in East German Marxist scholars' exchange with Christians." In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 135–150. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

Harwood, Jonathan. 2002. "Forschertypen im Wandel 1880–1930." In *Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftspolitik. Bestandsaufnahmen zu Formationen, Brüchen und*

Kontinuitäten im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts, edited by Rüdiger vom Bruch and Brigitte Kaderas, 162–168. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

Herms, Michael. 2002. "Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ)." In *Die Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR. Ein Handbuch*, edited by Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, Andreas Herbst, Christine Krauss, Daniel Küchenmeister and Detlef Nakath, 483–499. Berlin: Dietz.

Hertzsch, Klaus-Peter. 2005. "Interview mit Prof. Dr. Klaus-Peter Hertzsch." In *Universitätserfahrung Ost. DDR-Hochschullehrer im Gespräch*, edited by Matthias Steinbach with Michael Ploenus, 41–69. Jena/Quedlinburg: Dr. Bussert & Stadeler.

Hoffmann, Alfred. 2000. *"Mit Gott einfach fertig". Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Leipzig: St. Benno.

Hoffmann, Henryk and Radosław Tyrała. 2020. "Secularist social movements in Poland. History, institutionalization, repertoire of actions." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 177–206. London/New York: Routledge.

Hübner, Peter. 1999. "Einleitung: Antielitäre Eliten?" In *Eliten im Sozialismus. Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, edited by Peter Hübner, 9–35. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.

Jessen, Ralph. 1999. *Akademische Elite und kommunistische Diktatur. Die ostdeutsche Hochschullehrerschaft in der Ulbricht-Ära*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Jessen, Ralph and Jürgen John. 2005. "Wissenschaft und Universitäten im geteilten Deutschland der 1960er Jahre." *Jahrbuch für Universitätsgeschichte* 8: 7–23.

Kiope, Māra, Inese Runce and Anita Stasulane. 2020. "The trajectories of atheism and secularization in Latvia. From the German Enlightenment to contemporary secularity." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 137–154. London/New York: Routledge.

Klimova, Svetlana M. and Elena S. Molostova. 2013. "'Scientific Atheism' in action. Soviet sociology of religion as an agent of Marxist-Atheist propaganda from the 1960s to the 1980s." *Forum Philosophicum* 18 (2): 169–190.

Laitko, Hubert. 2002. "Wissenschaftspolitik und Wissenschaftsverständnis in der DDR - Façetten [sic] der fünfziger Jahre." In *Auf dem Weg zur "Produktivkraft Wissenschaft"*, edited by Clemens Burrichter and Gerald Diesener, 107–139. Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt GmbH.

Leendertz, Ariane. 2012. "Experten - Dynamiken zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik." In *Das Soziale ordnen. Sozialwissenschaften und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheit im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Christiane Reinecke and Thomas Mergel, 337–369. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.

Maser, Peter. 1992. *Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften in der DDR 1949–1989. Ein Rückblick auf vierzig Jahre in Daten, Fakten und Meinungen*. Konstanz: Christliche Verlagsanstalt.

Matějka, Ondřej. 2011. "Between the academy and power. Czech Marxist sociology of religion (1954–1970)." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 107–132. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Mazurek, Małgorzata. 2007. "Between sociology and ideology. Perception of work and sociologists advisors in communist Poland, 1956–1970." *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 16: 11–31.

Mespoulet, Martine. 2007. "La 'renaissance' de la sociologie en URSS (1958–1972). Une voie étroite entre matérialisme historique et 'recherches sociologiques concrètes'." *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 16: 57–86.

Mestrup, Heinz. 2007. "Im Zusammenwirken für die Sozialistische Gesellschaft: Die Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena als Kooperationspartner in 'Sozialistischer' und 'Territorialer Gemeinschaftsarbeit'." In *Hochschule im Sozialismus. Studien zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (1945–1990)*, edited by Uwe Hoßfeld, Tobias Kaiser and Heinz Mestrup, t. 1, 597–649. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.

Mink, Georges. 2017. "Sociology of social structure and sociologists working in totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes in Central Europe, 1945–1989." *Stan Rzeczy* 13 (2): 21–43.

Nešpor, Zdeněk R. 2011. "Czech sociology of religion under the communist regime 1948–1989." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 59–86. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Pasternack, Peer. 1995. "Kopfarbeiter im Umbruch und Wissenschaft im Umbau. Drei Typologisierungen." *Hochschule Ost* 4 (3): 29–43.

Pawlica, Jan. n.d. "Ausbildung und Forschung auf dem Gebiet der Religionswissenschaft." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 2/8: 31–36.

Ploenus, Michael. 2007. "*… so wichtig wie das tägliche Brot" Das Jenaer Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1945–1990*. Cologne: Böhlau.

Ploenus, Michael. 2008. "'… einmalig von Eisenach bis Wladiwostock'. Olof Klohr (1927–1994)." In *Ketzer, Käutze, Querulanten. Außenseiter im universitären Milieu*, edited by Matthias Steinbach and Michael Ploenus, 366–380. Jena: Bussert & Stadeler.

Preuß, Franziska. 2007. "Die Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena und der Mauerbau 1961. Reaktionen und Auswirkungen." In *Hochschule im Sozialismus. Studien zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (1945–1990)*, edited by Uwe Hoßfeld, Tobias Kaiser and Heinz Mestrup, t. 1, 239–266. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.

Remmel, Atko and Meelis Friedenthal. 2020. "Atheism and freethought in Estonian culture." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 84–110. London/New York: Routledge.

Schäfer, Bernd. 1997. "Die KPD/SED und ihr Umgang mit religiösem Brauchtum und kirchlichem Leben im Alltag von SBZ und DDR - unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Mecklenburg-Vorpommerns bzw. der ehemaligen drei Nordbezirke." In *Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung,* volume VI: *Zur Arbeit der Enquete-Kommission: "Leben in der DDR. Leben nach 1989 - Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung". Expertisen und Forschungsstudien zum Thema "Kultur und religiöses Brauchtum"*, edited by Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 158–194. Schwerin.

Schmidt-Lux, Thomas. 2008. *Wissenschaft als Religion: Szientismus im ostdeutschen Säkularisierungsprozess*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.

Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014. "The ticket to the Soviet soul: Science, religion, and the spiritual crisis of late Soviet atheism." *The Russian Review* 73: 71–97.

Smolkin, Victoria. 2018. *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty. A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Sparschuh, Vera and Ute Koch. 1997. *Sozialismus und Soziologie. Die Gründergeneration der DDR-Soziologie. Versuch einer Konturierung*. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

Szöllösi-Janze, Margit. 2002. "Die institutionelle Umgestaltung der Wissenschaftslandschaft im Übergang vom späten Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik." In *Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftspolitik. Bestandsaufnahmen zu Formationen, Brüchen und Kontinuitäten im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Rüdiger vom Bruch and Brigitte Kaderas, 60–74. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

Tesař, Jan. 2019. *The History of Scientific Atheism. A Comparative Study of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union (1954–1991)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Tesař, Jan. 2023. "The foundation, existence and demise of Czechoslovakian museum of religion." Talk at the international conference "Communist Perspectives on Atheism in the 20th Century", Aubervilliers, 13–14 November 2023.

Thrower, James. 1983. *Marxist-Leninist "Scientific Atheism" and the Study of Religion and Atheism in the UdSSR*. Berlin/New York/Amsterdam: Mouton Publisher.

Tížik, Miroslav. 2020. "Slovakia as a country without atheism but with a history of atheization." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 258–283. London/New York: Routledge.

Turcescu, Lucian. 2020. "Romania. Between freethought, atheism and religion." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 207–232. London/New York: Routledge.

Voigt, Dieter and Sabine Gries. 1994. "Zur wissenschaftlichen Qualität von Doktorarbeiten (Dissertationen A) und Habilitationsschriften (Dissertationen B) in der DDR". *Hochschule Ost* 4 (5): 46–58.

vom Bruch, Rüdiger. 2000. "Wissenschaft im Gehäuse: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil institutionengeschichtlicher Perspektiven." *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 23: 37–49.

Weber, Hermann. 2003. "Die Entwicklung der DDR-Forschung vor und nach der Herstellung der deutschen Einheit." In *Staat und Kirchen in der DDR. Zum Stand der zeithistorischen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung*, edited by Horst Dähn and Joachim Heise, 17–28. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Weinberg, Elizabeth Ann. 1974. *The Development of Sociology in the Soviet Union*. London: Routledge.

Wierling, Dorothee. 2000. "Erzieher und Erzogene. Zu Generationenprofilen in der DDR der 60er Jahre." In *Dynamische Zeiten: Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften*, edited by Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammers, 624–641. Hamburg: Christians Verlag.

Wohlrab-Sahr, Monika, Uta Karstein and Thomas Schmidt-Lux, with Anja Frank and Christine Schaumburg. 2009. *Forcierte Säkularität. Religiöser Wandel und Generationendynamik im Osten Deutschlands*. Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus.

4 Recovery, upswing and upper limit of scientific atheism in the 1970s and 1980s

The reappearance and dynamic development of scientific atheism in the 1970s

After the Chair of Scientific Atheism at Jena closed in 1968, the early 1970s represented a new key moment for the discipline and offered opportunities that certain academics, led by the former director of the chair, Olof Klohr, seized eagerly. This neglected decade in the work on East German scientific atheism was in fact no less important than its first phase of development. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) experienced a brief "golden age" (Fulbrook 1995, 172). It gained recognition on the international scene, even entered into discussions with the Holy See, and its new leaders did not want to compromise this success with an overly aggressive Church policy (Brand 1975, 256). Several religious communities underwent restructuring at the turn of the 1970s, the most notable of which was the creation of the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR (*Bund Evangelischer Kirchen in der DDR*, BEK) in June 1969 (see Maser 1992, 81–82, 97). However, the issue of atheism received renewed attention in 1972.[1] A resolution of the SED Politburo of 7 November 1972 stated as follows: "In spreading Marxism-Leninism among the population of the GDR, the atheistic character of the Marxist-Leninist world-view [must be] emphasised. This is intended to make an overall contribution to communist education".[2]

The Ministry of Higher and Technical Education translated this injunction into a "Concept for the development of scientific atheism in higher education" (20 August 1973) and set up a working group to introduce atheism into university courses, train teaching staff and coordinate research into scientific atheism. Courses specifically devoted to scientific atheism were to be introduced from 1975/1976. Every East German university and the majority of technical colleges were to have a teacher specialising in atheism by 1980 at the latest. Olof Klohr was appointed head of a new permanent working group (*Ständige Arbeitsgruppe*, St. AG) and head of a newly created GDR-wide research group (*DDR-Forschungsgruppe*, DDR-FG).[3] Since his arrival at the Naval and Shipping Engineering College in Warnemünde-Wustrow near Rostock in 1969, Klohr had not turned his attention to other research topics

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322-5

and continued to be identified as a specialist in Marxist-Leninist atheism.[4] He was now able to set up a group devoted to scientific atheism at the Engineering College, whose most prominent members were Wolfgang Kaul and Gerhard Peine, joined in the second half of the 1970s by Ulrike Lucas and, in the 1980s, by Petra Zeugner.[5] Around 1973–1974, Hans Joachim Lutter founded a second research group on scientific atheism at the Güstrow College of Education (*Pädagogische Hochschule Güstrow*, PHG), of which he was director. Since 1964, he had been a member of the Sociology of Religion Group at the Chair of Scientific Atheism, where he was working on a PhD on secularisation under Klohr's supervision.[6] Karin Gläser, Rainer Okunowski, Hannelore Volland and Christa Naumann were very involved in the Güstrow scientific atheism group. It also included members of other institutions in different parts of the GDR who were working on similar issues, such as Jürgen Scholze, Joachim Poppe, Gerhard Lewerenz and Gerhard Winter.

Together, Lutter and Klohr and their collectives formed the core of the new network of scientific atheism. The strong momentum of scientific atheism was palpable as early as spring 1973. As at the University of Rostock and then in Jena, Klohr once again played a leading role in preparing the creation of the permanent working group on scientific atheism and, at the beginning of June 1973, organised the first week-long training course on scientific atheism.[7] If he had had his way, the responsibilities of the permanent working group would also have included:

> the further implementation of the Marxist-Leninist world-view and the repression of the influence of religion and the Church in the GDR. The laws of overcoming religiosity in socialist society […] the critique of the main directions of contemporary Protestant and Catholic theology […] current political clericalism in the FRG and its function in the system of ideological diversion

and support for "the political-ideological work of the party" and propaganda.[8] On the contrary, the majority of its founding members approved of concentrating on teaching and teacher training.[9] A possible support offered to theologians – no doubt theologians close to the regime – was once envisaged but not retained either.[10] In fact, the permanent working group also planned and supervised research activities and became responsible for cooperation with foreign partners.[11] The concentration of many responsibilities in the hands of Klohr, always assisted by Kaul, did not always make it clear which entity was the organiser of a colloquium or training course.[12]

Projects and groups were multiplying rapidly and trying to recruit throughout the GDR; colloquia were following one another; two new periodicals were launched; and grey literature abounded. Among those involved in the 1970s, several former colleagues or students of Klohr reappeared, such as Karl Freese, Eckhard Griebel, Erhard Habel and Johann Klügl, still at Jena, and Paul Frost from Leipzig.[13] Research was organised

GDR-wide through thematic research groups. Five of these were set up in the 1970s: "The position of Marxism-Leninism on religion and the Church and the scientific and world-view foundations of Marxist-Leninist atheism"; "The development of the socialist way of life, the spread of the scientific world-view and the withering away of religion and the Church under socialism"; "Atheistic education and world-view development of students", also called "World-view and atheistic education and upbringing of youth and students as part of their communist education"; "Criticism of political clericalism", to which was added "Cooperation between Marxists and believers in the struggle for peace and social progress"; and a group on Protestantism.[14] The existence of such groups was no guarantee of results, and several turned out to be rather disappointing. The one on Protestantism was the work of the Güstrow collective and the most efficient. With a systematic approach and determination, Hans Lutter made a name for himself as the main East German specialist in Protestantism, reputed to be especially complex and difficult. These results were particularly expected in the context of the division of labour between socialist countries, the GDR being the only one with a Protestant majority.[15]

There were a few regular meetings of the new network of scientific atheists. The first main one was an annual plenary meeting in Warnemünde;[16] the second was the "Warnemünde Colloquium on Atheism", which started in 1973, was annual in the 1970s and then less frequent in the 1980s.[17] Another was the "Güstrower Symposium on Atheism", held every four years from 1976 onwards.[18] Finally, there were intensive week-long courses in scientific atheism for teachers, which were held six times between 1973 and 1989 in Leipzig.[19] Complementary schemes to train teachers and civil servants in contact with the Churches were devised at the end of the 1980s.[20] At the same time, scientific atheists gave lectures at many venues that requested them.[21] Between 1976 and 1980, for instance, members of the GDR-wide research group on scientific atheism gave 825 lectures to 40,800 people.[22] As before, they mainly targeted potential multipliers.[23] A brochure by Klohr, *On World-view and Atheistic Propaganda* (1975), was intended to support the work of these multipliers.[24] Teachers were given materials to help them "emphasise the atheistic character" in their lessons and to run special courses in scientific atheism.[25]

Two periodicals were published: *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* (WA), by the Warnemünde group, and *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* (F.u.B.), by the Güstrow group. The first one also remained very committed to providing help for teachers. Many of the issues were intended to provide readers with a basic grounding in the research carried out in the 1950s and 1960s. Four main themes stood out: the extensive use of the "classics" of Marx and Lenin; a certain vision of history; the oft-repeated opposition between religion and science; and a deliberately polemical approach. Most issues, especially those from the 1970s, were conceived as content to be assimilated, and some were presented as "works of reference". It was only in the

1980s that the periodicals began to open up in part to scientific debate. Meetings between researchers sometimes gave rise to animated discussions, but sometimes the content of the presentations was carefully prepared and discussed beforehand between scientific atheists, and consensus remained the ideal horizon.[26] A strong concern for confidentiality and sometimes technical problems hampered the distribution and reception of the brochures and journals.[27] The GDR did not have a publishing house or book series dedicated to atheism like the USSR and Czechoslovakia, nor a periodical geared towards popularisation like the Soviet *Nauka i zhizn'*. Both WA and F.u.B. systematically included a degree of confidentiality.

Klohr also considered it essential to give readers an overview of the situation in other socialist countries (WA 1/22), in developing countries (WA 1/6), Africa and the Middle East (WA 1/26; 2/15 and 16), Latin America (WA FB 35 and 44), Poland (WA 2/8 and WA FB 46), on scientific atheism in Bulgaria (WA 2/4) and recent Soviet literature (1964–1974, WA 2/3). Information on Czechoslovakia and Hungary was planned but not realised.[28] F.u.B. published five issues presenting selected Soviet works, according to the needs of the Güstrow collective (F.u.B. 4, 11, 18, 28 and 43). The emphasis was therefore on Protestantism and theoretical or general works (F.u.B. 4), summaries or translations of articles taken mainly from the specialist periodicals *Nauka i religija* and *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*. Particular attention was paid to the transliteration of names, titles and institutions to facilitate access to the original Russian-language works. After the Güstrow symposium in 1984, Güstrow researchers even proposed a systematic approach, by country and by theme, to what had been said, consciously or unconsciously highlighting points to be dealt with that their guests had not formulated as such. They also staged themselves as a group by lumping all East Germans together in a controversy over the definition of religion (F.u.B. 50, 293–294). In the 1980s, readers were provided with documentation on the symposia on scientific atheism held in Brno in 1982, Bratislava in 1983 and Budapest in 1986, either through the papers given by East German researchers or summaries of those given by foreign participants (WA FB 40; F.u.B. 34 and 36). In 1984, Peter Kroh documented the constitutional provisions on freedom of conscience and belief in 11 socialist and seven capitalist countries (F.u.B. 38). The extensive bibliographical undertakings of WA and F.u.B. ceased, however, in 1982 and 1984/1985, respectively. From then on, neither of them systematically monitored Soviet productions.[29] The reasons for this loss of interest and the dynamics between researchers in scientific atheism from different socialist countries require more in-depth research.

The Güstrow symposia always dealt with a theme broad enough to open up the horizons to other socialist countries and welcomed more foreign guests, the same ones that the East German professors met at every international conference organised in the GDR, the USSR or Czechoslovakia. Simultaneous translation into German and Russian was provided for the entire symposium, but the references remained confined to the GDR,

rather than placing the Güstrow symposia in the context of an ongoing international debate in scientific atheism. A photograph of the 1984 symposium also showed it was chaired solely by East Germans.[30] The symposia were held on several occasions at the junction between the five-year plans and provided an opportunity to discuss research planning issues that only concerned the GDR.

International contacts had already been re-established in 1973.[31] A concept drawn up in 1974 focused mainly on the USSR, more specifically the Institute of Scientific Atheism (Garadzha, Timofeyev) and the Chair of Theory and History of Atheism at Lomonossow University in Moscow (Ugrinovich).[32] The intense contacts with Czechoslovak scientific atheists prior to 1968 were definitely past. Relations with Poland (the Institute of Religious Sciences at the University of Krakow) and with Czechoslovakia (the University of Košice, the Institute of Scientific Atheism in Brno, the Ministry of Popular Education and the Ministry of Higher Education) were only established in the second half of the decade.[33] Hungary and Bulgaria also remained secondary partners.[34] The names of Polish, Czechoslovakian and Hungarian colleagues were so unfamiliar to Güstrow researchers that some of their publications were transliterated as Russian (F.u.B. 18). No trace remained of the attempts made in the 1960s to set up a joint research council and a joint periodical.[35] Researchers knew each other, communicated, kept abreast of each other's work and published in specialised periodicals of the other countries.[36] On several occasions, Klohr emphasised to his supervisory institutions the expectations foreign colleagues placed on East German researchers in the field of scientific atheism.[37]

Personal contacts and travel were also on the increase. For conferences abroad, it was customary to send a few representatives, often the same ones, and then to circulate reports in specialist journals. Each of the professors had personal contacts and could also form part of the international partnerships of his institution: Hans Lutter with teacher training colleges in the Soviet Union, Werner Lange from Halle with the universities of Bratislava and Debrecen, scientific atheists from Köthen with a school devoted to atheism in Poland, etc. In the 1980s, the Warnemünde college had an official partnership with the Institute of Scientific Atheism in Bratislava (Rothbarth et al. 1989, 86), and cooperation in scientific atheism was formally included in research plans with the University of Kraków (Last, Schaefer and Gralki 1992, A146). Władysław Pałubicki probably came into contact with Warnemünde's atheism researchers in this way.

A major innovation in the 1970s and 1980s was to send "cadres" to train in the Soviet Union (never in other countries) for periods ranging from four weeks to several years, including Wolfgang Heyde, Franklin Borrmann, Gerhard Peine and Bernd Stoppe, all in the mid-1970s.[38] Siegfried Hegenbarth and Robert Broda returned to Berlin in the early 1980s with Soviet diplomas. Another East German was spotted studying scientific atheism in Rostov-on-Don and was offered a post on his return.[39] It is true that after

1975 the Soviets no longer took part in the week-long training courses in Leipzig. Heise concluded that:

> this is also an indication that in the second half of the 1970s, GDR functionaries and religious scholars distanced themselves again - albeit cautiously - from the theoretical positions and Church policy practices that were common in the USSR in the 1970s. Soviet atheism research […] finally lost its role model function for the GDR.
>
> (Heise 1998, 160)

All the documented exchanges do not support this argument. Especially Garadzha's visits to the GDR remained very regular until he became head of the Institute of Scientific Atheism in Moscow (1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980). As the documentation in the German archives is not necessarily exhaustive, more research would be needed to be able to give an opinion on relations in the 1980s. Ugrinovich also visited the GDR in 1976 and 1983, and Timofeyev in 1975, 1978, 1980 and 1988. For 1979, the presence of Soviet colleagues was noted, but without names. A report from 1979 indicated, rightly or wrongly, that the Soviets were simply not available on the dates of the last Warnemünde colloquium.[40] Only Istvan Kónya, a scientific atheist from Debrecen and a long-standing friend of the Klohr family, could claim a more regular presence in the East German scientific atheism network. As for the return visits, Klohr travelled to the Soviet Union, mainly to Moscow, every year between 1973 and 1978, and again in 1984 and 1987. This rhythm rather reflects the decline in interest in Soviet literature noted for the mid-1980s.[41]

The return of East Germans to international research into scientific atheism was also expressed through their participation in collective works – no longer in sociology as in the 1960s, and above all under the aegis of the Soviets and no longer the Czechoslovaks. A first book, published in 1979, brought together East German and Soviet authors under the direction of Garadzha and Klohr.[42] A second project on the atheist education of students in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Mongolia and Hungary was due to appear in various countries and languages, but its publication in the GDR was discouraged, including by the scientific atheists Klohr and Kliem, for political reasons: "The content would give certain backward circles in the Churches too many points of departure for negative discussions". For them, the foreign articles did not make enough room for cooperation with believers.[43] In this respect, it is indeed appropriate to talk about distancing from foreign colleagues who were considered too radical. However, the coherence of the work and its scientific quality were also judged insufficient. We do not know how the abandonment was communicated to the foreign colleagues and whether political precautions made it possible to withhold the scientific judgement. The East German scientific atheists also tried to provide the GDR with a textbook on scientific atheism,

as Czechoslovakia had done in 1966 and Bulgaria in 1967 (WA 2/4). In the mid-1970s, their attention was mostly drawn to the new textbook *Foundations of Scientific Atheism*, published in Moscow in 1973. A translation by Helmut Dressler of Humboldt University was reproduced in 50 copies and circulated among East German specialists.[44]

Whatever the differences between researchers in the Eastern Bloc, scientific atheists tried to present a united front to their Western colleagues. 1973 also marked Olof Klohr's return to the wider scientific community. He spoke at the XVth World Congress of Philosophy in Varna in September 1973[45] and renewed contacts within the International Sociological Association alongside Dmitri Ugrinovich. At the Seventh World Congress of Sociology in Toronto (1974), he was elected to the Research Committee on the Sociology of Religion on the proposal of his Soviet colleagues.[46] Klohr used the argument of (presumed) Soviet interests to obtain the endorsement of the Central Committee's Science Department.[47] In 1978, he was very keen to be able to take part in the Ninth Congress in Uppsala and speak at a session chaired by Ugrinovich. Faced with the difficulty of obtaining authorisation from the East German authorities, Klohr invoked a consultation already underway with the Soviets and claimed that withdrawing would embarrass him in their eyes.[48] In the end, he was able to travel.

Within the GDR, the new impetus given to scientific atheism in 1972–1973 came up against obstacles, shortcomings and resistance at the end of the decade that prevented the great ambitions from being realised. Apart from exchanges with other socialist countries, the discipline was developing a confidentiality that was difficult to overcome. Books on scientific atheism available in libraries became increasingly rare. A project for a major collective work failed in 1978.[49] However, the confidential circuits were not running sufficiently smoothly to ensure the reception of grey literature. The scientific atheism network, its publications and its events were difficult to access, because places were limited, by invitation only, and participation required a delegation from the home institution.[50] However, not all higher education institutions were interested. As early as 1975, Klohr began to draw up a list of institutions that had not sent a representative to the week-long training courses, and he did so very regularly throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[51] The organisers proved to be largely powerless to deal with this absenteeism, and the situation was still the same in 1986. At least as serious was the lack of loyalty on the part of participants: too many of them came to learn about scientific atheism only once or twice. By the end of the regime, only four people had taken part in all six week-long training courses, and 11 had been present to 5 of them.[52] Moreover, the low hierarchical level of most of the participants meant that it was not possible to enhance atheistic education within their respective institutions after the training course or to consolidate and rejuvenate the core of the scientific atheism network. These problems were noted as early as the mid-1970s and were never overcome.

The discrepancy between the need for competent cadres and their lack was not unique to the GDR; it even existed in the Soviet Union (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 189; Peris 1998). In East Germany, the system of colloquia and training courses reached a low point at the end of the decade, with only around 30 participants at the Warnemünde colloquia in 1979 and 1980 and at the training course in 1979. The next training course did not take place until five years later, and several of the meetings scheduled for 1978–1980 were postponed.[53] Perhaps the emergence of a new Department for Scientific Atheism in 1977 at the Academy of Social Sciences, followed by the Council on Cooperation between Communists and Believers in 1981, threw the system out of kilter. In any case, the momentum of the 1970s had run out of steam, even though most of the tools established by the East German network of scientific atheism from 1973 onwards lasted until the end of the regime. The introduction of special courses in scientific atheism, a priority since 1973, was also already lagging far behind those in other disciplines.

A more Party-led organisation in the 1980s

The end of the 1970s saw the emergence of a third major centre for East German scientific atheism, which until then had been firmly under the control of Olof Klohr and Hans Lutter. It was set up at the Academy of Social Sciences (*Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften*, AfG) attached to the SED Central Committee and was headed by Wolfgang Kliem. Born in 1930, of the same generation as Klohr and Lutter, Kliem had gained his PhD in 1965 with a thesis on rural sociology in the FRG, a subject with no religious connection.[54] As late as 1970, he gave a talk on this subject at an East German sociology congress (Kliem 1970).[55] According to his wife, he had been baptised, confirmed and received a religious education without being attached to the Church, but he had always been interested in religion.[56] A move to Berlin in 1977 to head up a new scientific atheism collective suited him.[57] It is not clear from the archives which State, SED body or individual was behind this new creation. Kliem was joined by Udo Pacholik, who arrived from a university of applied sciences for economics in Berlin. Talking about his career in 2010, Pacholik said his religious upbringing in the Protestant Church had had a strong influence on him, with a deaconess even hoping to see him become a pastor. However, he said he lost his faith and left the Church in 1974.[58]

Kliem and Pacholik proved to be the most productive of the AfG group, which also included Robert Broda and Siegfried Hegenbarth. Both had gained their PhDs at the Moscow Institute of Scientific Atheism, in 1977 and 1979, respectively. Peter Gerstenberger, a doctoral student in the second half of the 1980s, then joined the team, as did Petra Kasimirski. Pacholik had completed his dissertation B, i.e. the second thesis, which had replaced habilitation, unlike Kliem, who never did. All these researchers had a weak standing in the network of scientific atheism. Kliem, Pacholik and Hegenbarth appeared

on the scene around 1975. Admittedly, a document at the time stated that "Prof. Kliem has solid knowledge in the field of Marxist-Leninist atheism", and Klohr recommended that he be transferred to the University of Leipzig in order to establish the discipline there.[59] But apart from Kliem's interlude at the head of a thematic group for a few months, which was not a success,[60] it is striking to note that none of the members of the AfG group was integrated into the system of thematic groups, either before 1977 or afterwards. They published little in the specialised periodicals and kept a highly critical distance, at least from the Warnemünde one.[61] Kliem was a member of the management of the GDR-wide research group and the permanent working group on scientific atheism. He even joined the major book project (abandoned in 1978) in which he had not previously been involved, becoming one of its editors in 1977. It was from 1977 to 1978, when the group was set up at the Academy of Social Sciences, that Kliem and his colleagues received invitations and turned into assiduous participants in the meetings of the scientific atheism network.

Klohr and Kaul had to take note of a change which shifted the centre of gravity of East German scientific atheism, given the institutional weight of the party-linked Academy.[62] Kliem was also sent to Moscow for a month in 1977. The Academy of Social Sciences attached to the Central Committee of the CPSU and its Institute for Scientific Atheism were seen as natural partners and as essential for refining the profile of research in the GDR.[63] It was indeed East German research as a whole that AfG researchers wanted to influence. This mission was even explicitly assigned to them as soon as 1977. It was a matter of "clearing the 'heads', bringing leading comrades into line with the [AfG department in scientific atheism]".[64] However, Kliem proved unable to oust Klohr and Lutter entirely in his attempt to reform scientific atheism. The discussions did not go smoothly: Kliem attacked Klohr in particular, describing several of his projects as "illusions" and "politically disorienting".[65] Kliem called for scientific atheism to be decompartmentalised, for instance, in the direction of Islam and Buddhism, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa – not an entirely new idea, even if he presented it as such. In line with his institutional position and the positioning of his own group of researchers, he also wanted research to be more politically formulated and intended to establish SED supervision over research that had hitherto been overseen by the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education and largely focused on educational issues; his mission was "to find such solutions that ensure long-term political leadership subject to party control".[66] Making scientific atheism more visible and accessible to a wider public was not part of the objectives. The AfG's scientific atheism collective was primarily expected to provide internal analyses for the party leadership on which it depended.[67]

It took a few years after the creation of the new department at the AfG to refine Kliem's vision of what scientific atheism should be. With him, issues such as peace, the "revolutionary world process" and its manifestations all over the globe, led to religious movements being considered from other

angles. These reflections found an institutional culmination in 1981 with the creation of a new structure called "Problem Council" (*Problemrat*) on "world-view problems in the cooperation between communists and believers". An internal document stipulated:

> The most important task of the Problem Council is the political orientation, substantive direction and coordination of research in the field of scientific atheism […] The Problem Council discusses theoretical and political-ideological fundamental questions, advises on important concepts and results of research, assesses the status of research, provides information on substantive results of scientific work and promotes the scientific debate and socialist collective work.[68]

It was, therefore, a question of scientific atheism. Similarly, the group founded at the AfG in 1977 did have this title. For the Problem Council, it was quickly discarded on the grounds that the term was "ambiguous and [did] not adequately address the concerns of the Problem Council".[69] The proposals focused on "world-view (or world-view and philosophical) questions of co-operation between communists and believers", possibly adding "in the socialist society of the GDR and in the revolutionary world process", but they also sought a name that was not too long. Around August-September 1981, the idea arose of replacing "questions" with "problems". This was because, as Kliem's handwritten notes dated 29 September show, "Millions of believers / not progressive / but problem".[70] One document spoke of "two opposing trends": On the one hand, the commitment of believers to peace and socialism, and on the other, "political clericalism", which had to be fought.[71] In fact, the first axis clearly took precedence over the second. In a discussion that raised the question "what are world-view questions of co-operation…?", Kliem's superior Erich Hahn made it clear that "world-view problems in cooperation between communists and believers" were not to be confused with "problems in world-view cooperation". He planned for the Problem Council to tackle the "spiritual [*geistig*] problems arising from co-operation, humanism, pacifism", "principles of co-operation", "transmission of m[arxism-]l[eninism] to believers" and "the world-view problems that stand in the way of the willingness of believers to cooperate".[72] At the same time, those in charge were anxious not to create the impression of a new anti-religious campaign.[73] A few years later, Kliem pointed out that the term "scientific atheism" was controversial and that the emphasis should be shifted from the "negative" to the "positive" function of scientific atheism.[74] The name of the new Problem Council was intended to symbolise new priorities. It is doubtful whether this communication strategy produced the desired results (see Hoffmann 2000, 273; Schäfer 1997, 186).

To begin with, the creation of the Problem Council raised the question, "what can Klohr and Lutter do?".[75] Their place in the future Problem Council was not self-evident, but they had to be involved. In the end,

they both became vice presidents, together with Hellmuth Hartmann from Erfurt, a more low-profile researcher. Among the members of the Problem Council, well-known researchers in scientific atheism such as Borrmann, Dressler, Kaul and Lange rubbed shoulders with researchers working in other geographical areas in order to cover Islam and Buddhism, including Kurt Büttner and Holger Preißler. Several SED and State institutions were also represented.

The creation of the Problem Council led to a restructuring of activities and a new division of tasks within the scientific atheism network. Teaching was to remain the responsibility of the permanent working group, still chaired by Klohr, while the Problem Council was to concentrate on coordinating research.[76] In day-to-day practice, however, the roles of the two governing bodies were intertwined, and the Problem Council tended to want to establish control over many areas: The projects of the permanent working group; the development of new research groups and personnel issues; the content of individual works produced by the scientific atheists; the preparations for scientific events; international contacts; and even contacts with East German colleagues from other specialities. It did not even refrain from interfering in teaching.[77] Faced with the extra workload, Kliem realised that it would be impossible to control everything directly. He therefore concluded that the "Control system is not to be perfected", otherwise it would stifle rather than stimulate research in scientific atheism. It was better for other researchers to discipline themselves by internalising the new guidelines and constraints: "Solution: Enforcement of our conception in the consciousness of atheism researchers".[78] The success of this approach was imperfect throughout the 1980s, putting the real power of the scientific atheists of the AfG into perspective.

In order to clarify and inculcate its own vision, the Problem Council organised two study days a year, in May or June and in October. It brought in partners who had not previously been part of the scientific atheism network, such as the AfG's "History of Church Policy" research group. The Problem Council was primarily interested in Catholicism and Islam and therefore in corresponding working groups at the Central Council for Asian, African and Latin American Studies.[79] Olof Klohr had already addressed these specialists. At the Problem Council, the names of Büttner and Preißler came up most often; Martin Robbe and Gerhard Höpp were invited in April 1984. A study day in 1982 and another in 1985 were devoted to Islam. The desire to involve these specialists in Islam was made explicit at the very creation of the Problem Council.[80] Wolfgang Kliem himself had gathered documents on Islam, above all on the Near and Middle East.[81] One of Olof Klohr's concepts from 1982 was broader in scope, without being able to provide the names of specialists to cover all the potentially interesting regions.[82] In comparison to the network initiated by Olof Klohr, the Problem Council managed to take a further step, laying out a plan in June 1982, always with the same ambition to control: "By 1985, we must be able to orientate research in the

field of Islam and Hinduism accordingly".[83] In November of the same year, Hans-Joachim Peuke and Hiltrud Rüstau were invited to extend the project to Buddhism and Hinduism, respectively.[84] However, these religions were not included in the Problem Council's own research plans.

Several documents from 1980/1981 specify the thematic orientation of the new Problem Council, formalised around five axes. The first concerned the integration of believers into the socialist society developed in the GDR, focusing not only on policy towards them and experiences of cooperation but also on "religious consciousness" and its changes. Issues such as the natural sciences, ethics, ecology, the "Christian way of life" (*christlicher Lebensstil*) and, above all, the commitment to peace were included in this first complex of topics. The second invited scientific atheists to look at "The role of religions and believers in the revolutionary world process", potentially taking all religions into account once again from the perspective of a peace so dear to Wolfgang Kliem and his group. The third line of work, "Religions and religious ideology under the conditions of the intensified ideological conflict between socialism and imperialism", indicated that they were not forgetting "the abuse of religion", "clerical anti-communism" and other excesses that they thought needed to be combated. Religious consciousness and its "philosophical and world-view problems" were the subject of the next thematic area. Rather than leaning towards psychology or related sciences, it allowed for the integration of conceptions of society, progress and social doctrines that the AfG group had already begun to study. An opening onto Islam and Buddhism was considered. Finally, the last thematic line was devoted to atheism: "Problems of the position and function of atheism in the Marxist-Leninist world view". This continued the earlier work on scientific atheism, including education and propaganda. A preparatory document even foresaw an entire complex on the communist education of youth.[85]

The various documents and handwritten notes from 1980/1981 also reveal an interest in carrying out historical work and even biographical research on East German churchmen, but this was not put into practice. More generally, the key ideas, in line with the AfG's profile and which brought new accents to East German scientific atheism, revolved around the commitment of believers to peace, religious consciousness and "Christian humanism" (often in inverted commas). The Problem Council's 1981–1985 five-year plan took up these five main themes.[86] In 1983, the Problem Council planned to contribute to the honours paid to Martin Luther on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of his birth. In the run-up to the 500th anniversary of the birth of reformer Thomas Müntzer in 1989, further articles were planned, as well as an excursion that was prevented by the fall of the Berlin Wall. Kliem's ideas for the plan covering the years 1986–1990 raised two criticisms symptomatic of the evolution of scientific atheism as a discipline in the 1980s:

> It seems problematic […] that - in contrast to the current plan - the terms 'atheism' or 'atheistic research' were completely eliminated. […] We

> would also like to point out [the question of] whether the confrontation with clerical anti-communism should not be explicitly set as a task.[87]

The Problem Council's general plans were supplemented by a special research plan on Catholicism for 1981–1985. A specific research programme on Islam was supposed to emerge, according to several 1981 documents, but was probably not drawn up.[88] With the exception of Catholicism, the Problem Council had no desire to reorganise research groups. As a result, the plans it formalised sometimes lacked substance. Research continued to rely on the research groups that had already been set up, in particular the "big three" (considered as such in several documents) at the AfG, Warnemünde and Güstrow. The rest depended on the researchers' goodwill and on institutions over which the Problem Council had little power. "Research on Islam will primarily be realised by the 'Islam and Society' research group planned in Leipzig (Karl Marx University, Near and Middle East Section)", stated a document from 1980 or 1981. It classified the numerous projects into three categories: "plan" (feasible), "preparation" and "open", i.e. for which the conditions in terms of human resources and skills had not been met.[89] As so often happened, ambitions came up against reality, and scientific atheism developed within the limits dictated by what was feasible.

Diversification and newcomers of the last decade

One of the developments that the Problem Council chaired by Kliem would have liked to control in the 1980s was the emergence of several new, secondary research centres in scientific atheism. Far from being standardised by the Problem Council, the discipline diversified with people from different backgrounds and positions in more or less favourable local situations. At Berlin's Humboldt University, a "Teaching and Research Department on Theory and History of Religion and Atheism" (*Lehr- und Forschungsgebiet Theorie und Geschichte der Religion und des Atheismus*) was founded in 1979, under the direction of Wolfgang Kleinig (Kleinig 1994). Scientific atheism was not new at this university, but Helmut Dressler had not been able to be as active as hoped in the second half of the 1970s.[90] There was also Fritz Welsch,[91] but Klohr and Kaul had higher hopes for Kleinig, whom they had spotted in 1977.[92] Born in 1933, he had attended a religious school in Potsdam and studied Protestant theology at Humboldt University. After beginning a thesis in theology and a short-term position in a parish, he was dismissed from the Church, disaffiliated from it by his own account in May 1960, and joined the SED. In 1961, he became an assistant lecturer in Marxism-Leninism in Potsdam. In 1966, he defended a doctoral thesis on Catholicism (Kleinig 1966), and in 1979, he joined Humboldt University, where he taught scientific atheism. After many difficulties and delays, in 1985 he defended his second thesis on "The political function of the Catholic Church today" (Kleinig 1985).[93]

At Humboldt University, Wolfgang Kleinig succeeded in bringing together a whole series of young people interested in scientific atheism. Nine of them defended a PhD by 1990, 15 had a diploma thesis and two were working on their second thesis. The group's monthly philosophical seminar was less focused on current political events than other venues of East German scientific atheism and not at all on atheist propaganda, teaching or "practice". Not entitled "scientific atheism", it offered the opportunity to refine one's knowledge and deepen certain notions used in theology or in the sciences of religions beyond the communist world, without polemics. Defining religion was seen as the primary theoretical challenge. It dealt with Feuerbach, Hegel, Catholic theology, African and Asian theologies, and reflections on myth and sacrifice. The historical approach announced in the title aimed to understand religions in their genesis and evolution.[94] For his second thesis, Kleinig envisaged dealing with "Philosophical and methodological questions of a Marxist science of religion" (*marxistische Religionswissenschaft*).[95] The project came to nothing; no doubt Wolfgang Kliem was opposed to it, having criticised a draft article by Kleinig in the same vein in 1981.[96] Along with a few other less senior researchers with less established institutional positions, Kleinig did indeed throw stones into the pond of scientific atheism in the 1980s.[97] His own understanding of religion evolved between a very negative article in 1980 and the eve of the regime's end. In the first, he spoke of irrationalism, mysticism, clericalism and a Catholicism that was at best ready to "adapt" (Kleinig 1980). Subsequently, Kleinig conceded that religions had a "momentum of their own" and "inherent laws".[98] The contemporary framework for developing these "dynamics of their own" was the same as emphasised by Wolfgang Kliem, that of "cooperation between communists and believers".[99] The group endeavoured to highlight the "philosophical-theological and/or theological-philosophical motivations for social action"[100] and became part of a working group on peace. Kleinig's interests were broader than Catholicism; he planned sessions on Confucianism and Shintoism, undertook a trip to India in 1983, and was the East German scientific atheist most interested in Judaism.[101]

The group published its own periodical, *Contributions on the Theory and History of Religion and Atheism* (*Beiträge zur Theorie und Geschichte der Religion und des Atheismus*), together with Horst Dohle of the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs, with whom it was more closely associated than with most scientific atheists at other universities. A textbook on the "theory and history of religion and atheism" was not achieved.[102] Kleinig was a member of several scientific atheist bodies. Wolfgang Kliem, who was sometimes very critical of his ideas, nevertheless said of him in 1981 that "he belongs to those forces in the field of scientific atheism in the GDR that contribute to the profiling of this scientific discipline according to the requirements of the Party".[103] However, Kleinig did not access a professorship and had little opportunity to travel abroad.[104] Moreover, a document from 1986 suggests that he should have Kliem, Pacholik and Klohr "give their blessing" to a topic before getting down to work.[105]

Scientific atheism was more difficult to establish in the south of East Germany. The Leipzig and Dresden districts in particular, which were home to major higher education establishments and large numbers of students, were of concern to the network's leaders. A small scientific atheism group had certainly sprung up in Halle with Werner Lange, Viola Schubert-Lehnhardt, Heinz Thielecke and perhaps two other assistants,[106] but this was not enough. In Leipzig, a major place of Marxist-Leninist education, scientific atheism remained very weak. Gottfried Handel had taken a personal interest, but he died in 1980. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, those in charge showed no eagerness to introduce courses in scientific atheism.[107] Olof Klohr first counted on Wolfgang Kliem's transfer to Leipzig University to change the situation, then on Paul Frost, a hope that was also dashed.[108] It was not until 1987 that the situation began to change, thanks to Bernd Stoppe. Born in 1948, he had been baptised and received a Protestant religious education before leaving the Church; he later described himself as "religiously unmusical". However, he was interested in atheism and the criticism of religion as a subject for research.[109] Since 1974 or 1975, he frequented the East German network, and in 1976–1977, he spent ten months in Moscow specialising in scientific atheism. In his PhD, he set about clarifying the terms "religious science" (*Religionswissenschaft*), "criticism of religion" (*Religionskritik*), "atheism" and "scientific atheism" (Stoppe 1981).

At the University of Leipzig, Bernd Stoppe began to represent scientific atheism after his return from Moscow in mid-1977. However, the archives give the impression of a complicated position within his institution, with superiors who were all but sympathetic. The preparation of a second dissertation came to nothing (Guigo-Patzelt forthcoming). In 1987, he wrote a study on dialogue and "cooperation between Marxists and Christians in the struggle for peace", which was heavily criticised within the university and much weakened his position.[110] In April 1988, he nevertheless organised a conference entitled "Marxism-Leninism on religion and the Church" in the presence of Kurt Reiprich and Roland Krayer, two other scholars from Leipzig interested in the subject.[111] One might also mention Holger Preißler, a specialist in Islam well known to Klohr and Kliem, who in 1988–1989 headed an interdisciplinary working group on "Marxist-Leninist theory of religion" at Leipzig. He was powerful enough not to fear blame from local Party structures.[112]

It was Roland Krayer who gave the most hope to institutionalise scientific atheism in Leipzig at the end of the 1980s. Born in 1950, he defended his PhD thesis on "Religious world-view and the common struggle of Marxists and Christians against imperialist war and for social progress" in 1985 (Krayer 1985). He occasionally spoke on the subject at the Marxism-Leninism training given in Leipzig,[113] but he did not attend the activities organised by Klohr and Lutter. In May and June 1987, the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education sought the views of both Stoppe and Krayer on the prospects for further developing scientific atheism at Karl Marx University. While Stoppe

placed much more emphasis on teaching than on research,[114] Roland Krayer called for "primarily philosophically intended […] fundamental research" that would include, among other topics, the Marxist-Leninist conception of religion and the theoretical bases for cooperation with Christians. Krayer also widened the scope to include cooperation with Warnemünde, Güstrow, Berlin, regional sciences and other disciplines.[115] However, any initiative to create a group came up against resistance from university officials. "I can't imagine anything under 'Marxist-Leninist theory of religion' (the communists don't have to develop it and the Christians have theology […])", wrote a vice-rector in 1988.[116] More often than not, they claimed a lack of competent people and available university positions.[117] The heads of the scientific atheism network and the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education nevertheless maintained the objective of a group in Leipzig for the 1990s.[118]

The problem was different for another specialist in scientific atheism who was making his mark in the 1980s in Zittau on the border with Poland and Czechoslovakia. Jürgen Scholze, born in 1943, had been teaching at a technical college there since 1968. He was baptised into the Protestant Church, confirmed, but, as he later wrote, "then […] lost contact with the Church for various reasons".[119] In 1977, he married a practicing Protestant. The following year he gained his PhD at the Güstrow College of Education and, after a period of study in Leningrad in 1980/1981, did his second thesis, also in Güstrow, in 1986. Scholze was indeed fully integrated into Hans Lutter's group on Protestantism, often travelling there, attending study days and colloquia and publishing mainly in the Güstrow journal. His speciality was Protestant positions on technology and technical, scientific and social progress. He then broadened his focus to include ecumenical bodies and other topical issues such as the conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. He had no particular links with the scientific atheists who were located nearer to him. According to his widow's recollection, his last superior in Zittau put obstacles in his way. Scholze seems to have been quite isolated in this remote corner of the GDR. None of the surviving documents mention the idea of developing a real centre or a research group. It was through his integration into the network that Scholze could have pursued a more advanced career as a scientific atheist, circumstances permitting. In 1986, he succeeded Olof Klohr as head of the permanent working group. It was then envisaged that he would succeed Lutter or Klohr at the head of one of the research centres in the north of the country.

The city of Dresden attracted far more attention from those responsible for East German scientific atheism. At the Technical University of Dresden, subjects relating to scientific atheism were taught throughout the 1970s.[120] Scientific atheism was not the preserve of a single specialist but an interest shared by several colleagues. Siegfried Wollgast, a specialist in the history of philosophy and the Enlightenment in particular, taught part of the course on scientific atheism, an area he saw as promising and in which he noted a keen interest among students in 1975.[121] Two years later, he noted: "Education

in scientific atheism should definitely be profiled".[122] His colleague Erwin Herlitzius, author of a habilitation on "Marxism on the nature, concept and origin of religion" (Herlitzius 1965), also taught scientific atheism; in 1979, he even asked to take responsibility for the courses.[123] He supervised the thesis of Gabriele Müller, married name Christian, on "Socialist consciousness of religious people under socialism" (1982);[124] she also went on to teach scientific atheism in the 1980s.[125] However, there was no formal research group on scientific atheism, and Wollgast, a very independent spirit, did not place himself in this speciality,[126] did not take part in the network's activities, and only maintained personal contacts with some of its members.[127] As for the teaching of atheism at the Technical University, the information and materials compiled under the direction of Olof Klohr barely made it to Dresden, and the Dresden teachers took the liberty of creating a course of their own.[128] Herlitzius also reported major differences of approach with Klohr.[129] Conversely, the directors of the scientific atheism network considered Siegfried Wollgast to be perfectly capable of teaching courses in scientific atheism.[130] However, as Siegfried Hegenbarth of the AfG put it in 1980, "Comrade Herlitzius seems to be completely disconnected from the more recent developments, and in this respect the topic and the structure of the dissertation [of Gabriele Müller-Christian] only give a picture of the Dresden confusion".[131] Integrating the young woman into the network seemed more important.[132]

Wolfgang Heyde, born in 1938, had been a member of the scientific atheism network since 1973 and was one of its longest-standing and most loyal members. He held a position at the Dresden Transport College but also taught courses in scientific atheism at the neighbouring Technical University.[133] In addition to courses and colloquia in East Germany, he accompanied Klohr to an international colloquium in Lviv in 1974 and then spent ten months at the Chair of History and Theory of Atheism in Moscow. His work focused on Protestantism, as in his second thesis entitled "Socialism as an idea and reality in interpretation through Protestantism" (Heyde 1977). His college supported this specialisation, which took the form of courses, lectures and the opportunity to conduct research.[134] From 1988, Heyde was assisted by Karin Gania, who was 30 years old and a former student at Leningrad. She seems to have discovered scientific atheism in 1986 but was able to defend a PhD thesis just a few months before German reunification, which was striking for its eminently positive view of religion.[135]

In 1987, a research group on "Religion – Humanism – Scientific and Technical Progress" (*Religion – Humanismus – Wissenschaftlich-technischer Fortschritt*) emerged; it was officially founded in June 1988. In particular, it aimed to study the ways in which theologians and Churches – Catholic but above all Protestant – interpreted technical development, their relationship to technical and natural sciences, the position of believers in socialist society and the question of whether they possessed a particularity and what this might consist of – all with a view to identifying new possibilities for cooperation between communists and Christians and providing expertise to the SED and

the government.[136] The group relied on cooperation with Manfred Düsing from the Mountain Academy in Freiberg, who was 41 years old at the time. He had defended a PhD in 1977 on "'Religious socialism' in the Weimar Republic" and a second thesis in 1985 on Protestant theology and the natural sciences in Germany before 1933. His first contact with the East German network of scientific atheism seems to date back to the Güstrow symposium in 1976, but he was not otherwise integrated into the thematic groups or projects. Within the Mountain Academy, he was left to his own devices. Düsing taught courses in scientific atheism there from around 1982/1983.[137]

These new research centres for scientific atheism were joined by two groups that began to gravitate around the network, attending and leading scientific events and writing analyses. A group of historians at the AfG began to study the history of East German religious policy. Joachim Heise, Monika Kaiser, Lothar Wöllner and Horst Dohle each dealt with a period from the point of view of "alliance policy", focusing on the links between Christians and communists.[138] Scientific atheism itself was beginning to become a historical object with the question: "How should the establishment of a Chair of Scientific Atheism at the University of Jena in 1963 be assessed?"[139] Wolfgang Kliem regularly reported on this work, and he even claimed that it was coordinated with his Problem Council.[140] The historian Rolf Leonhardt was a member of the Problem Council as soon as it was set up, and Joachim Heise joined in 1983 or 1984. The historians took part in study days when the subject lent itself to it, and the session at the end of 1984 was even prepared by or with Leonhardt's group, themed around the past 35 years of the SED's Church policy.[141] This cooperation gave the scientific atheism collective led by Kliem access to a historical perspective that had been planned in its initial programmes, but which it did not ultimately implement. The two neighbouring research groups also worked together to provide the Central Committee with analyses.[142]

One of the authors quoted, Horst Dohle, was Director of the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs. The Jena Chair of Scientific Atheism had already had dealings with this State body. However, the position of the Office of the State Secretary changed in the 1980s, in the context of more flexible Church politics.[143] Horst Dohle was a "practitioner, but with a theoretical aspiration", as Heise put it.[144] His second thesis from 1988 formed an integral part of the series of historical works by the AfG group. He gave lectures at Humboldt University, was recognised as a peer and specialist for evaluating academic works and scientific atheism courses,[145] and sat on the Problem Council. His colleague Horst Hartwig from the Office of the State Secretary provided several studies for members of the scientific atheism network and was also a member of the Problem Council, while Bertram Handel wrote a thesis under the supervision of Hans Lutter (see F.u.B. 54 and 59). All three took part in the network's scientific events, published in specialist periodicals, and Dohle was a regular at Wolfgang Kleinig's seminars at Humboldt University. Together, they devised a training programme for civil servants in

charge of Church policy, which the end of the regime prevented from being put into practice.[146]

As the 1990s approached, the handover to a new generation of scientific atheists became a crucial issue. In December 1986, Klohr handed over the leadership of the permanent working group to Jürgen Scholze.[147] He and Lutter were due to retire around 1992/1993. The Warnemünde group was now working on three main areas: Education and student training, Catholicism and sociology.[148] Klohr would have liked to continue the line of enquiry he had been pursuing since the 1950s on the relationship between the natural sciences, atheism and religion. However, the creation of the Problem Council and the restructuring it brought about resulted in his work being integrated into the Problem Council's "Special programme on Catholicism research".[149] The Warnemünde collective proved prolific and was consolidated with several new arrivals in the 1980s.

The Güstrow collective was larger than the Warnemünde and Berlin centres. In 1980/1981, it had seven and then eight members employed by the school and six collaborators employed by other institutions but attached to the research collective. By 1982, the total number had risen to 17, so Lutter formed sub-groups. In 1989, there were still 14 researchers.[150] This comfortable size enabled the Güstrow collective to envisage setting up a second group devoted to scientific atheism at the new Neubrandenburg teaching college in 1987. Peter Kroh, a close associate of Hans Lutter, was to head up this branch, but the end of the GDR prevented it from getting off the ground.[151] Kroh, then aged 43, had arrived in Güstrow in 1980 and made Protestant ethics the subject of his second dissertation.[152] If it had been up to him, the new research group at Neubrandenburg was to be called "Marxist-Leninist ethics and scientific atheism (Boundary issues)". The Problem Council preferred "Ethical problems of co-operation between communists and believers in a developed socialist society". Kroh's concept for future work in May 1987 remained faithful to its Güstrow provenance by limiting itself to Protestantism alone. The aim was to explore common ground, including intellectual and spiritual common ground (*geistige Gemeinsamkeiten*), between communists and Protestants, to encourage cooperation on the basis of shared ethical values and common interests, to integrate Christians and to encourage constructive dialogue. The idea that there were also philosophical oppositions was present but not emphasised.

Maintaining the oldest research group in Warnemünde after Klohr's departure became a major concern at that time. In mid-1987, bitter negotiations began between the Ministry of Higher Education and the heads of the Naval and Shipping Engineering College. For a time, consideration was given to transferring the Centre for Scientific Atheism to the University of Rostock. There were not many candidates to succeed Klohr. His loyal second-in-command, Wolfgang Kaul, would also reach retirement age in 1992. Several names were considered in turn: Roland Krayer from Leipzig; Jürgen Scholze from Zittau, who was also the perfect candidate

to succeed Hans Lutter at the head of the Güstrow collective; or maybe Petra Zeugner.[153] The peaceful revolution of November 1989 surprised the actors, who were still in complete disagreement. Faced with the upheavals that the country was undergoing at the time, their disagreement on the best way to ensure the future of East German scientific atheism eventually became irrelevant.

Quoted archives

Federal Archives (BArch)
Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BArch)
Technical University Dresden Archives (TUD)
Leipzig University Archives (UAL)
Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research (BISKF)
Private Collection (PC) Düsing
Private Collection (PC) Kleinig
Private Collection (PC) Scholze

Quoted periodicals

Forschungsberichte und Beiträge (F.u.B.)
Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus (WA)

Notes

1 Joachim Heise saw the first hint of this in the daily *Neues Deutschland* in February 1972 (Heise 1998). Gerhard Winter linked the beginning of this authorised revival to a speech by Kurt Hager, Politburo member in charge of ideological questions, science and culture, in 1972 (BISKF Kliem 5a Winter, Laudatio).

2 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2/1421. The quotation differs slightly from the published version (SED 1972, 73): "The atheistic character of the Marxist-Leninist world-view must be emphasised more strongly and in a variety of ways."

3 BISKF Kaul 14 Dienstberatung des Ministers für Hoch- und Fachschulwesen, extract, 20 August 1973.

4 BISKF Klohr 100 Moeck to Schirmer, 29 May 1973. In the meantime, Klohr had authored or co-authored two studies showing his ongoing interest: Friedrich, Klohr and Förster 1971; Bemerkungen zur weltanschaulich-atheistischen Propaganda und Forschung, October 1972 (mentioned in several documents in BISKF Klohr 308 and BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544).

5 On setting up the group, see BISKF Kaul 14 Himpich [?] to Moeck, 19 December 1973 and several documents in BISKF Klohr 310 and 311.

6 BISKF Kaul 14 Kuhrt to Klohr, 11 January 1965, and Klohr to Kuhrt, 1 February 1965; Lutter, Lebenslauf unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Bildungsganges, 1 September 1965, in his PhD thesis (Lutter 1965); Lutter 1987, 31.

7 Preparation started in November 1972, see BISKF Klohr 100; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Abteilung ML, Information zu Fragen der Entwicklung des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, 25 May 1973. On the permanent working group: UAL NA Handel 193; BISKF Klohr 100; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c.

8 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Entwurf, Arbeitsrichtlinie für die DDR-Arbeitsgruppe "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus".
9 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Klohr, Konstituierende Beratung der St. AG am 23.11.1973 in Warnemünde.
10 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Abteilung ML, Information zu Fragen der Entwicklung des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, 25 May 1973, p. 4.
11 Several examples, as soon as 1973, in BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c; UAL NA Handel 193; BISKF Klohr 100 Entwurf, Konzeption der Arbeitsgruppe "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus".
12 This is reflected in the following documents: BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Abteilung ML, Information über den 4. Weiterbildungslehrgang, 30 March 1979; BISKF Klohr 98 Klohr, Abschlußbericht IX. Warnemünder Atheismus-Kolloquium vom 13. bis 17. Juni 1983; BISKF Klohr 308 Entwurf, St. AG, Abschlußbericht, VI. Sonderlehrgang, 30 June - 4 July 1986; BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht 1979.
13 BISKF Klohr 100 Teilnehmer des zweiten Sonderlehrgangs - ihre Mitarbeit in der Atheismus-Forschung.
14 On these groups, see BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; BISKF Klohr 308, 310 and 311; BISKF Kaul without archive box Entwurf existiert in 2 Exemplaren, 30 January 1975.
15 BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, DDR-FG, Forschungsbericht für den Planungszeitraum 1976–1980, June 1981.
16 BISKF Klohr 96, 97, 308, 310 and 311.
17 Documentation on the meetings themselves in 1973–1977 is missing. On 1978–1989, see BISKF Klohr 96, 97, 98, 99 and 302 and *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/8, 2/16 and *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 40 and 41.
18 See the related issues of *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge*: 3 and 5 to 9, 22 to 27, 42 and special issue 1985, 58 and special issue 1989; two bound books, kept in the archives, on the 1980 and 1984 editions (BISKF Kaul).
19 Documented in BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 and B 1429c; BISKF Klohr 100 and 308; BISKF Kliem 121; UAL FMI 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 29; UAL NA Handel 075 and 193. See also Heise 1998.
20 BISKF Klohr 100; BISKF Kaul 12 Kaul, St. AG, invitation, October 1988; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht 960, p. 3; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Konzeption für die Aus- und Weiterbildung von Lehrenden auf dem Gebiet Grundlagen des Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus im MLG; BArch DO 4/1023 (pp. 1284–1286, 1322–1331), 1024 (pp. 1456–1468) and 1025 (pp. 175–178, 263).
21 Many mentions in BISKF Klohr 310 and 311; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544. See also Lutter 2001.
22 BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, DDR-FG, Forschungsbericht für den Planungszeitraum 1976–1980. Incomplete figures on the previous period in BISKF Klohr 308 Entwurf, DDR-FG, Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht 1973–1975, [1976], p. 15: about 90 talks to 6,000 listeners.
23 BISKF Klohr 310 IHS, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsplan 1980, p. 4, and DDR-FG, Forschungsplan 1978, p. 6.
24 This 28-page brochure was published by the Propaganda Department of the SED Central Committee in July 1975. The SED leadership in the Rostock district also commissioned material on "Human rights, freedom of religion and conscience" from Klohr and on the principle of performance at work from Peine (BISKF Klohr 310 FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht für 1977, 30 December 1977).
25 See the brochures: *Hinweise zum atheistischen Charakter der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie* (1975); *Der atheistische Charakter des Marxismus-Leninismus, Lehrhinweise* (1975); *Religion und Atheismus im ideologischen*

Klassenkampf, Beiträge (1976); *Der atheistische Charakter der Politischen Ökonomie, Lehrhinweise* (1977); *Marxismus-Leninismus, Atheismus, Religion* (1978 and 1980); *Der atheistische Charakter des Wissenschaftlichen Kommunismus* (1980); *Wissenschaftlicher Kommunismus, Atheismus und Religion* (1980); *Politische Ökonomie, Atheismus und Religion* (1984); *Grundlagen des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, Studienmaterial* (1986 and 1987), two series of slides and booklets, a seminar programme on Lenin's *Socialism and Religion*.

26 BISKF Klohr 97 Klohr, 8. Warnemünder Atheismus-Kolloquium, Abschlußbericht and St. AG, Protokoll der Beratung vom 19.10.1979, draft; BISKF Kaul Bound book, 2. Güstrower Symposium 1980, Hans Lutter, "Schlußwort"; Kliem 1985; Lutter 1989.

27 This was a recurring problem, as documented in BISKF Klohr 100, 308 and 310; BISKF Klohr 96 FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Konzeption 6. Warnemünder Atheismus-Kolloquium; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; UAL FMI 29, pp. 36–40; UAL NA Handel 634, p. 10.

28 BISKF Klohr 310.

29 With the sole exception of F.u.B. 53 (1987), which translates a table of contents of *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*.

30 BISKF Kaul Bound book, Bericht über das III. Internationale Güstrower Symposium vom 24.-26.10.1984.

31 BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr, Forschungsbericht "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" 1973, 15 December 1973, p. 5.

32 BISKF Klohr 311 Forschungsbericht für das Jahr 1974 and Formblatt 1, Ausgewählte wissenschaftliche Leistungen in den Gesellschaftswissenschaften; BISKF Klohr 308 St. AG, Tätigkeitsbericht 1973–1979; BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, DDR-FG, Forschungsbericht für den Planungszeitraum 1976–1980, June 1981.

33 BISKF Klohr 310; BISKF Klohr 308 St. AG, Tätigkeitsbericht 1973–1979; BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr, IHS, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht 1975; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Forschungsprogramm 1976 bis 1980, 10 June 1975.

34 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Forschungsprogramm 1976 bis 1980, 10 June 1975, p. 8.

35 Only one document consulted referred to a (Czechoslovakian) proposal to set up an international commission in the early 1980s, it was obviously never followed up (BISKF Kaul 1).

36 BISKF Kaul 1 and 13; BISKF Kliem 42 and 72; BISKF Klohr 100. The exchange of scientific publications is mentioned for the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Poland. See also correspondence in BISKF Kaul 11.

37 BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Betr.: Plan der gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Forschung 1976–1980, [1974], and IHS, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht für 1977, 30 December 1977; BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr, IHS, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht für das Planjahr 1974, 1 January 1975, p. 7; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Kaul, St. AG, Protokoll der Beratung am 14.6.1974 in Berlin.

38 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; BISKF Klohr 310; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Kaul, St. AG, Protokoll der Beratung am 14.6.1974 in Berlin.

39 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kaderentwicklung "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" im Bereich des MHF, [end of 1975].

40 BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, IHS, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht 1979.

41 BISKF Klohr 64, 100, 308, 310 and 311; BISKF Kliem 5; BISKF Kaul 1 and 11; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; F.u.B. 4 and WA 2/8.

42 BISKF Klohr 310 and 311; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Kaul, St. AG, Protokoll der Beratung am 14.6.1974 in Berlin.
43 BISKF Klohr 95 Klohr to Schulz, 17 January 1977. Others documents on the project in this box, BISKF Klohr 94 and BISKF Kliem 1.
44 BISKF Klohr 308 Entwurf, DDR-FG, Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht 1973–1975, [1976]; BISKF Klohr 311 research rapports on 1974.
45 BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr, Forschungsbericht "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" 1973, 15 December 1973.
46 BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr to Schirmer, 25 January 1978.
47 BISKF Kaul 11 Klohr to Vogel, 27 September 1974, and Klohr to Weidig, 27 September 1974.
48 BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr to Schirmer, 25 January 1978; other documents in BISKF Kaul 11.
49 Manuscript preserved in BISKF Klohr 92 and 93; BISKF Kliem 136. Related documents in BISKF Klohr 309 and 310; BISKF Klohr 100 Klohr, Beiträge zum Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, Konzeption, 1. Entwurf, 8 September 1975; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c and 544.
50 An extreme example for a very small conference in 1978 in BISKF Klohr 302.
51 BISKF Klohr 96, 98, 100 and 308; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544.
52 BISKF Klohr 100 Anlage 5, VI. Sonderlehrgang, Teilnahme an Sonderlehrgängen 1–6 bzw. 5 bzw. 4.
53 Contradicting plans were preserved in BISKF Klohr 310.
54 UAL Phil. Fak. B 139, p. 27.
55 The link between the specialist in scientific atheism and agrarian sociology is attested by several documents from 1973 in BISKF Kliem 100. He should not be confused with the jurist Wolfgang (Konrad) Kliem.
56 Interview with Helga Kliem, 15 April 2017.
57 According to the archives, the department was created in 1977 (against Thiede 1999, 288; Hartweg and Heise 1995).
58 BISKF Pacholik Pacholik to Manntz, 22 May 2010.
59 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kaderentwicklung "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" im Bereich des MHF, [end of 1975], p. 1; BISKF Klohr 100 Teilnehmer des zweiten Sonderlehrgangs; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Kaderentwicklung "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" im Bereich des MHF [1975/1976].
60 BISKF Klohr 310.
61 BISKF Kliem 94.
62 See several documents they authored, in BISKF Klohr 310.
63 BISKF Kliem 86 Kliem, Konzeption für den Aufbau des Forschungsbereiches "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" (Entwurf), February 1977, and Kliem, Bericht über den wissenschaftlichen Studienaufenthalt … in der Zeit vom 31.8. bis 27.9.1977.
64 BISKF Kliem 86 Handwritten notes, Abstimmung mit G. Vogel und E. Hüttner am 18.11.1977.
65 BISKF Kliem 120 Forschungskonzeption 1981–1985, 1. Entwurf; BISKF Kliem 116 Kliem, Zur Entwicklung der Forschung auf dem Gebiet des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus (Diskussionsbeitrag), 4 January 1980, p. 4. Several other documents on the difficult relations in these boxes.
66 BISKF Kliem 116 Kliem, Zur Entwicklung der Forschung …, 4 January 1980, p. 8.
67 An example of the reserve towards the public in BISKF Kliem 86 Konzeption für den Aufbau des Forschungsbereiches "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus", November 1977, p. 2.
68 BISKF Kliem 86 Grundsätze für die Tätigkeit des Problemrates "Weltanschauliche Probleme der Zusammenarbeit von Kommunisten und Gläubigen", 24

November 1980, p. 1. Different versions in BISKF Kliem 86 and 120; BISKF Pacholik. Other documents related to its creation in BISKF Kliem 74, 78, 115 and 116; BISKF Pacholik.

69 BISKF Kliem 116 Vorlage für die Rektoratssitzung 17.11.1980, November 1980, p. 1.

70 BISKF Kliem 115 Handwritten notes, Direktion zu Komm. u. Gläubige, 29 September 1981, p. 1. To date this idea see also BISKF Kliem 116 Handwritten notes, Kliem, Information für E. Hahn zum Thema Problemrat, [before 20 August 1981].

71 BISKF Kliem 86 Konzeption des Vortrages zur Tagung des Wissenschaftlichen Rates für Marxistisch-Leninistische Philosohie, p. 1.

72 BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, Tagung wissenschaftlicher Rat für marxistisch-leninistische Philosophie, 4 December 1981, p. 1.

73 BISKF Kliem 86 Handwritten notes, Kliem: Begrüßung: Lutter Forschungsprogramm.

74 BISKF Kliem 86 Handwritten notes.

75 BISKF Kliem 116 Handwritten notes.

76 BISKF Kliem 116 Kliem, Zur Entwicklung der Forschung auf dem Gebiet des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus (Diskussionsbeitrag), 4 January 1980; BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, Forschungsbericht für den Planungszeitraum 1976–1980, June 1981, pp. 4–5.

77 The Problem Council's activities are well documented in BISKF Pacholik; BISKF Kliem 74, 78, 85, 98, 109 and 121; BISKF Kaul documents without archive box.

78 BISKF Kliem 120 Diskussionsbeitrag auf der GO-Versammlung am 30.11.1981, p. 2.

79 BISKF Pacholik Gemeinsame Beratung der Leitung des Problemrates und der St. AG, 2 April 1982, Ergebnisprotokoll; BISKF Kliem 74 Ergebnisprotokoll der Leitungssitzung des Problemrats am 24.11.1983.

80 BISKF Kliem 120 Diskussionsbeitrag auf der GO-Versammlung am 30.11.1981; BISKF Kliem 86 Handwritten notes.

81 BISKF Kliem 86 and 117.

82 BISKF Pacholik Klohr, Zur Rolle der Religionen und religiösen Gemeinschaften im Kampf um Frieden und sozialen Fortschritt, 8 July 1982.

83 BISKF Kliem 86 Ergebnisprotokoll der Leitungssitzung vom 24.6.1982.

84 BISKF Pacholik 2. Tagung des Problemrates 1982 am 26.11.1982, draft.

85 Two concording versions, of 17 and 24 November 1980, in BISKF Kliem 86 and 116.

86 BISKF Kliem 86, 116 and 120.

87 BISKF Kliem 120 Problemrat, Zuarbeit zum Entwurf des "Zentralen Forschungsplanes 1986–1990", 16 April 1983, p. 1. Various preparatory versions of the plan 1986–1990 (not found itself) in BISKF Kliem 74 and 120.

88 BISKF Kliem 86.

89 BISKF Kliem 86 Inhaltliche [?] Orientierungen für die Ausarbeitung eines Forschungsplanes des Problemrates für die Jahre 1981–1985, p. 1.

90 BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, Atheismus 1976, 27 January 1977.

91 Welsch headed a distinct group not labelled scientific atheism (against Thiede 1999, 288). See BArch DO 4/1023 (pp. 1322–1331) and 1024 (pp. 1474–1488); BISKF Klohr 308 Handwritten collection of names and institutions; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1204 Kleinig, Bemerkungen zum "Arbeitsstandpunkt", pp. 2–3.

92 BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, Atheismus 1976, 27 January 1977, p. 10.

93 On Kleinig's life and career, see HUB Personalakte Kleinig, Wolfgang; HUB Staatsexamen Theologische Fak. nach 1945, 1950–1969, J-Knitt; HUB Gewi Fac doc 22.01; HUB Gewi Hab 051; Guigo-Patzelt forthcoming.

94 PC Kleinig; HUB Personalakte Kleinig, Wolfgang; HUB Gewi Hab 051, pp. 77–78; HUB Gewi Fac doc 22.01, p. 6; interviews with Horst Dohle (14 October 2015), Horst Dohle and Joachim Heise (25 November 2015), Sabine Kleinig (26 November 2015), discussion with Rainer Opitz (26 April 2017); Kleinig 1994. Some of the group's work is preserved or mentioned (sometimes without having been completed) in BISKF Klohr 119, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130 and 136.
95 BISKF Kliem 86 Kleinig, Arbeitsthema für eine B-Promotion.
96 BISKF Kliem 91 Kliem, Gutachten zum Artikel von Wolfgang Kleinig, 9 March 1981.
97 Various articles in PC Kleinig, including one published in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität Berlin* 37 (9), 1988.
98 PC Kleinig Kleinig, Beitrag zum VII. Philosophie-Kongress der DDR.
99 HUB Personalakte Kleinig, Wolfgang, p. 72.
100 PC Kleinig.
101 PC Kleinig, Sektion marxistisch-leninistische Philosophie, Interdisziplinärer Arbeitskreis "Philosophische Friedensforschung", Vorträge/Studien/Materialien 1, May 1988.
102 HUB Personalakte Kleinig, Wolfgang, pp. 92–93.
103 HUB Gewi Fac doc 22.01, p. 16.
104 Interview with Sabine Kleinig, 26 November 2015.
105 PC Kleinig Hansi to Wolfgang, 11 Sepember 1986, p. 3.
106 BISKF Kliem 116 Handwritten notes, Kontaktdaten der Atheismusforscher; BISKF Klohr 308 Handwritten sheets with names and places; interview with Viola Schubert-Lehnhardt, 26 October 2022.
107 For instance BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Stellungnahme zum Arbeitsstandpunkt der St. AG, 22 June 1988; UAL R 1004 (pp. 171–172) and 1399 (p. 12); UAL ZM 08464/9.1 Zur Erhöhung der Effektivität des marxistisch-leninistischen Grundlagenstudiums durch die Zusammenarbeit der Leipziger Hochschulen, [1981], p. 5.
108 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kaderentwicklung "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus", [end of 1975]; BISKF Klohr 308 St. AG, Kaderentwicklung für das Gebiet "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus", November 1979; BISKF Kliem 86 Handwritten notes, p. 11.
109 Interview with Kurt Fleming and Bernd Stoppe, 27 July 2019. On Stoppe's life and career, see UAL StuA 17063; UAL PrüfA 29095; UAL PA-A 50991; UAL WR 1981/262.
110 UAL DirF 082; UAL ZM 08464/10.1; UAL WR 1981/262, pp. 24–25; UAL PA-A 50991, p. 19; interview with Kurt Fleming and Bernd Stoppe, 27 July 2019.
111 UAL DirF 082, pp. 33–39, 71; UAL PA-A 50991, p. 19; UAL ZM 08464/10.1 KMU, Sektion marxistisch-leninistische Philosophie, WB Historischer Materialismus, Studie (Erfahrungsanalyse), 8 June 1987; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Hildebrandt, Information über eine Lehrkonferenz, 21 April 1988.
112 Interview with Uwe Funk, 23 July 2019; UAL PA-A 50991 p. 19; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Stoppe, Zum gegenwärtigen Stand des Lehrgebietes, 2 May 1987.
113 UAL R 1399, pp. 30–32.
114 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Stoppe, Zum gegenwärtigen Stand des Lehrgebietes, 2 May 1987.
115 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Krayer, Erste und vorläufige Überlegungen …, June 1987.
116 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 KMU, Prorektor für Gesellschaftswissenschaften, Stellungnahme zum Arbeitsstandpunkt der St. AG, 22 June 1988, p. 2.

117 UAL ZM 08464/58.4; UAL ZM 08464/10.1 Thom to Stübler, 31 October 1986, p. 2; UAL ZM 08464/11 Stübler to Engel, 29 November 1988. Other traces of resistance in UAL R 1399, pp. 3–6; UAL ZM 08464/46.7 Bericht über die Ergebnisse der Tätigkeit der Arbeitsgruppe des MHF an der KMU, October-November 1973; UAL ZM 08464/46.3.
118 UAL ZM 08464/58.4 MHF, Kaderentwicklungsprogramm für die Sektionen … bis 1995 und darüber hinaus, July 1988, p. 11; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1204 Festlegungen zum Standpunkt der St. AG; BArch DO 4/1023 (pp. 1322–1331) and 1024 (pp. 1474–1488).
119 PC Scholze Lebenslauf, 23 April 1991, p. 2. On his life: PC Scholze and interview with Dagmar Scholze, 2 March 2018.
120 TUD 009, 011, 012, 024, 026, 027, 036 and 077.
121 TUD 027 Wollgast, Striebing, Bericht über das Philosophie-Fernstudium Studienjahr 1974/75, 23 September 1975, p. 2.
122 TUD 010 Festlegungsprotokoll Kontaktberatung 22.6.1977, p. 3.
123 TUD 011 Woit to Bächler, 19 March 1979, Aktennotiz, pp. 1–2.
124 A summary has been presented in WA FB 38.
125 I would like to thank archivist Mrs Ludwig for the information provided by TUD 079.
126 TUD 044 Wollgast to Strobel, 3 May 1985.
127 Correspondence in TUD 011, 012 and 045.
128 TUD 027 and 077.
129 TUD 010 Herlitzius, Kurze Bemerkung zum Klohr-Manuskript, 15 December 1978.
130 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Kaderentwicklung "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" im Bereich des MHF, [end of 1975]; BISKF Klohr 308 St. AG, Kaderentwicklung für das Gebiet "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" im Bereich des MHF - Zeitraum bis 1979, November 1979, and Handwritten sheets with names and places.
131 BISKF Kliem 72 Hegenbarth to Erich, 25 January 1980, p. 1.
132 Several mentions in BISKF Kliem 72, 116 and 119; BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, Leitung des Problemrates + St. AG, 2 April 1982.
133 TUD HfV 000099 Personalakte Heyde; TUD 009 and 044.
134 As preceding note and TUD HfV 3.2.1./a/039, 063, 070 and 076; TUD HfV 3.2.1./d/004.
135 TUD HfV Akte: zu 1.4.1./#98 Promotionsverfahren A Dipl-Phl. Gania, Karin.
136 TUD HfV 3.2.1./a/070, 076 and 088; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, Leitung des Problemrates, 30 October 1987, and Einladung Problemrat, 20 May 1988. See also Düsing 1989, 119.
137 Interview with Manfred Düsing, 7 July 2016; PC Düsing.
138 BISKF Kliem 61, 77, 91, 100 and 137; Heise 2003.
139 BISKF Kliem 91 Kliem, Einschätzung des Dissertationsentwurfes des Gen. Lothar Wöllner, 3 January 1986, p. 4.
140 BISKF Kliem 137 Kliem, Gutachten zur Dissertation B von Genn. Dr. Phil. Monika Kaiser, December 1988.
141 BISKF Pacholik Problemrat, Ergebnisprotokoll der Leitungssitzung 24.11.1983.
142 BISKF Kliem 102 and 120; interview with Horst Dohle and Joachim Heise, 25 November 2015; Heise 2003.
143 Interview with Horst Dohle and Joachim Heise, 25 November 2015; Heise 2020.
144 Interview with Joachim Heise, 7 July 2014.
145 BISKF Kliem 137 Dohle, Gutachten zu Wöllner, Dissertation A, 30 May 1986; BISKF Kliem 124 Hinweise von Horst Dohle; BArch DO 4/1023, 1024 and 1025.

146 BISKF Klohr 100; BISKF Kliem 78; BArch DO 4/1023 (pp. 1297–1298) and 1025 (pp. 175–178).
147 BISKF Klohr 308 Probleme, die sich in Vorbereitung und Durchführung des VI. Sonderlehrgangs … ergeben haben, [1986], and Kaul, St. AG, untitled, 4 December 1986; BISKF Kliem 85 Kaul, St. AG, Protokoll der Beratung am 21.10.1981 in Halle.
148 BISKF Klohr 310 and 311; BISKF Kliem 116; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544.
149 BISKF Klohr 311 IHS, IML, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht 1982, p. 1.
150 BISKF Kliem 116 Lutter, Forschungsschwerpunkte und -projekte für den Zeitraum 1981–1985, 4 June 1980; BISKF Kliem 86 Lutter, Forschungskonzeption für den Perspektivplanzeitraum 1981–1985; BISKF Klohr 312 Lutter, Arbeitsbericht 1982, 21 December 1982, p. 7; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1204 Lutter to Göhring, 12 October 1989.
151 BISKF Pacholik Ergebnisprotokoll der Beratung der Leitung des Problemrates zum Material "Problemansatz zur Konstituierung und Entwicklung der Forschungsgruppe 'Marxistisch-leninistische Ethik und wissenschaftlicher Atheismus (Grenzprobleme)'", May 1987; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; interview with Peter Kroh, 7 October 2016.
152 On Kroh, see BISKF Kaul without archive box Handwritten notes, Zu Dissertation B Peter Kroh, Konzeption zur Dissertation B, August 1981; WA FB 37 and Kroh 2014.
153 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 and 1204; DO 4/1024, pp. 1471–1472; BISKF Kliem 86 Handwritten notes; UAR PA W/W: 472, pp. 31–32; UAL ZM 08464/11 Engel to Stübler, 24 October 1988, and Stübler to Engel, 29 November 1988; PC Scholze.

References

Brand, George H. 1975. "The status of religion in the German Democratic Republic." In *Religion and Atheism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe*, edited by Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John W. Strong, 256–272. London/Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Düsing, Manfred. 1989. "Wissenschaft und Glaube - Anmerkungen zum Thema 'Geistige Gemeinsamkeiten'." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 113–119.

Friedrich, Walter, Olof Klohr and Peter Förster. 1971. *Zu einigen Problemen der weltanschaulichen Erziehung*. Leipzig: Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung.

Fulbrook, Mary. 1995. *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949–1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guigo-Patzelt. Forthcoming. "Rester propagandiste ou devenir docteur? Ambitions et obstacles dans le parcours d'universitaires est-allemands." In *La thèse et le doctorat. Socio-histoire d'un grade universitaire (XIXe -XXIe siècles)*, edited by Pierre Verschueren.

Hartweg, Frédéric and Joachim Heise, ed. 1995. *SED und Kirche: Eine Dokumentation ihrer Beziehungen,* tome 1: *SED 1946–1967*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

Heise, Joachim. 1998. "'… die Arbeit auf dem Gebiet des Atheismus intensivieren und qualifizieren': Zum Wandel in der atheistischen Propaganda und Lehre in der DDR von den Anfängen bis Ende der siebziger Jahre." In *"Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung…" Jugend im Spannungsfeld von Staat und Kirche in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Horst Dähn and Helga Gotschlich, 150–167. Berlin: Metropol.

Heise, Joachim. 2003. "Persönliche Erfahrungen bei der wissenschaftlichen Beschäftigung mit dem Thema Geschichte der Kirchenpolitik der SED bzw. der DDR vor und nach dem Systembruch 1989/90." In *Staat und Kirchen in der DDR: Zum Stand der zeithistorischen und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschung*, edited by Horst Dähn and Joachim Heise, 55–67. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Heise, Joachim, ed. 2020. *Horst Dohle. Im Dienst der Kirchenpolitik der DDR. Gespräche und Selbstzeugnisse*. Berlin: Gesellschaft zur Förderung vergleichender Staat-Kirche-Forschung e.V.

Herlitzius, Erwin. 1965. *Der Marxismus über Wesen, Begriff und Ursprung der Religion*. PhD thesis, Humboldt University Berlin.

Heyde, Wolfgang. 1977. *Der Sozialismus als Idee und Realität in der Interpretation durch den Protestantismus*. Dissertation B thesis, Dresden University of Technology.

Hoffmann, Alfred. 2000. *"Mit Gott einfach fertig". Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Leipzig: St. Benno.

Kleinig, Wolfgang. 1966. *Katholische Reaktionen auf die marxistisch-leninistische Philosophie als eine Erscheinungsform der Krise des Katholizismus*. PhD thesis, Potsdam College of Education.

Kleinig, Wolfgang. 1980. "Aspekte gegenwärtiger vatikanischer 'Ostpolitik'." *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Pädagogischen Hochschule "Karl Liebknecht" Potsdam* 24 (2): 207–212.

Kleinig, Wolfgang. 1985. *Die politische Funktion der katholischen Kirche heute*. Dissertation B thesis, Humboldt University Berlin.

Kleinig, Wolfgang. 1994. "Lehre und Forschung von Religion und Atheismus an der Sektion/Institut für Philosophie der Humboldt-Universtität zu Berlin (1980–1990)." *Berliner Dialog-Hefte 5* (1–4): 18–30.

Kliem, Wolfgang. 1970. "Zur Einschätzung des Klassencharakters der 'ländlichen' Soziologie in Westdeutschland." In *Soziologie im Sozialismus. Die marxistisch-leninistische Soziologie im entwickelten gesellschaftlichen System des Sozialismus. Materialien der "Tage der marxistisch-leninistischen Soziologie in der DDR"*, edited by Wissenschaftlicher Rat für Soziologische Forschung in der DDR, 393–398. Berlin: Dietz.

Kliem, Wolfgang. 1985. "Schlußbemerkungen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 549–552.

Krayer, Roland. 1985. *Religiöse Weltanschauung und der gemeinsame Kampf von Marxisten und Christen gegen imperialistischen Krieg und für sozialen Fortschritt: eine Studie zur Beschaffenheit von religiöser Weltanschauung hinsichtlich ihrer Potenzen für ein Zusammenwirken von Marxisten und Christen in der Epoche des Übergangs vom Kapitalismus zum Sozialismus*. Dissertation A thesis, Leipzig University.

Kroh, Peter. 2014. *Minderheitenrecht ist Menschenrecht. Sorbische Denkanstöße zur politischen Kultur in Deutschland und Europa*. Berlin: Beggerow.

Last, Bärbel and Hans-Dieter Schaefer with Renate Gralki. 1992. *Die Wissenschaftsbeziehungen der Hochschulen der ehemaligen DDR mit Osteuropa. Kompendium*. Berlin: Verlag Constructiv.

Lutter, Hans. 1965. *Die Säkularisierung in der sozialistischen Großstadt demonstriert am Beispiel der Stadt Magdeburg*. PhD thesis, Jena University.

Lutter, Hans. 1987. "Die Zusammenarbeit von Kommunisten und Gläubigen und Fragen nach Gemeinsamkeiten und Gegensätzen - Ergebnisse und Aufgaben der

marxistisch-leninistischen Atheismus-Forschung." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 40: 31–39.

Lutter, Hans. 1989. "Schlußwort." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 143–144.

Lutter, Hans. 2001. "Zur Geschichte des Atheismus in der DDR." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 43 (2): 72–83.

Maser, Peter. 1992. *Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften in der DDR 1949–1989. Ein Rückblick auf vierzig Jahre in Daten, Fakten und Meinungen*. Konstanz: Christliche Verlagsanstalt.

Peris, Daniel. 1998. *Storming the Heavens. The Soviet League of the Militant Godless*. Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell University Press.

Rothbarth, Maria, Hannelore Barthel, Fred-Rainer Großkopf, Manfred Hessel and Olof Klohr. 1989. *Hochschule für Seefahrt Warnemünde-Wustrow. Erbe, Tradition, Verpflichtung*. Rostock: IHS.

Schäfer, Bernd. 1997. "Die KPD/SED und ihr Umgang mit religiösem Brauchtum und kirchlichem Leben im Alltag von SBZ und DDR - unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Mecklenburg-Vorpommerns bzw. der ehemaligen drei Nordbezirke." In *Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung*, volume VI: *Zur Arbeit der Enquete-Kommission: "Leben in der DDR. Leben nach 1989 – Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung". Expertisen und Forschungsstudien zum Thema "Kultur und religiöses Brauchtum"*, edited by Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 158–194. Schwerin.

SED, ed. 1972. "Die Aufgaben der Agitation und Propaganda bei der weiteren Verwirklichung der Beschlüsse des VIII. Parteitages der SED. Beschluß des ZK der SED vom 7.11.1972." In *Die Aufgaben der Agitation und Propaganda bei der weiteren Verwirklichung der Beschlüsse des VIII. Parteitag der SED, Konferenz des Zentralkomitees der SED über Agitation und Propaganda, Berlin 16–17 November 1972,* 65–90. Berlin: Dietz.

Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014. "The ticket to the Soviet soul: Science, religion, and the spiritual crisis of late Soviet atheism." *The Russian Review* 73: 71–97.

Stoppe, Bernd. 1981. *Die Religionsauffassung von Karl Marx und Kritik ihrer theologischen Kritik*. Dissertation A thesis, Leipzig University.

Thiede, Simone. 1999. *Der Dialog zwischen Religionen und säkularen Weltanschauungen: Dargestellt am Beispiel des christlich-marxistischen Dialogs in der DDR*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

5 Lectures on scientific atheism in the GDR against widespread indifference

For a group of academics, contact with students is a natural opportunity to share their favourite subjects, to expand the influence of their discipline and, in the case of scientific atheism, to spread atheism as they understand it. The importance of teaching was constantly stressed. In so doing, the scientific atheists' mission towards students was understood less as the transmission of knowledge or training in research than as a contribution to the socialist educational project – to ideological education, to be precise. The latter "represent[ed] a battle for the hearts and minds, for socialist feeling and socialist thinking of all citizens", thus requiring attention to several dimensions of the human being.[1] East German specialists in scientific atheism spent three decades thinking about teaching, so the analysis here benefits from this long period of time. The content and objectives did, after all, evolve. Teaching obliged scholars to agree, among themselves and with their supervisory institution, on the content to be taught, offering a summary of their conception of scientific atheism, atheism and religion. However, it was necessary to succeed in imposing this content within the university. Examining the teaching of atheism allows us to examine the legitimacy acquired by the discipline in the eyes of other actors in the academic world, to gain a better understanding of the intentions and objectives of the representatives of scientific atheism and to assess the impact that the latter may have had beyond the circle of specialists, in this case among students.

Thirty years of efforts to introduce atheism in higher education

The first reflections on the teaching of atheism can be found at the University of Rostock in the 1950s and then at Jena after the creation of the Chair of Scientific Atheism in 1963. At Rostock, for example, Olof Klohr gave lectures on religion and morality.[2] The creation of the chair under his direction did not automatically go hand in hand with the introduction of courses in this new speciality, especially as the University of Jena had virtually no philosophy students (see Metzler 2002; Fiedler and Riege 1969, 33; Dahms 2007). The main contact between scientific atheists and students was through the compulsory "dialectical and historical materialism" course.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322-6

Specialists in the subject would have liked to explore the atheist dimension in these courses.[3] In the German Democratic Republic, however, officially appointed committees drew up syllabuses and materials, some of which were extremely detailed, to ensure that teaching was uniform and consistent throughout the country, regardless of the individual teacher. Admittedly, teachers did not always adhere to them meticulously,[4] and the desire for uniformity did not prevent certain exceptions, discussions and experiments. But it was strategic to make one's voice heard in places where the design of courses and study programmes was discussed.

In the mid-1960s, the Jena collective for Scientific Atheism was represented on the Scientific Advisory Council for Philosophy to the State Secretariat for Higher Education.[5] An examination of the syllabuses of the compulsory Marxism-Leninism courses that were in force from 1964 to 1968 reveals little mention of religious or atheist issues.[6] However, the many preliminary versions preserved in the archives show that this was a real concern at the time.[7] In addition, a booklet aimed at students was quick to point out that "Marxist-Leninist philosophy […] is incompatible with idealism and superstition; it is consistent, atheistic and combats unscientific, religious views of the world".[8] The extent to which lecturers in scientific atheism have relied on such statements to give a particular spin to the courses at Jena will have to remain unanswered.

In any case, the research themes of the Chair of Scientific Atheism were discussed with students from the Protestant Theology Faculty. Since 1951, they had also been required to take classes in Marxism-Leninism, and their teachers were members of the Institute of Philosophy specialising in atheism.[9] Specialists in scientific atheism even taught specialised courses there: "On the relationship between State and Church in both German States" and "Philosophical foundations of Marxist-Leninist ethics".[10]

In the spring of 1965, the scientific atheists took the initiative of offering a series of optional courses open to all students of the Friedrich Schiller University, all faculties combined, which seems to have continued with interruptions until 1967.[11] In 1965 again, scientific atheism was included in the distance learning philosophy programme, which at the time was attended by 45 students spread over three years.[12] This was the first course specialising in scientific atheism to be documented for East Germany. Moreover, the scientific atheists intended to introduce the subject into other distance learning courses and supervise more dissertations and diploma theses. Olof Klohr also wanted to develop atheism as a speciality for distance students already working in the field of Church politics or propaganda.[13] Nevertheless, the courses offered as part of distance learning in philosophy were numerous: In a 1967 list, atheism came second last out of 16.[14]

The idea of introducing atheism into the curriculum was not confined to Jena in the 1960s. In Leipzig and Halle, a new course of study to train certified teachers for Marxism-Leninism was introduced in 1964. In the mid-1960s, this was to include lessons in atheism. Even though the programme only

included two hours of lectures over a semester, the initiative deserves to be highlighted.[15] We do not know whether these courses took place, and there is no evidence that the introduction of scientific atheism into the training of future certified teachers for Marxism-Leninism was effective and lasting.[16]

It was not until the first half of the 1970s that the new group of scientific atheists brought together by Olof Klohr was able to launch a real offensive in higher education. The political support was exceptional. A Politburo resolution of 7 November 1972 ordered "to emphasise the atheistic character of the Marxist-Leninist world-view" as part of "communist education".[17] A decision by the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education on 20 August 1973, prepared with Olof Klohr, legitimised for two decades the efforts and claims of the representatives of scientific atheism. It founded a dual strategy in the field of education. On the one hand, it stipulated that "the atheistic character of Marxism-Leninism must be emphasised more strongly and in a variety of ways".[18] Scientific atheists could have a look at the way compulsory courses in Marxism-Leninism were taught throughout the country and try to reinforce their "atheist character" by publishing brochures and a series of transparencies, proposing optional subjects, and contacting the commissions responsible for this teaching. Olof Klohr even joined the group of writers of the textbook on dialectical and historical materialism.

On the other hand, the ministry ordered the preparation of courses specifically dedicated to scientific atheism. Every university was to have at least one teacher specialising in scientific atheism by 1980. The course title was taken from the USSR, "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" (*Grundlagen des Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus*); it was designed to take 24, 32 or 40 hours depending on the category of students and was ready in the summer of 1974. It was redesigned for the first time in 1982, and its name was changed in 1988 to "Marxism-Leninism and Religion" (*Marxismus-Leninismus und Religion*). The course was accompanied by a handbook project,[19] study information and material (1986 and 1987),[20] and teachers were able to train themselves through specialist periodicals, courses and colloquia. Other aids, including two series of transparencies and a film on Islam, were being developed at the end of the 1980s.[21] Further courses were designed for theology students in the 1980s;[22] still others were tried out at the "Friedrich Engels" military academy[23] and at the Güstrow College of Education (Lutter 1987; Naumann 1987).

The most motivated students were to be given the opportunity to go further in the study of scientific atheism. The most obvious success, or at least the best documented, was at Olof Klohr's school in Warnemünde. There, a group of students supervised by the youth organisation FDJ, sometimes even several groups at a time, were active for a number of years from 1975 onwards, organising conferences, contributing to research and even writing a brochure.[24] One of Klohr's former students emphatically recalled this deepening of scientific atheism, which for him was mainly a matter of general knowledge (Bräunert 1987, 72). To support similar initiatives, the FDJ adopted a

guide to studying atheism in its basic groups during the 1977–1978 academic year.[25] Unfortunately, the authors in Warnemünde left no record of the actual implementation of this initiative.

The efforts of the group around Olof Klohr were part of a dynamic already well underway in several countries of the Soviet Bloc. In the Soviet Union, a course called "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" existed since 1959, based on an education programme first tried out in Ukraine in 1957 (Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov 2020). It became compulsory for certain courses of study throughout the USSR in 1964 (Thrower 1983, 143–144; Powell 1975, 156; van den Bercken 1989, 130). In the 1970s, the USSR and Slovakia were seen, from Eastern Germany, as the most advanced countries in this field, followed more timidly by Poland, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria.[26] The East German scientific atheists examined the various programmes and manuals available and publicised in their network the workings of foreign colleagues (Dressler, Kauschanskij and Kurpakova 1974), including tools that the GDR never acquired, such as the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism in Leningrad, which a scholar from Leipzig had the opportunity to visit in 1973.[27]

The archives left by East German researchers prove that they kept abreast of how the teaching of their discipline was understood in Moscow and Tallinn, in Ukraine as well as in Belarus, but also in Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and even in the People's Republic of Mongolia.[28] Soviet professors took part in intensive training courses in scientific atheism in Leipzig, such as Agafonov from Moscow in 1973.[29] In 1976–1977, the University of Halle welcomed another great Soviet specialist, Dmitri Ugrinovich, for a series of lectures.[30] An international collective volume on atheistic education in higher education was prepared, contacts multiplied, international conferences followed one another and various trips and stays enabled them to familiarise themselves with the methods and progress made elsewhere. After a first Pan-Soviet conference in Lviv in 1974, a conference devoted to "questions of method in courses on scientific atheism in higher education" in December 1976 brought together more than 300 participants from the Soviet Union and abroad, including Olof Klohr and Gerhard Peine.[31] In the 1980s, an international symposium entitled "Marxism and religious ideology - theory and criticism of religion in the philosophical education of students" was held in Debrecen in November 1985, in connection with another collective volume then in preparation.[32] Educational issues were also discussed at other colloquia with broader themes, such as those held in Moscow in October 1986 and in Pécs in November 1988.[33] A specific exchange took place on the use of films in the teaching of Marxist-Leninist philosophy and scientific atheism.[34]

East German scientific atheists were trying to adapt to their student population by taking advantage of the surveys conducted since the 1960s to get to know them better. How many of the students attending the courses were atheists, how many religious, how many "not set in their ways" (*weltanschaulich*

nicht festgelegt), "still undecided" (*noch unentschieden*), "indifferent" (*indifferent*) or "supporters of other opinions" (*Anhänger anderer Auffassungen*)? The categories varied slightly without blurring the main trends. The experts noted a breakthrough for materialist and dialectical thought after 1945, an increase in the proportion of atheist students from the early 1960s onwards, followed by a "significant" drop at the end of the decade.[35] The figures varied widely depending on the course of study and the institution. As a general rule, atheists accounted for around 70% of students, leaving around 12%–15% for those who were indifferent or held other opinions.[36] Scientific atheists identified three groups of students, each posing different challenges. Unsurprisingly, religious students were not favoured. Teachers still took it for granted that a dialectical materialist position of the Marxist-Leninist type went hand in hand with a stronger class position and a stronger commitment to the service of society than religious or even neutral positions.[37] The emphasis on a political commitment put atheism in an important but subordinate position or as the Politburo decision put it, as a "contribution to communist education".

In this perspective, the Marxist atheists and the indifferent or undecided called for considerable educational work. For those who declared that they adhered to the Marxist-Leninist worldview, the investigators had to face up to the fact that their positions were much less solid than they might have hoped. Not only were the "right" political positions not always accompanied by a great willingness to take political action (Schauer 1977, 43), but these students were also guilty of a flagrant ignorance of the basic notions of their own worldview. In 1971, atheism was a concept that only 21% of students could explain with any precision, 20% more or less, and which, paradoxically, was most widely known among religious students (Friedrich, Klohr and Förster 1971, 16).[38] A lack of knowledge about the concepts of Marxism-Leninism and religion persisted among young East Germans, as was deplored as late as August 1989 (Lange, Dennhardt and Schubarth 1989). This means that the impact of the teaching efforts made by specialists in scientific atheism must be viewed with great caution. They found it difficult to move beyond a "spontaneous", "naive" or "implicit" atheism. The boundaries with indifference blurred, an indifference that affected both religion and atheism. "Spontaneous lack of religion" (*spontane Religionslosigkeit*)[39] could be politically damaging because it was too aggressive towards religions, without knowing anything about them, and incapable of supporting atheist positions in a debate with believers. The turn of the 1970s saw academics move away from a binary opposition between atheism and religion to adopt a scheme organised more around three poles. Atheist education was henceforth to be aimed less at religious students than at the undecided, who were more likely to join the ranks of Marxist atheists during their student life.[40]

The growing indifference was then observed in several Eastern Bloc countries and did not escape the notice of either their Soviet colleagues or Western observers.[41] In the USSR, the "atheist establishment" redoubled its efforts

to address a vacuum by giving spiritual content to atheism itself (Smolkin 2018). The different conclusions drawn in the GDR took account of the religious landscape and the policy of cooperation that was gradually taking hold. A more nuanced view of Christians, particularly Protestants, and a discourse on shared values even led in some cases to an open preference for believers over the indifferent and undecided, who were deemed to be more selfish, more fragile and less compatible with life in society.[42] Disconnecting religious affiliation and a political stance hostile to socialism could finally pave the way for a change of perspective without there being any real question of religion, the political implications being the main concern.

Meanwhile, one of the aims of teaching scientific atheism was "the deepening of the atheistic convictions of atheists".[43] The three compulsory courses in Marxism-Leninism were each intended to make a specific contribution to atheist education.[44] The first brochure, published in 1975, directed the "Dialectical and historical materialism" course towards a confrontation with religion through the themes of "political clericalism", "revisionism" and "social reformism". Atheism was to be addressed in terms of the relationship between consciousness and matter, implying that all materialist philosophy was atheistic. The subject used two main arguments that had been familiar to Olof Klohr's readers since the 1950s: The opposition between science and faith and the working class as the main actor in history to the exclusion of any divine force. The recommendations for the "Scientific Communism" course were geared towards a more concrete treatment of religion: The SED's position on religion and the Church; the separation of State and Church; freedom of belief; and not forgetting the inevitable decline of religion. "Political clericalism" and the commitment of a growing number of believers to peace, democracy and socialism completed a more nuanced picture.[45]

At almost the same time, two young researchers advocated introducing atheist issues when talking about the theory of revolution, which made it possible to address questions of alliances and the persistence of religion in a socialist regime, the theory of socialism, as well as the "revolutionary world process" and the international class struggle.[46] The later and much more detailed 1980 brochure, *Scientific Communism, Atheism and Religion,* took a broader view of religions in the world and international struggles and now emphasised the notion of cooperation. An appendix provided information on the religions present in East Germany. The brochure both set out the convictions of the authors and provided knowledge, quotes and recent references from different religious contexts, both national and international. "Clerical anti-communism" was not forgotten, but the overall position was more favourable to believers and reflected the state of thinking at the end of the decade.[47]

As for the third compulsory course, "it has hardly ever been customary to emphasise the atheistic character of political economy. It is also […] the intention […] only to deal with these questions where there are widespread counter-concepts on the part of religion", thus from an oppositional

perspective.[48] The same was true of the much more extensive teaching instructions produced in 1976–1977, which focused on "clerical conceptions" to the extent that atheism was mentioned only once.[49] In 1984, there was talk of a twofold relationship between political economy, atheism and religion. On the one hand, political economy was to scientifically explain the material origins and social role of religion; on the other hand, it should help to unmask and refute social and economic doctrines that take the form of religion (Klohr and Pacholik 1984, 4). Udo Pacholik, who specialised in the socio-economic conceptions of various religious institutions, offered a much more in-depth analysis of Christian economic ethics, Catholic social doctrine and discussions within the World Council of Churches. As with most of these booklets, however, the reader will be hard-pressed to find information that can be applied directly in the classroom.

Courses devoted entirely to scientific atheism and given by the specialists themselves obviously offered much more scope. The first course to be found in the archives, from 1965, was full of polemics against religion. The introduction focused much more on the term "scientific" than on atheism. The programme itself began with religion, presented atheism almost as a special case of criticism of religion, and above all suggested throughout the lessons that it was nothing more than the absence and rejection of religion, all the more so as the natural sciences – astronomy, physics and biology – played an important role. Unusually for East Germany, the 1965 syllabus contained a lesson on the history of atheism. Attacks on the social doctrine of the Catholic Church – other denominations were less present than later on, and other religions were still absent – were balanced by a presentation of the different attitudes in the fight for peace and the building of socialism. But the attitude was fundamentally hostile towards religion. Cooperation between Marxists and believers was barely present, and the course ended with the future decline of religion.[50] Two years later, a list of themes showed a slight shift in the centre of gravity in favour of atheism.[51]

The first programme of the special course "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" (1974) reversed the proportion. Atheism occupied a considerable place in the course compared with the previous and subsequent programmes, in which religion predominated. As an "expression of the interests of the working class", it was also "the expression of the process of human liberation from domination by elemental, spontaneous forces of nature and society".[52] Unsurprisingly, it was linked to the development of the natural sciences and led to the rejection of a religious vision of history; recognising the laws of nature and not believing in a providence characterised the atheist. The programme also attempted to give a positive, ethical content to atheism, which was closely linked to practical, revolutionary struggle and was profoundly "optimistic" and "life-affirming" (*lebensbejahend*). As for religion, it was portrayed as reactionary and in crisis. The programme insisted heavily on its expected disappearance, even "too much so", according to a ministry official.[53]

The authors of the 1974 syllabus claim a link with its Soviet counterpart.[54] They had at their disposal Soviet, Czechoslovakian and Hungarian syllabuses and a German translation of the Soviet textbook from 1973.[55] A comparison reveals that the 1974 East German syllabus indeed closely followed its 1971 Soviet counterpart, sometimes word for word. However, it was shorter, softened an, at times, even more aggressive tone, and did not embrace the same diversity of religions. These discrepancies between the Soviets and the East Germans are confirmed in other documents.[56] The reduced emphasis on history was also typical of the teaching of scientific atheism in East Germany. A disconnection occurred in the early 1980s. The growing differences with the other countries of the Soviet Bloc highlight the specificities of the East German vision. East Germans preferred to focus on such notions as tolerance and cooperation between Marxists and believers. They began to think of Christianity as coming in part from Judaism and introduced a development on anti-Semitism that was absent from the Soviet and Czechoslovak programmes preserved in the archives. The latter in turn included themes entirely absent from the Soviet and East German programmes such as art. In an evaluation of a Czechoslovak programme, Klohr did not hide the differences and showed little will to discuss them with his colleagues.[57] Openly rejecting the options taken by the Soviets proved trickier. Jürgen Scholze, Klohr's future successor at the head of the working group responsible for the programmes, claimed that the programmes of the two countries were in agreement "essentially" (*im Wesentlichen*), notwithstanding a long list of divergences.[58] While claiming that they were going to draw inspiration from the Soviets, the East German researchers were in fact taking a different route for their own programme and becoming independent without claiming it.

As early as 1982, the second version of "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" contrasted with the 1974 programme.[59] There were a number of salient features from that time onwards, and these were to become more pronounced until 1990. Cooperation, tolerance and the common struggle with believers for peace and socialism became the guiding ideas. Gone were the philosophical polemics and arguments inherited from the 1950s and 1960s in direct opposition to religion. The thesis of the withering away of religion disappeared. Mention of the Soviet Union and its religious policy was now avoided, even if it meant removing Orthodoxy. This is all the more striking as the course became much richer in information of all kinds, including extracts from the constitutions of other socialist and communist countries, including North Korea, but leaving out the USSR as far as possible. Familiarising students with the world's major religions was now one of the primary teaching objectives, with atheism taking a back seat. From the outset, religions were considered from a political angle, particularly in their commitment to peace and to help solve the "global problems" of the 1980s. In 1981, Klohr also mentioned ecological issues, religious art and the festivities planned around Luther's 500th birthday in 1983 as possible avenues for a more topical course.[60] The course thus became politicised to the detriment of the original philosophical controversies.

The authors insisted that cooperation "results from the theory of M[arxism-]L[eninism] and is therefore sincere and long-term".[61] As it was better in the GDR to rely on traditions than to claim innovations, the authors built a tradition of cooperation in the history of the workers' movement and distinguished between two divergent lines in the class struggle: Religion as the "opium of the people" on the one hand and as a force of protest on the other. This dualism made it possible not only to focus more on "progressive" movements but also to reintroduce "anti-communist clericalism" when this seemed appropriate.[62] By the end of the 1980s, specialists in scientific atheism were planning to share with students the conviction they had acquired in the 1970s: "Cooperation between communists and believers as an objective law".[63] Under the heading of "scientific atheism", the aim was now to educate students "in the sense of alliance and dialogue capability".[64]

Lectures given by Wolfgang Kliem in 1981 give an idea of how this teaching was put into practice. As part of a very traditional programme at the military academy,[65] Kliem nevertheless spoke exclusively about religion, its functions, religions in the world, Christianity and its contemporary developments. His handwritten notes reveal a pleasure in dwelling on religion, even if it meant not being able to deal with the last theme he had planned: not atheism as such, but atheist propaganda and working with believers.[66]

With all the talk of religions and believers, some people have asked the question: "What happened to atheism?"[67] In 1982, it had already disappeared from the headlines. Atheism continued to be derived simply from materialism, from the opposition between knowledge or science and faith, even though the authors of a 1984 teaching manual insisted that it was not a "mere negation of theism", not a "fight against God", and Wolfgang Kliem added: "He does not exist".[68] Its object tended to dissolve, and atheism became the discipline that analyses religious phenomena.[69] In 1988–1989, the development of new course materials gave rise to highly controversial debates among specialists about the appropriateness of continuing to use the term "atheism", its definition and its purpose. After lengthy debates, the course "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" became "Marxism-Leninism and Religion" in 1988.

The 1982 and 1984 courses for Protestant theology students confirmed these trends.[70] A mention of the decline of religion and the spread of scientific atheism, still contained in a draft of the 1982 programme, was eliminated.[71] The final version, which was much toned down, sought to explain the policy towards the Churches and the possibilities of cooperation between Marxists and believers. The latter theme took over in 1984, so much so that teachers ended up not talking about atheism at all. Students of theology also had to familiarise themselves with history seen through the prism of cooperation. For the Christian party CDU and "Christian circles" attached to it, the aim was to point future pastors in the right direction. The emphasis was on "differentiation" within religions and Churches, between the two lines – "opium" and "force of protest" – so that students could choose the

"right" tendencies within their Churches. These courses were offered at least at the University of Halle in 1983, 1984/1985 and 1987/1988[72] and at Jena.[73] For the others, it remains to be seen whether all these efforts by scientific atheists bore any fruit.

Obstacles at every level: teaching falls far short of ambitions

Concrete achievements are, by their very nature, more difficult to ascertain than plans and projections set down in writing. There is, however, a variety of documents available to examine the extent to which scientific atheists succeeded in sharing their concerns within the academic world and to attempt to paint a picture of the reality of atheist teaching.[74] For the compulsory courses on Marxism-Leninism, successfully introducing the atheist aspects directly into the most official documents would have given a more reliable guarantee that the topic would be discussed with the students than publishing booklets whose use required particular interest and effort. Before reaching students, it was necessary to convince other teachers. A systematic examination of course syllabuses between the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1980s shows that there were considerable difficulties in shifting the comments on religion or atheism to bring them into line with the positions defended by specialists in scientific atheism – when there were any comments on the subject at all.[75] It should come as no surprise that the official versions of the political economy courses made no mention of atheism throughout the period. The specialists in scientific atheism never found any real intermediaries among the teachers of this subject, and by their own admission, they were breaking new ground without ploughing it deeply. As for the Scientific Communism course, those in charge of it showed no sensitivity to atheism.[76] Several themes could have lent themselves to touch upon religious aspects. However, one must go down to the level of the various lectures to find a few references, all of them very succinct and entirely negative or polemical.[77]

The situation was a priori more favourable for the course in dialectical and historical materialism since the members of the scientific atheism network were themselves involved in teaching and could participate in the committees responsible for the syllabus. Olof Klohr himself taught the course from its inception in 1951 and is said to have played a major role in drawing up the first syllabus.[78] In the early days, in the 1950s, the materials were full of polemics against religion, in keeping with the tense political situation at the time. New programmes at the end of the 1950s further hardened the tone. Virulent polemics against clericalism were introduced, and much longer pieces presented religion as linked to a primitive society and slavery. A poor reflection of the world, hostile to the natural sciences and opposed to socialism, religion was presented as instrumentalised by the ruling class and doomed to disappear. Atheism was defined by reaction and opposition to religion and was characterised above all by a scientific view of the world. It was fundamentally militant. At the same time as scientific atheism

was gaining official recognition in the GDR, new curricula (1964–1966) paradoxically inaugurated an attitude of total indifference towards religion and atheism. This was to prove tenacious right up to the end of the regime. Where the themes are not simply absent, a comparison of different versions shows that they were added late and only superficially. The presentation of religion remained very negative. Atheism, when it was mentioned, was fixed in stereotyped and not very explicit expressions: The "scientific and atheistic character" (*wissenschaftlich-atheistischer Charakter*) of dialectical materialism or Marxist-Leninist philosophy, or "consistent atheism as an intrinsic property" (*konsequenter Atheismus als immanente Eigenschaft*). Atheism had its place only in polemics, in contrast with religion, and in connection with scientificity. When it came to a positive vision of Man and socialist society, it was absent.

By the time the Politburo ordered that "the atheistic character of Marxism-Leninism be given greater prominence", religion and atheism had virtually disappeared from the materials of the course in dialectical and historical materialism. Teachers and decision-makers seemed to take atheism largely for granted,[79] considering that as scientists and materialists, people would necessarily also be atheists. Without something at stake, the subject was in danger of being eliminated. When religion and atheism were still mentioned, it was typically in last place. As in the perspective of the scientific atheists, atheism also suffered from a concentration on religion. On the whole, the trend was and remained one of indifference. In 1989, religion and atheism were as absent as ever.

As for the manual of historical and dialectical materialism, despite the mention of Olof Klohr's name in the successive editions from 1974 to 1987,[80] the debates did not crystallise around themes close to his heart.[81] At the beginning, there were several references to religion and atheism. In 1978, criticism of religion, atheism and scientific atheism from a fairly aggressive perspective took over, only to disappear again in 1983 and make way for a more conciliatory tone. There were fewer mentions of religion, but it was presented as having a place in socialist countries (Fiedler 1983, 448–450). The textbook therefore integrated religion and atheism more easily than the compulsory syllabuses. But the evolution, with a return to aggressiveness in 1978, was not in phase with that of the discipline of scientific atheism as a whole.

The working group chaired by Olof Klohr questioned the effectiveness of its own work. As early as 1975, it took steps to assess whether atheism was beginning to be taken more into account in compulsory courses on Marxism-Leninism.[82] In 1975 and 1977, optimism prevailed, though not without provoking some critical enquiries from a Ministry official.[83] In 1977, to get a clearer picture, the Ministry of Higher Education asked the 31 East German higher education institutions to report on the "state of atheist education and training of students as part of their communist education".[84] The evaluation carried out on this basis produced a much more ambivalent picture. Klohr and Kaul concluded that great progress had been

made in the course on dialectical and historical materialism, but that the effect on students had been wiped out by the lack of follow-up in the other two courses, which would have enabled them to go beyond an abstract philosophical approach.[85] The various brochures explaining the atheist nature of the compulsory courses were found in the libraries of around two-thirds of the institutions. Many teachers were unfamiliar with them, and in many places they remained hard to find and unused. The same was true of the series of periodicals published in Warnemünde and Güstrow. What happened to the few thousand copies that were printed? The situation was bad in several establishments despite the presence on site of a member of the scientific atheism network. With the exception of the University of Jena, the most advanced in the field were not the major institutions with the most students. For the Technical University of Dresden, the archives attest to the difficulties of dissemination, the gaps in documentation and the efforts of a few motivated individuals to remedy the situation. The confusion was so great that Professor Wollgast ended up drawing up a course design himself, arguing that none existed at the central level, although this had been the case for two years.[86]

In Dresden, the initiative was well received, but elsewhere the situation could be more complicated. The advocates of a more thoughtful atheist education were confronted with a number of opposing views, which constituted serious obstacles. These included the idea that atheism did not need to be made explicit and a certain reluctance to get involved in a subject felt to be unnecessarily burdensome in the classroom.[87] Some institutions were unclear about what scientific atheism was. Even well-placed universities such as Halle, which welcomed the Soviet Professor Ugrinovich in 1977, missed opportunities.[88] The University of Leipzig was also rather closed-minded, and this was not to change until the end of the regime.[89]

The 1978 document identified the two main obstacles to the teaching of atheism at different levels of the university hierarchy. The first were the teachers who were supposed to implement atheist education. Specialists in scientific atheism were acutely aware of a problem of "cadres". There were too few trained, too few in number, with too little influence within their institutions. The specialists in scientific atheism insisted on the requirements: "It is essential to maintain the principle that only politically and academically qualified comrades read this course".[90] This warning was double-edged. On the one hand, it made scientific atheism a serious and demanding specialisation and legitimised the initiatives of its network. But on the other hand, it cast a shadow of illegitimacy over teachers interested in atheist education. Numerous archive documents attest to the fact that they were not considered sufficiently trained and felt themselves to be "anxious", "at a loss", helpless, ill-informed and unprepared.[91] The difficulty was made all the greater by the fact that scientific atheism was absent from both the initial training and the planned in-service training.[92] And yet training "cadres" in the social sciences easily took seven years.[93]

At the end of the 1980s, the permanent working group attempted to set up a postgraduate course of study in Berlin. Its planned launch in 1990 was prevented by the end of the regime.[94]

In the meantime, few teachers were available. As early as 1974, the target set that by 1980, every university and most technical colleges would have a teacher specialising in scientific atheism seemed difficult to achieve.[95] The figures given in the 1980s ranged from 26 to 39 available teachers. Yet the Warnemünde and Güstrow groups alone accounted for a good 15 of them.[96] Despite cooperation between education institutions in close geographical proximity,[97] some areas of East Germany remained without solutions, particularly around Leipzig and Dresden.[98] It has to be said that there was no rush of candidates. Most teachers simply lacked an interest in atheist education or were unaware of the need for it.[99] After a first thesis in the field or a first special training course, some switched subject.[100] They were therefore also proving difficult to retain. The decline in the number of participants in the activities of the scientific atheism network in 1979 was as much quantitative as qualitative, with almost half of the 38 participants coming for the first time.[101] Under these conditions, it was difficult to provide ongoing, in-depth training.

These obstacles were neither specific to the GDR nor to scientific atheism. Even in the USSR in the 1970s, reluctant teachers sometimes refused to enter the field of religion and were inadequately prepared to teach atheism. A 1975 article highlights the lack of interest among Soviet teachers and students (Powell 1975; see also Smolkin 2018, 75, 140–141). In Estonia, the lack of specialists was such that the compulsory course "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" was taught only at Tallinn Polytechnic Institute (Remmel and Friedenthal 2020, 97). As for the GDR, in order to provide the special courses in Marxism-Leninism that were introduced from the mid-1970s, the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education estimated that an additional 30 teachers would be needed by 1981, to be drawn from the existing staff.[102] These ambitions came up against structural problems, and scientific atheism was not the only one to suffer.

Finally, the teachers who took up the cause generally did not exert enough influence in their respective institutions. Few managed to report on the activities of the scientific atheism network.[103] The vast majority were at the beginning of their careers and had a subordinate institutional status, particularly from 1979 onwards.[104] In the 1980s, assistants regularly made up more than two-thirds of the participants.[105] In Zittau, Halle and Freiberg, certain relatively isolated professors were free to teach scientific atheism.[106] At Leipzig, a much more important university, one of those in charge still wrote in 1988: "I can't imagine anything under 'Marxist-Leninist theory of religion'".[107] At Greifswald in 1975, "the majority of members of the teaching staff of the M/L section makes a pretext of insufficient expertise", preferring "tolerance of the world-view" (*weltanschauliche Toleranz*).[108]

The second obstacle, apart from teachers, was crucial but received far less thought and effort. The 1977/1978 analysis identified the heads of the Marxism-Leninism and Philosophy departments, and those of the university more generally, as crucial actors in the widespread teaching of atheism. The few measures taken to raise their awareness seem to have been limited to the years 1973–1977.[109] The impression that emerges from the archives is that there was little support for the discipline of "scientific atheism" from a ministry which, with a few exceptions, made little use of the extensive powers that the highly centralised and hierarchical East German system offered it. Too many of the most official documents ignore religion and atheism, thereby allowing for the indifference of university managers and the majority of teachers.[110]

The introduction of special courses in scientific atheism came up against these obstacles even more massively. The choice of special courses was generally left to the deans of the universities.[111] The "History of the SED" course had to be given priority, working against the other special courses. In fact, the Ministry did not impose "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" on any public or any institution.[112] Unlike its Soviet counterpart, which had been optional since 1959 but had only a small number of enrolments and was made compulsory in 1964 (Thrower 1983, 143–144), the claims of the East German course were quickly disavowed by the Ministry.[113] Moreover, university officials persisted in not making it a priority.[114] Its authors had taken the lead over other planned special courses by having a programme validated as early as 1974[115] and planned to implement it without delay.[116] The most eminent members of the scientific atheism network set an example by offering the course at least from 1975/1976. It was especially from 1977/1978 that "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" was offered to students in various places.[117] This was in line with the Ministry's objectives set in 1975,[118] and the progress of courses in scientific atheism was satisfactory.[119] The optimism faded, however, when the other special courses overtook scientific atheism from 1978/1979 onwards. With just 330 students, "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" was already well down the league table in 1979/1980. In 1982/1983, out of the 11,109 East German students who took a special course, only 605 attended "Foundations of Scientific Atheism", i.e. 3% of the cohort. By the end of the 1970s, scientific atheism had reached a ceiling that it was unable to break through, with a presence in only 8 to 10 of the 31 higher education establishments. The desire to establish the special course more widely was reaffirmed until the end of the 1980s but never satisfied.[120]

The themes of several other special courses could have lent themselves to dealing with atheism. In fact, the scientific atheists planned to develop guidelines for atheist education as part of the courses "History of the SED", "Fundamental Questions of Marxist-Leninist Ethics" and "Philosophical Problems of Technology and the Natural Sciences".[121] However, references to religion or atheism in the syllabuses of these courses were rare or even absent.[122]

The results were less negative when we consider the institutions involved, including the six East German universities. On the whole, however, the students who benefitted from the atheism courses were not the target audience, i.e. "future multipliers of the scientific world-view".[123] Future teachers were of particular interest to the scientific atheists. These included philosophy students, future teachers of Marxism-Leninism (*Diplomlehrer für Marxismus-Leninismus*), and secondarily teachers of civic education (*Staatsbürgerkunde*) in secondary schools. The idea of imposing a special atheism course on them was raised several times from 1975 onwards and in the 1980s, but never materialised.[124] Other types of teachers were trained in the education institutes and colleges run by the Ministry of Education. However, apart from a few enthusiasts, including Hans Lutter, rector of the Güstrow school, the field of popular education resisted scientific atheism. Future teachers of civic education do not seem to have benefitted from courses in scientific atheism.[125]

The University of Leipzig played a key role in all teaching of Marxism-Leninism in the GDR, from initial training through in-service training to curricula and textbooks. Between 1975 and 1983, 270 teachers of Marxist-Leninist philosophy in higher education were said to have graduated, and in the 1980s this was between 22 and 38 people per year. This could have been a considerable pool of talent for a small country like the GDR and as many reinforcements to consolidate scientific atheism.[126] A course in atheism was planned in 1964, but it is not known whether it ever took place.[127] In the 1970s, courses specifically devoted to scientific atheism failed to gain a foothold at the University of Leipzig, where the people in charge were not very supportive.[128] A new programme for the "graduate teachers of Marxism-Leninism" course in 1977/1978 planned to introduce scientific atheism,[129] but it is unlikely that the reality was in line with the forecasts. The following programme, from 1982, even allocated up to 45 hours of lessons to scientific atheism, but as optional teaching, and it tended to disappear from the objectives.[130] The last syllabus, dated 1 September 1989, still mentioned scientific atheism.[131] Did these courses really take place? There is no doubt that various seminars at the University of Leipzig included atheist aspects,[132] but the actual implementation of the special course remains to be seen.

On the students who actually took special courses in scientific atheism, data are available for the 1988/1989 academic year. The student profile was consistent with the institutions, i.e. mainly architecture and engineering schools. The public was more heterogeneous at the universities of Leipzig, Jena and Greifswald, with students in mathematics, chemistry, physics, animal production and veterinary medicine, but also in literature, German, arts, psychology and history. A few future teachers also slipped in.[133] But in any case, the strategy of teaching scientific atheism primarily to future "multipliers" failed.

While none of these courses were imposed on the students and most were unrelated to their course of study, their motivations for choosing lessons in

atheism remain to be identified. It goes without saying that the reception by students is particularly difficult to assess. Documents and testimonies must be treated with caution (Sieber and Freytag 1993, 49; Ploenus 2007, 179–188). In general, courses in Marxism-Leninism left bad memories (Ploenus 2007; Linke 1995, 27; Krusche 2002, 204, 458; Hildebrandt 1993, 121–136). However, religious phenomena aroused interest among the students. This, at least, is what emerges from numerous internal university reports.[134] The scientific atheists naturally shared this assessment.[135] The scientific atheism courses took advantage of this curiosity and seem to have been well received, provided that the documents contained a grain of truth. This would already have been the case for the courses at the time of the Jena chair (Ploenus 2007, 179). Unlike many special courses, they were of "cross-sectional nature" and opened up horizons.[136] Most of the students had grown up in a nonreligious environment and were looking for knowledge on subjects they knew nothing about.[137] The trend to increase the information content, including on Islam, Judaism and Buddhism, was a step in their direction. By the end of the 1980s, religious movements and institutions were gaining visibility and becoming part of the news. Unlike in the Soviet Union, however, the teaching of scientific atheism remained confined to the walls of the university and avoided observations in the field, which meant that it could not be used as a bridge to bring curious or even new believers to the Churches. However, it can be compared with the "ironic metamorphosis" (Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer in Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 173) of the periodical *Nauka i religija*, noted by several researchers, which went from being "an atheist weapon" (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 173) to a source of information for readers eager to find out more about religion. In the GDR, the desire for discussion seems to have been very strong, and students were more interested in seminars that were likely to turn into discussions and even controversies.[138] Here, scientific atheism was a notable exception to the special courses given mainly, if not exclusively, in the form of lectures.[139]

The results of two decades of efforts to "give greater prominence to the atheistic character of Marxism-Leninism" in education remain ambivalent. Commissioned by the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education, specialists in scientific atheism studied their audience, participated in committees, trained teachers, assessed the situation, drew up programmes, various aids, transparencies and booklets and would have made a film if the end of the GDR had not prevented them from doing so. Despite a promising start, their hopes of seeing "Foundations of Scientific Atheism" established throughout the country by the mid-1970s were not realised. The "cadres" problem, regularly cited, was not the only obstacle; at least as important was the resistance of the institutions' decision-makers, who were mostly simply indifferent to their cause. And yet indifference can be tenacious and a serious obstacle when it comes to allocating resources. The proponents of scientific atheism did not succeed in making their perspective relevant to colleagues and university managers, despite their concern to adapt content ever more

closely to the interests of students. The course materials illustrate the trajectory followed by the discipline, from the perspective of conflict still present in 1974 to a more conciliatory perspective. This reflected the global evolution of themes and approaches within "scientific atheism" in the 1970s and 1980s.

Quoted archives

Federal Archives (BArch)
Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BArch)
Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (BStU)
Thuringia Land Archives – Rudolstadt Public Archives (ThStA Rudolstadt)
Leipzig University Archives (UAL)
Rostock University Archives (UAR)
Protestant Central Archives (EZA)
Private Collection (PC) Düsing

Quoted periodicals

Mitteilungen der IHS
Navigator

Notes

1 UAL PH 162 Bd. 3 Nr. 2, Thema: Wesen und Hauptinhalt der ideologischen Erziehung, pp. 2–3.
2 UAR SML/85 Klohr, Hinweise für die Vorlesungen über Religion und Moral.
3 BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für das Jahr 1966.
4 UAR SML/5 Protokoll der Arbeitsbesprechung am 16.3.1959, p. 1; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/1760, pp. 78–90; BArch DO 4/1023, pp. 1317–1319; interview with Kurt Fleming and Bernd Stoppe, 27 July 2019, and with Viola Schubert-Lehnhardt, 26 October 2022; Dahms 2007, 1595.
5 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2960 Protokoll der Sitzung des wissenschaftlichen Beirates für Philosophie beim SHF, 12 March 1965.
6 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2266; SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV A2/9.04/124.
7 Preserved in BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2514 and 2266.
8 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2266 Grundlagen der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie, added: Fernstudium-Anleitung / Hochschul-Fernstudium 1963/1964, p. 21.
9 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 19–25, 65–83; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls … Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966; BISKF Kaul 12 Index cards, Tätigkeit in staatlichen Leitungsgremien u. ä. Funktionen, 1967; UAJ BC 90 Korch to Herder, 28 September 1961; UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967, p. 21.
10 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 19–25, 65–83; UAJ BC 118 Steinbach, Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1966; UAJ BC 144 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Studienjahr 1964/1965;

UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1542 Entwurf, Aufgaben und Inhalt des Studiums der Grundlagen des Marxismus-Leninismus an der Theologischen Fakultät, p. 3.

11 UAJ BC 144 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Studienjahr 1964/1965; UAJ BC 118 Steinbach, Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1966; BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für "Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" 1964/1965 and Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für das Jahr 1966; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für den Zeitraum Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966 and Arbeitsbericht des "Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" von Dezember 1963 bis September 1968; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727 (pp. 93–112, 131–134), 1183 (pp. 42–43), 1232 (pp. 62–65), 1828 (pp. 89–99) and 2086 (pp. 71–73).

12 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 93–112, 131–134; BISKF Kaul 14 Kirschke, Fernstudium Philosophie, Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Studienmaterial (vorläufige Fassung), 1965. See also the reworked material: BISKF Kaul 14 Kirschke, Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus (Themen und Literatur für 8 Konsultationen), 1967.

13 BISKF Kaul 14 Arbeitsprogramm des Lehrstuhls für "Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus" 1964/1965; BISKF Klohr 314 Tätigkeitsbericht des Lehrstuhls für Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus für den Zeitraum Dezember 1963 - Mai 1966, p. 2; ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/148, p. 21; UAJ BC 144 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Studienjahr 1964/1965.

14 UAJ BC 151 Arbeitsprogramm des Instituts für Philosophie für das Jahr 1967, p. 14.

15 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2266 and 2270.

16 Other plans no longer mention atheism, in SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV A2/9.04/124 (March 1969 and 3 April 1969); BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2270.

17 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2/1421.

18 "Concept for the development of scientific atheism in higher education" quoted in BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544, Dienstberatung des Ministers, 20 August 1973. Quoted in numerous archive documents, these provisions are sometimes dated 21 or 23 August 1973. A draft document mentions that Klohr had been consulted.

19 Called *Beiträge zum wissenschaftlichen Atheismus*, it was abandoned at the end of the 1970s.

20 BISKF Klohr 82 Klohr, Spezialkurs Grundlagen des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus - Lehrmaterial.

21 BISKF Kaul 14; BArch DO 4/1023 (pp. 1320–1334), 1024 (pp. 1456–1468); DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kaul, Protokoll Beratung der St. AG am 26.-27.5.1988 in Rostock-Warnemünde.

22 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kaul, St. AG, Arbeitsplan für das Studienjahr 1988/1989, 12 October 1988.

23 BISKF Kliem 115 Militärakademie "Friedrich Engels", Studienanleitung für das Lehrfach Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, 16 July 1980.

24 *Mitteilungen der IHS*, June 1977, p. 2; *Navigator* 9, 9 May 1979, pp. 4–5; 9, 14 May 1982, p. 5; 16, 12 October 1984, p. 7; 15, 27 September 1985, p. 8; BISKF Klohr 310; BISKF Klohr 311 Polzin, Bericht, 19 December 1977; UAR R 2133 IHS, FDJ-Studententage, Hochschulfestspiele, Hochschulleistungsschau, 28 April–1 May 1976, p. 23; UAR R 2125 IHS, 11. FDJ-Studententage, 8. Hochschulfestspiele, 2 April - 1 May 1980, Hochschulleistungsschau 25 April - 4 May 1980.

25 EZA 101/1803 Anleitung für das FDJ-Studienjahr ATHEISMUS.

26 BISKF Kaul 11 Klohr, Reisebericht, 24 December 1976.
27 UAL NA Handel 193 Handel, Untitled, 29 May 1973.
28 BISKF Kliem 5, 42 and 59; BISKF Kaul 1 and 11.
29 BISKF Kaul 11 Agafanow, Einige Fragen der Forschungsarbeit.
30 BISKF Kliem 64 and 65; BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Forschungsabrechnung 1979 mentions the sharing of the manuscript within the GDR.
31 BISKF Kaul 11 Klohr, Reisebericht, 24 December 1976.
32 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Brüll, Information über das Internationale Symposium zur kommunistischen Erziehung der Studenten, 12–14 November 1985 Debrecen. See also Engel, Heidorn, Direktive für die Delegation … für die Reise in die Ungarische VR, 6–8 February 1984.
33 BISKF Kliem 5; BISKF Kaul 11.
34 East German specialists did not participate directly in this event, but were informed: BISKF Kliem 85 Dick, Bericht über die Teilnahme am Internationalen Seminar …, 7 May 1981.
35 UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof, pp. 91–96; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Kaul, St. AG, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten … 1976/1977, 13 March 1978; Friedrich, Klohr and Förster 1971.
36 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Kaul, St. AG, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten … 1976/1977, 13 March 1978; BISKF Klohr 303 Baum, Jahresarbeit, April 1978; Schauer 1977.
37 Friedrich, Klohr and Förster 1971; BISKF Klohr 305 ZIJ, Konzeption zur Untersuchung "Jugend und Weltanschauung" (überarbeitete Fassung), November 1973, p. 5; BISKF Klohr 303 Baum, Jahresarbeit, April 1978; BISKF Kaul 13 Kaul, Thesen zur Dissertation, January 1974, p. 4; Lange, Dennhardt and Schubarth 1989; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Kaul, St. AG, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten … 1976/1977, 13 March 1978; UAL Pror StuA 447 Damm, Studienvoraussetzungen und Studienaktivitäten von Chemie-Studenten an der KMU, June 1983.
38 See other alarming surveys and questionnaires in: BISKF Kliem 72; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Kaul, St. AG, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten … 1976/1977, 13 March 1978, p. 3.
39 BISKF Klohr 301; BISKF Kaul 13 Gottschling, Thesen zur Dissertation, October 1969, p. 1; Friedrich, Klohr and Förster 1971.
40 BISKF Kaul 13 Gottschling, Thesen zur Dissertation, October 1969, p. 8; UAL FMI 29, pp. 41–42; Schauer 1977, 4; Friedrich, Klohr and Förster 1971; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Kaul, St. AG, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten … 1976/1977, 13 March 1978.
41 An example in BISKF Kaul 1 Lebedew, Studentische Jugend und Atheismus. See van den Bercken 1989, 140; Walters 1993, 28; Smolkin 2018, 13, 142–143, 159–164, 206–214, 226; Tesař 2019, 316.
42 Lange, Dennhardt and Schubarth 1989, 19; Hoffmann 2000, 242; BISKF Kliem 72 Kramer, Einschätzung des Erfahrungsaustausches, 19 October 1979, and Röser, Einschätzung der Ergebnisse des Erfahrungsaustausches zur atheistischen Arbeit, 10 October 1979.
43 BISKF Klohr 95 Eschke, Gutachten zu dem geplanten Sammelband, 15 December 1976, p. 12.
44 BISKF Klohr 85 Klohr, St. AG, Entwurf, Der atheistische Charakter des Marxismus-Leninismus, Hinweise für … MLG, December 1975, p. 2, and Untitled, pp. 41–42.
45 BISKF Klohr 85 Klohr, St. AG, Entwurf, Der atheistische Charakter des Marxismus-Leninismus, Hinweise für … MLG, December 1975.
46 BISKF Klohr 123 Hiller, Griebel, Diplomarbeit, Die atheistische Bildung und Erziehung, May 1974.

47 BISKF Klohr 85 Klohr, Kaul, Lucas, Wissenschaftlicher Kommunismus, Atheismus und Religion, draft, 1980.
48 BISKF Klohr 85 Klohr, St. AG, Entwurf, Der atheistische Charakter des Marxismus-Leninismus, Hinweise für … MLG, December 1975, p. 13.
49 BISKF Kaul 1 Der atheistische Charakter der Politischen Ökonomie, Lehrhinweise, 1976/1977; other versions in BISKF Klohr 83 and BISKF Kliem 1.
50 BISKF Kaul 14 Kirschke, Fernstudium Philosophie, Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Studienmaterial, vorläufige Fassung, 1965.
51 BISKF Kaul 14 Kirschke, Fernstudium Philosophie, Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Themen und Literatur für 8 Konsultationen, 1967.
52 Lehrprogramm Grundlagen des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, 1974, p. 7, preserved in BISKF Kliem 85 and 121; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544, 666 and B 1429c; PC Düsing.
53 See the annotated copy in BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544.
54 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Entwurf, Lehrprogramm für das Lehrgebiet Grundlagen …, and Klohr, Konstituierende Beratung der St. AG am 23.11.1973 in Warnemünde; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Zur Geschichte der St. AG und zur Atheismusforschung im Bereich des MHF, p. 1, and IH Zittau, Vergleichende Darstellung der wissenschaftlich-atheistischen Bildung …, 7 January 1981, p. 3, and St. AG, Tätigkeitsbericht 1973–1979; BISKF Klohr 308 Klohr, Bericht, Spezialkurs, p. 1.
55 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; BISKF Klohr 82; BISKF Kaul 10; BISKF Kliem 62.
56 See the documentation in Blakeley 1964 and Thrower 1983; BISKF Kliem 64 and 65.
57 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr to Göhring, 30 April 1986.
58 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 IH Zittau, Vergleichende Darstellung der wissenschaftlich-atheistischen Bildung, 7 January 1981.
59 Materials from the 1980s are preserved, sometimes in different versions and annotated, in: BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544, 666a and 1040; BISKF Kliem 1 and 104; BISKF Klohr 82; BISKF Kaul 12 and 14; PC Düsing; BArch DO 4/1023 and 1025 (pp. 153–164, 173–174, 219–229, 231); KMU-DS 0830; MfS HA IX Nr. 11070, pp. 1–8, 10–12.
60 BISKF Kaul without archive box Kaul, St. AG, Protokoll der Beratung vom 22.-23.5.1981.
61 BISKF Kliem 104 Studienhinweise zum Spezialkurs, 1984, p. 62.
62 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kaul, Protokoll der Beratung der St. AG am 27.3.1987.
63 BISKF Kliem 104 Studienhinweise zum Spezialkurs, 1984, p. 62.
64 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Dohle, Gutachten, January 1988, p. 3.
65 BISKF Kliem 115 Militärakademie "Friedrich Engels", Studienanleitung für das Lehrfach Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, 16 July 1980.
66 BISKF Kliem 115 Scheler to Kliem, 12 December 1980, and Handwritten notes, Vorlesung zum Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, February 1981.
67 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Lehrprogramm für den Spezialkurs, margin comment, p. 1.
68 BISKF Kliem 104 Studienhinweise zum Spezialkurs "Grundlagen des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus",1984, p. 8–10.
69 BISKF Kliem 104 Studienhinweise zum Spezialkurs; BISKF Kaul 12 Booklet to accompany the slide series "Aspekte des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus", 1985.
70 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 960, 1223 and 1542.
71 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 960 Freese, draft.
72 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1542 MLU, Sektion Theologie, Vorlesungsplan Studienjahr 1983/1984, August 1983, and 1984/1985, August 1984; DR 3, 2. Schicht, 564 MLU 5. Welche Spezialkurse, in welchem Umfang werden an der MLU angeboten?

73 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 564 FSU Jena, table.
74 Evaluations from higher education establishments and from the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education have been preserved. A Ministry directive dated 30 September 1976 even prescribed annual reports on the special courses (BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 576). See BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Kaul, St. AG, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten … 1976/1977, 13 March 1978.
75 The analysis is based on some 70 documents dating from 1958/1959 to 1989, held in BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 1757, 2266 and 2514; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 245, 666, 666a, 1040 and B 1429c.
76 See also BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Kölsch, Information über die Beratung der AG WKG vom 24.6.1974.
77 Examples in BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2266. Other models or examples of lectures kept in the same box make no mention of religion or atheism.
78 *Navigator* 18, 7 November 1986, pp. 1, 3.
79 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 666.
80 Fiedler 1974 (1st edition), 1978 (5th edition), 1981 (8th edition), 1983 (10th edition), 1987 (14th edition) and 1988 (15th edition) have been compared. Interim editions were reissued without modification.
81 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Steußloff, H. Friedrich, Konzeption für die Überarbeitung des Lehrbuches DHM, 13 February 1976, and Bohring, Protokoll über die Sitzung der ständigen Arbeitsgruppe DHM am 19.12.1975.
82 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Kaul to Schmieter, 17 December 1975, and Arbeitsplan der St. AG, 1975/1976, and St. AG, Arbeitsplan für das Studienjahr 1976/1977.
83 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Abteilung ML, Vorlage für die Dienstbesprechung beim stellvertretenden Minister, 9 July 1975. For an optimistic assessment, see BISKF Klohr 310 Bisherige Arbeiten zur weltanschaulich-atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten.
84 Reports preserved in BISKF Klohr 301; for a summary assessment, see BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten.
85 BISKF Klohr 301 Draft, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten … 1977/1978, p. 5.
86 TUD 027 Wollgast, Striebing, Bericht über das Philosophie-Fernstudium Studienjahr 1974/1975, 23 September 1975, p. 2, and Striebing, Studienjahresanalyse 1975/1976, 29 September 1976, p. 2.
87 For instance BISKF Klohr 301 Teichmann [?], TUD, Nichtperiodische Information über atheistische Bildung und Erziehung im Studienjahr 1976/1977, 10 November 1977, p. 1.
88 BISKF Klohr 301 Luther, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten, 1976/1977, 30 November 1977, pp. 2–3.
89 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Hildebrandt, Information über eine Lehrkonferenz der Sektion Marxistisch-leninistische Philosophie der KMU auf dem Gebiet Theorie und Geschichte der Religionen und des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, 21 April 1988.
90 BISKF Klohr 308 Klohr, Bericht, Spezialkurs "Grundlagen des Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus", p. 4.
91 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Abteilung ML, Information über den 4. Weiterbildungslehrgang für Spezialisten auf dem Gebiet des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, p. 3, and Zur Wirksamkeit der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung im MLG, [1975], and Brüll, Kurzinformation über die Durchführung des Spezialkurses "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus", 24 April 1978, and Klohr, Vierter Weiterbildungslehrgang (Konzeption), p. 1; BISKF Klohr 100 St. AG, Vierter Sonderlehrgang, Abschlußbericht, 5–8 February 1979; "Freie Diskussion" 1985, 365.

92 Partly published in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 1, 1982, pp. 89–97. See also SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV A2/9.04/124 Rahmenstudienprogramm für das Grundstudium der Studienrichtung Marxistisch-leninistische Philosophie, draft; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kaul, Protokoll der Beratung der St. AG am 12.12.1986, p. 2.
93 UAL ZM 08464/46.3 1. Entwurf: Konzeption zur Entwicklung der Gesellschaftswissenschaften an der KMU, 10 April 1973, p. 4.
94 BArch DO 4/1023 pp. 1322–1331.
95 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Abteilung ML, Vorschlag für die Einführung des Lehrprogramms Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, and Burkhardt to Böhme, 31 July 1974.
96 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 St. AG, Positionsbestimmung - Teil: Kaderentwicklung, [1986]; BArch DO 4/1024 pp. 1456–1468.
97 UAR SML/92; BISKF Kaul 12 Kaul to Heilmann, 16 January 1989. Rothbarth, Barthel, Großkopf, Hessel and Klohr 1989 recalled the partnership between the Naval and Shipping Engineering College and the University of Rostock and explicitly named atheism as one of the areas concerned.
98 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Vorläufige Analyse der Kader und Kaderentwicklung für Lehrveranstaltungen über wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, [around 1974]; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kaderentwicklung "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" im Bereich des MHF, [end of 1975?]; BISKF Klohr 308 St. AG, Kaderentwicklung für das Gebiet "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" im Bereich des MHF, November 1979, and handwritten sheets with names and information [1980s]; BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, DDR-FG, Forschungsbericht für den Planungszeitraum 1976–1980, June 1981, p. 28.
99 This also applied to secondary education, see BISKF Kaul 13 and UAR Personalakte Klohr, Olof, pp. 91–96.
100 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kaul, Protokoll der Beratung der St. AG am 12.12.1986 in Berlin, and St. AG "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus", Positionsbestimmung - Teil: Kaderentwicklung, [1986].
101 BISKF Klohr 100 Teilnehmerliste 4. Sonderlehrgang and Qualifizierungsstand der Teilnehmer 4. Sonderlehrgang and Wiederholte Teilnahme an Sonderlehrgängen.
102 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 576 Konzeption für die Durchführung der weiterführenden marxistisch-leninistischen Ausbildung der Studenten in den höheren Studienjahren, May 1976; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 564 Analyse über die Durchführung von Spezialkursen zu ausgewählten Problemen des ML in den höheren Studienjahren 1979/1980.
103 BISKF Klohr 301 2. Entwurf, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung der Studenten …, 1976/1977.
104 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Qualifizierungsstand.
105 BISKF Klohr 310; BArch DO 4/1023 (p. 1330) and 1024 (pp. 1456–1468).
106 Interview with Manfred Düsing, 7 July 2016.
107 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 KMU, Prorektor, Stellungnahme zum Arbeitsstandpunkt der St. AG, 22 June 1988.
108 BStU MfS BV Rostock, KD Greifswald Nr. 398, pp. 162–165.
109 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 (documents from 9 July and 17 July 1975); BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 576 Abteilung ML, Konzeption für die Durchführung der weiterführenden marxistisch-leninistischen Ausbildung …, May 1976; BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr, Forschungsbericht 1973, 15 December 1973; UAR R 684 Hinweise für den Lehrgang der Prorektoren für Gesellschaftswissenschaften, 29 January–1 February 1974; UAL NA Handel 075 pp. 198–219; BArch DO 4/1023, pp. 1387–1389.
110 Examples in UAR R 185 and UAL PH 162 Bd. 1.
111 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 576 Richtlinie für die Durchführung von Spezialkursen, 30 September 1976, and Abteilung ML, Konzeption für die Durchführung, May 1976.

112 This is confirmed in BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Burkhardt to Böhme, 31 July 1974; UAR R 686 Circular by Brüll, 6 May 1976.
113 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Abteilung ML, Information zu Fragen der Entwicklung des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, 25 May 1973, p. 3, and Burkhardt to Böhme, 31 July 1974, and Kaderentwicklung "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus" im Bereich des MHF.
114 See also BISKF Klohr 308 Klohr, Bericht, Spezialkurs, p. 4; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1204 Festlegungen zum Standpunkt der St. AG.
115 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 576 Abteilung ML, Konzeption für die Durchführung, May 1976.
116 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 and B 1429c; BISKF Klohr 308 Klohr, Bericht, Spezialkurs; BISKF Klohr 310 Forschungsplan 1974; BISKF Klohr 100 Entwurf, Konzeption der Arbeitsgruppe "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus".
117 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544, 564, 574 and B 1429c; BISKF Klohr 301, 308 and 310; UAR SML/92; TUD 009, 024 and 036.
118 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Brüll, Information über die Arbeit auf dem Gebiet des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, 17 July 1975, and Abteilung ML, Vorlage für die Dienstbesprechung, 9 July 1975.
119 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Brüll, Kurzinformation über die Durchführung des Spezialkurses, 24 April 1978; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Kaul, St. AG, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung … 1976/1977, 13 March 1978; BISKF Klohr 301 Entwurf, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung, Stand 1/ 1977/1978.
120 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Theorie und Kritik der Religion in der weltanschaulichen Bildung der Studenten, [not prior to 1981]; BISKF Klohr 308 St. AG, Bilanz 1981–1985 und Aufgaben 1986–1990.
121 BArch DO 4/1023, pp. 1322–1331.
122 The courses analysed were ethics, history of the SED, "global problems", "The Marxist-Leninist theory of culture and aesthetics", and courses on philosophy and natural sciences, see BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 576, 666 and 666a; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 564 Analyse über die Durchführung von Spezialkursen 1979/1980, December 1980.
123 BISKF Klohr 308 St. AG, Tätigkeitsbericht 1973–1979, p. 11.
124 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Brüll, Information über die Arbeit auf dem Gebiet des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, 17 July 1975, and Protokoll der Beratung der St. AG, December 1986, p. 2; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1204 Festlegungen zum Standpunkt der St. AG; BISKF Klohr 308 Klohr, Bericht, Spezialkurs "Grundlagen des Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus"; BArch DO 4/1023, pp. 1322–1331.
125 UAL PH 162 Bd. 1 and Bd. 3.
126 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2270 Zum Stand der Ausbildung der Studenten der Fachrichtung Lehrer für ML an der KMU, Thesen; UAL Pror StuA 288 (p. 1) and 298 (pp. 174–182); UAL FDJ 451, pp. 81–110; UAL DirF 051, pp. 57–58; UAL R 1413, pp. 1–2.
127 BArch DR 3, 1. Schicht, 2270.
128 UAL R 1004 (pp. 50–123, 171–172), 1012 and 0603 (pp. 1–132); UAL FDJ 451, pp. 81–110.
129 UAL R 1009, pp. 110–194.
130 UAL FDJ 451, pp. 1–35, 134–171.
131 UAL R 1413, pp. 16–29.
132 Examples in UAL R 1012, pp. 50–54; UAL Pror StuA 288, pp. 35–43.
133 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 564.
134 For Leipzig, see wealth of examples in UAL R 1263; UAR R 185 Kribbel, Studienjahresbericht 1987/1988, 20 August 1988, p. 3; UAL ZM 08464/9.1.
135 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Kaul, St. AG, Zum Stand der atheistischen Bildung 1976/1977, 13 March 1978, p. 10, and Theorie und Kritik der

Religion, p. 1; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 564 Analyse über die Durchführung von Spezialkursen 1979/1980, pp. 8–9; BISKF Kliem 85 Zur Überarbeitung des Lehrprogramms "Grundlagen des Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus", p. 1; TUD 027 Wollgast, Striebing, Bericht über das Philosophie-Fernstudium Studienjahr 1974/1975, 23 September 1975, p. 2.

136 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 574 Entwurf, Gesamtanalyse der Ein- und Durchführung von Spezialkursen, 1989, p. 5.

137 BISKF Klohr 308 Klohr, Bericht, Spezialkurs "Grundlagen des Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus", p. 3; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Theorie und Kritik der Religion, p. 1, and Brüll, Kurzinformation über die Durchführung des Spezialkurses "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus", 24 April 1978; BISKF Kaul 14 Expose, Ausarbeitung einer Diapositiv-Reihe, p. 2; interview with Manfred Düsing, 7 July 2016.

138 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 574 Entwurf, Gesamtanalyse der Ein- und Durchführung von Spezialkursen, September 1989; Ploenus 2007, 271, 308.

139 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 564 Im Studienjahr 1981/1982 wurden folgende Spezialkurse durchgeführt, p. 10, and Analyse über die Durchführung von Spezialkursen 1979/1989, December 1980.

References

Basauri Ziuzina, Anna Mariya and Oleg Kyselov. 2020. "Atheism in the context of the secularization and desecularization of Ukraine in the 20th century." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 284–309. London/New York: Routledge.

Blakeley, Thomas J. 1964. "Scientific atheism: An introduction." *Studies in Soviet Thought* 4 (4): 277–295.

Bräunert, Axel. 1987. "Wissenschaftler, Hochschullehrer, Mensch. Prof. Dr. Olof Klohr aus der Sicht eines ehemaligen Studenten." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 40: 72–73.

Dahms, Hans-Joachim. 2007. "Philosophie an der Universität Jena 1945 bis 1989." In *Hochschule im Sozialismus. Studien zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (1945–1990)*, edited by Uwe Hoßfeld, Tobias Kaiser and Heinz Mestrup, t. 2, 1568–1626. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau.

Dressler, Helmut, P. L. Kauschanskij and L. P. Kurpakova. 1974. "Neuere sowjetische Literatur 1964–1974 (Überblick)." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 2/3: 1–48.

Fiedler, Peter and Gerhard Riege. 1969. *Die Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena in der Hochschulreform*. Berlin: Ministerium für Hoch- und Fachschulwesen.

Fiedler, Frank, ed. 1974. *Dialektischer und historischer Materialismus: Lehrbuch für das marxistisch-leninistische Grundlagenstudium*. Berlin: Dietz.

Fiedler, Frank, ed. 1978. *Dialektischer und historischer Materialismus: Lehrbuch für das marxistisch-leninistische Grundlagenstudium*. Berlin: Dietz.

Fiedler, Frank, ed. 1981. *Dialektischer und historischer Materialismus: Lehrbuch für das marxistisch-leninistische Grundlagenstudium*. Berlin: Dietz.

Fiedler, Frank, ed. 1983. *Dialektischer und historischer Materialismus: Lehrbuch für das marxistisch-leninistische Grundlagenstudium*. Berlin: Dietz.

Fiedler, Frank, ed. 1987. *Dialektischer und historischer Materialismus: Lehrbuch für das marxistisch-leninistische Grundlagenstudium*. Berlin: Dietz.

Fiedler, Frank, ed. 1988. *Dialektischer und historischer Materialismus: Lehrbuch für das marxistisch-leninistische Grundlagenstudium*. Berlin: Dietz.

"Freie Diskussion (I)." 1985. *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge*. Special issue: 362–367.
Friedrich, Walter, Olof Klohr and Peter Förster. 1971. *Zu einigen Problemen der weltanschaulichen Erziehung*. Leipzig: Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung.
Hildebrandt, Bernd. 1993. "'Wir alle mußten Kompromisse schließen.' Integrationsprobleme theologischer Fakultäten an staatlichen Universitäten der DDR." In *Protestantische Revolution? Kirche und Theologie in der DDR: Ekklesiologische Voraussetzungen, politischer Kontext, theologische und historische Kriterien*, edited by Trutz Rendtorff, 121–136. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Hoffmann, Alfred. 2000. *"Mit Gott einfach fertig". Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Leipzig: St. Benno.
Klohr, Olof and Udo Pacholik. 1984. "Politische Ökonomie, Atheismus und Religion." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/28.
Krusche, Hans-Martin. 2002. *Pfarrer in der DDR. Gespräche über Kirche und Politik*. Berlin: Verlag am Park.
Lange, Günter, Rudolf Dennhardt and Wilfried Schubarth. 1989. *Zum politisch-ideologischen Profil junger Christen*. Leipzig: Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung.
Linke, Dietmar. 1995. "Existenzweisen institutionalisierter Theologie in der DDR. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen politischer Einflußnahme auf die Theologische Fakultät Berlin." *Hochschule Ost* 4 (4): 26–39.
Lutter, Hans. 1987. "Vorbemerkung zur Lehrkonzeption 'Biblische Mythologie in der Literatur'." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 55: 259.
Metzler, Helmut. 2002. "Vorbereitung und Einführung des Fachstudiums Philosophie." In *Gewalten, Gestalten, Erinnerungen. Beiträge zur Geschichte der FSU Jena in den ersten Jahren nach 1945*, edited by Manfred Weißbecker, 135–154. Jena: Thüringer Forum für Bildung und Wissenschaft e.V.
Naumann, Christa. 1987. "Biblische Mythologie in der Literatur, Konzeption der Vorlesung." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 55: 260–291.
Ploenus, Michael. 2007. *"… so wichtig wie das tägliche Brot" Das Jenaer Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1945–1990*. Cologne: Böhlau.
Powell, David E. 1975. "Rearing the new Soviet man: Anti-religious propaganda and political socialisation in the U.S.S.R." In *Religion and Atheism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe*, edited by Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John W. Strong, 151–170. London/Basingstoke: Macmillan.
Remmel, Atko and Meelis Friedenthal. 2020. "Atheism and freethought in Estonian culture." In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 84–110. London/New York: Routledge.
Rothbarth, Maria, Hannelore Barthel, Fred-Rainer Großkopf, Manfred Hessel and Olof Klohr. 1989. *Hochschule für Seefahrt Warnemünde-Wustrow. Erbe, Tradition, Verpflichtung*. Rostock: IHS.
Schauer, Heinz. 1977. *Weltanschauliche Einstellungen von Studenten*. Leipzig: Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung.
Sieber, Malte and Ronald Freytag. 1993. *Kinder des Systems. DDR-Studenten vor, im und nach dem Herbst '89*. Hamburg/Berlin: Morgenbuch Verlag Volker Spiess.
Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014. "The ticket to the Soviet soul: Science, religion, and the spiritual crisis of late Soviet atheism." *The Russian Review* 73: 71–97.
Smolkin, Victoria. 2018. *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty. A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Tesař, Jan. 2019. *The History of Scientific Atheism. A Comparative Study of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union (1954–1991)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Thrower, James. 1983. *Marxist-Leninist "Scientific Atheism" and the Study of Religion and Atheism in the UdSSR*. Berlin/New York/Amsterdam: Mouton Publisher.

van den Bercken, William. 1989. *Ideology and Atheism in the Soviet Union*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Walters, Philip. 1993. "A survey of Soviet religious policy." In *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, 3–30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

6 Scientific atheism in the 1970s, between conflicts with religion and cooperation with believers

Exploring new fields, religions and parts of the world

The revival of scientific atheism from 1972 onwards corresponded to a broadening of the discipline's horizons. Interdisciplinarity and openness to other "cultural areas" had already been envisaged but little practised in Jena in the 1960s. Scientific atheism now benefitted from the dynamics of regional studies (*Regionalwissenschaften*) and development country studies (*Entwicklungsländerwissenschaften*) (see Barthel 1993; Wahl 1993; Robbe 1993, 1999; Hafez 1995; Hafez and Höpp 1998; Krauth 1998; van der Heyden 2001). They combined various disciplines, with much teaching in Marxism-Leninism, to study the facets of a given society: Economics, politics, language, literature and sometimes religion. The sciences of Islam (*Islamkunde*) were explicitly provided for in the 1970s, but they "should not be equated with religious studies research. In addition to religious doctrine, the history of dogma and sects, all sciences and activities practised in the Islamic Middle Ages can actually be examined from the perspective of Islam".[1] No reference was made either to colleagues working in scientific atheism or to propaganda or teaching. Kai Hafez highlighted that there was a great deal of work on Islam in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) with lively debates and heterogeneous positions from the late 1970s onwards (Hafez 1995, 260–309). The first opening on Islam within East German scientific atheism was provided by Martin Robbe, author of several articles on religious science in the early 1960s and of a book, *On the Origin of Christianity* (Robbe 1967). In 1963, Robbe argued for the creation of a Marxist science of religion (Robbe 1963), and he soon came into contact with the Chair of Scientific Atheism in Jena (as seen in Robbe 1966).

Robbe's approach was that of a historian. He was also a connoisseur of "bourgeois" religious sociology (Robbe 1963, 1964, 1965). His attention was drawn to non-socialist countries in Asia and Africa, the ancient gods of the East and contemporary Islam. He questioned the role of religion in the struggle for independence (Robbe 1993; Hafez 1995, 276–277). In the 1970s, Robbe provided members of the new scientific atheism network with an overview of religions in developing countries as diverse as India, Indonesia,

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322-7

Egypt, South Africa, Algeria and Turkey. Hinduism and Latin American Catholicism were mentioned, but it was above all on the subject of Islam that Robbe unfolded the two possible sides of the religion: On the one hand, its reactionary majority interpretation, and on the other, the articulation of social protest through a modernised religion. Even though "their inclusion in social debates gives certain new impulses to traditional religions", religiosity was supposed to lose depth in the end (Robbe n.d., 28). In a talk before scientific atheists in 1976, Martin Robbe explained the "disorientation" that was spreading through ecumenical conferences to distract people from the anti-imperialist struggle (Robbe 1977).

In 1980, scientific atheists devoted a colloquium and a special issue to Islam. Professor Brentjes gave an introduction to the fundamental beliefs of Sunni and Shi'ite Islam and was very pessimistic about possible points of contact with Marxism (Auch and Brentjes 1981, 16–18). In 1982 and 1983, researchers from the University of Leipzig not only spoke again about Islam but also Buddhism.[2] Cooperation with East German specialists on Buddhism was envisaged by the scientific atheists, but no contacts were established.[3] As for Sinologists, only one contact has been documented, in 1988 (Anonymous 1988; Richter 1988). The scientific atheist Wolfgang Kleinig travelled to India in the 1980s, but as far as is known, he did not report his visit to his colleagues.[4] Contributions on religious thought in Africa were welcomed but remained occasional.[5] Latin America, on the contrary, acquired a well-established place in East German scientific atheism in the 1980s.

Unlike in the Soviet Union, where interest in Islam and Buddhism fuelled work on scientific atheism (Thrower 1983, 419–452; Smolkin 2018, 112), both were always considered non-existent in the GDR, which indicates a lack of observation of the transformations in the East German religious landscape in the 1980s (Kirsch 2008, 43, 59–62). The study of these religions involved inviting specialists working on distant countries. Judaism was even more out of the spotlight, even though it was present and institutionalised in East Germany. It was not until the 1980s that Judaism began to feature in courses and publications on scientific atheism. But it was not considered a research subject in its own right. Olof Klohr did not refuse information sent to him, for example, on Jehovah's Witnesses, officially banned in the GDR since 1949[6]; but he did not use it for his work. So it was Roman Catholicism and Lutheran-Reformed Protestantism that took up most of the attention of scientific atheism researchers in the 1970s.

Klohr's group in Warnemünde was to specialise in Catholicism, but did so mostly in the 1980s. Before, Klohr was very busy disseminating what had been achieved by the Jena University chair in the 1960s. Atheist education and sociological methods, already priorities of the former chair, were once again given pride of place. The research programme for 1976–1980 even stipulated that "the research work on scientific atheism ultimately aims to theoretically substantiate ideological-atheistic education and upbringing as a component of communist education".[7] Wolfgang Kaul, Klohr's right-hand

man in Warnemünde until 1990, had just completed a thesis on the subject (Kaul 1974a). This was perfectly in tune with concerns in other socialist countries. The East German scientific atheists spoke at two conferences in the Soviet Union on atheist education (in Lviv in 1974 and in Moscow in 1976) and took part in a project for an international collective work, which never came to fruition.[8] This work prompted a return to the "problems of religious sociology", thus not limited to the 1960s (against Pawelzik 1998, 186). In the 1970s and 1980s, the Warnemünde group produced a detailed inventory of the entire East German religious landscape.[9]

Following on from the 1950s and 1960s, the opposition between Marxist-Leninist atheism and religion was reiterated with regard to the conception of history (Klohr 1975a). A new area of opposition was opened up in the field of ethics, notably by the researchers Gerhard Peine from Warnemünde (Peine 1975, 1977) and Werner Lange from Halle (Lange 1977, 1980a, 1980b), joined in the 1980s by Peter Kroh from Güstrow/Neubrandenburg.[10] Here again, it offered the possibility of establishing collaborations with Soviet researchers, supposed to give the "moral content of atheism" greater prominence in the 1970s (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014, 195). In the following decade, issues such as the meaning of life (Hannelore Volland) and Christian art (Renate Billinger) made their debut at Warnemünde, alongside a stronger focus on Catholicism.

In the meantime, Franklin Borrmann of the University of Jena had made a name for himself with his analyses of Catholicism after Vatican Council II. His PhD thesis sought to demonstrate a link between the "general crisis of capitalism" and a crisis of Catholic theology. In "political theology" and "liberation theology", the researcher saw expressions of this crisis born of confrontation with the modern world. Despite theological innovations, Borrmann showed little mercy towards a Catholicism that was above all conservative, reactionary and anti-communist, according to him. It could not be otherwise, theology being by nature "an attempt to conceptualise irrational content in a rational, logically consistent form", which cultivates passivity and prevents people from entering into a rational and scientific relationship with the world around them (Borrmann 1978, 187). As for the Catholic Church's social doctrine, its "fundamental idea […] is: 'Masters, be good masters; but slaves, be good slaves!'" (Borrmann n.d., 80).

The following year, Borrmann turned his attention to Catholicism in the GDR. He retraced the history of clashes and disputes between the German Catholic Church and the young East German State, concluding that "ideological opposition always harbours a tendency towards political tensions". He emphasised not only the distant attitude and the risk of distrust on the part of Catholic citizens towards their country but also a tendency to withdraw into the problems of the individual. Overall, the specialist considered that:

> to speak of a special theology of the Catholic Church in the GDR is problematic. It should always be noted that it is developed in close

> connection with theology in the FRG, whereby the ideas of K. Rahner, J. B. Metz and J. Ratzinger in particular are taken up.[11]

In an article intended for the network of scientific atheists, Borrmann immediately drew attention to the political dimensions lurking behind any supposedly theological quarrel. However, he mentioned no theological quarrels and offered no real analysis of material interests. Readers will come away with a certain amount of knowledge about past and present political positions, particularly those of the Vatican, and without knowing anything more about Catholic dogma, ecclesiology or piety (Borrmann 1977). Finally, in a 1978 document, Borrmann opened up to Third World countries, particularly Latin America, with liberation theology.[12] He continued to examine Catholicism from various angles throughout the 1980s (Borrmann 1983, 1989).

The study of Protestantism was flourishing at the Güstrow College of Education. In 1971, its rector Hans Lutter defended his second thesis, "Criticising religious adaptation [*Anpassung*] in Protestantism". Güstrow became home to a very active group of scholars on different aspects of Protestantism throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This work was said to be eagerly awaited by researchers in other socialist countries, as part of a division of labour based on national specificities.[13] As Gerhard Winter recalled in 1998:

> the aim was to analyse and criticise Protestant theology. […] Hans Lutter emphasised again and again […]: 'Any analysis in any field must be critical, otherwise it is superfluous […]. But to see the subject as a declaration of war to Protestant theology was a gross misunderstanding […]. The analysis must also lead to a grasp and understanding of theology.'[14]

To begin with, the group looked at certain Western Protestant theologians, given the absence, in their view, of a Protestant theology specific to the East German context (Lutter 1975). Their Soviet colleagues Garadzha and Ugrinovich were studying the same references at the time (Garadzha 1976, 1977, 1978; Ugrinovitch 1977). Lutter traced the influence of the great currents of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, linked to names such as Schleiermacher, Troeltsch and Barth.[15] According to him, since the end of the 1950s, the beginning of the third stage of the general crisis of capitalism, the major theological systems had been exhausted and theology had fallen into "a downright chaotic state" in which all the references coexisted (Lutter 1979, 7). The observer was said to be in the presence of a "theology of change", which gave pride of place to dynamic notions, movement, revolution, change and commitment.[16] The researcher reviewed numerous "genitive theologies" of the 1960s and 1970s. Jürgen Moltmann, Dorothee Sölle and Heinz Zahrnt were his most frequent and in-depth references.[17] Lutter's criticisms were of two kinds. He criticised Moltmann for supporting the "counter-revolution" in Czechoslovakia in 1968 (i.e. the Prague Spring), for proposing a "theological variant of social reformist ideology", and for

serving anti-communism (Lutter 1975, 5). According to Lutter, Richard Shaull's "theology of revolution" was reactionary despite its name. Moreover, Lutter considered that Dorothee Sölle's "political theology" stood out through its "misleading and disorienting formulations"; all theology being political, this one was, according to him, on the side of revisionism against real socialism. As advocates of a "third way", he believed these proposals were thus wrong to want to "improve" socialism and divert people from the real struggle to be waged.[18]

The criticism levelled at Harvey Cox was different; inviting believers to escape from the world and take refuge in illusions was something Lutter diagnosed as the classic "opium of the people". For him, religion would not benefit from this recent trend:

> Under the pressure and impression of secularisation, Protestant theology has reached the extreme limit in its adaptation [to the world]. A continuation of this process […] must inevitably lead to the increasing loss of the substance of faith and the dissolution of theology into ethics, morality, psychology and politics.
>
> (Lutter 1977, 15)

From Lutter's point of view, this attempt to save religiosity was met with an injunction from right-wing political forces in Western Germany that were keen to see the Churches stop preaching revolution. Once more, theology found itself on the wrong side of the barricade (Lutter 1979, 21). Again, East German researchers paid little attention to the forms taken by piety, religious practices or the emotional aspect of religion. The East German charismatic movement, for example, was observed and analysed by the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR and by the West German Protestant Church EKD, not by the scientific atheists (EZW 1980). In theory, they knew that religion appealed to the emotions. But in the practice of their work, as Eberhard Hüttner put it, "scientific atheism examines a specific form of social consciousness, religious thought" (Hüttner 1975, 26; see also Lutter 1980a, 52). Scholars in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria tried to make psychological methods and theories productive for scientific atheism; not so in East Germany.

Lutter's criticisms were shared by others. In his doctoral thesis on Helmut Gollwitzer and Dorothee Sölle, Manfred Bartsch argued that religion retained its character and function as an ideology, even under the guise of progressivism, and was still the "opium of the people". It would be the duty of the Marxist philosopher to unmask them. Religiously motivated protests did not always lead to action, and even when they did, they were always fraught with error and inconsistency, according to Bartsch. In short, "the objective of revolutionary groups becomes clearer, more distinct and their actions more conscious the less they are affected by religious ideology" (Bartsch 1977a, 42; see also Bartsch 1977b). Wolfgang Heyde's judgement of the same authors

was more lenient (Heyde 1977). In an article on the "death of God theology" in 1979, Heyde and Inge Werner nevertheless concluded:

> The hope for a theology that would rise like a phoenix from the ashes, in this case from the outdated systems of Protestant thought, has not been fulfilled. Neither supranaturalistic considerations nor desupranaturalistic constructions of thought, neither orthodox nor Christocentric thoughts, neither the theologies of the genitive nor the more recent endeavours at mystification have overcome the crisis of theology, but have deepened it.
>
> (Heyde and Werner 1979, 35)

However, criticising certain West German or American theologians was no longer enough for the East German specialists in Protestantism, whose ambition was "to make their contribution to the ideological class confrontation of our time by analysing and criticising such concepts" (Lutter 1975, 13). The class struggle involved international dynamics and geopolitical actors, including the Churches' stance on the world stage. As a result, the Güstrow group developed a strong interest in ecumenical initiatives. They wanted to know how the balance of power was evolving, how the declarations and programmes being launched fitted into the global confrontation between imperialism and socialism, and what role the Churches in socialist countries were playing. Lutter classified the actors as "evangelical" (*Evangelikale*, sometimes *Evangeliker*) and "ecumenical" (*Ökumeniker*). Far from seeing these as theological oppositions, he analysed them as political (Lutter 1977, 4–5, 19). To him, the "spirituality of commitment" put forward in the Nairobi assembly in 1975 was a compromise, especially as the content of commitment remained entirely open. To East German Marxists, this was hardly surprising, since political action was to be ultimately determined by class and social status. However, these quarrels were important insofar as both sides aimed to spread the Christian religion, and ecumenical initiatives fuelled discussion among East German Christians. Lutter concluded with a few recommendations for propaganda and educational work in the GDR.

The dominant role of Protestants in international ecumenical bodies meant that their analysis was mainly the responsibility of the specialists in Protestantism at Güstrow (Lutter 1977). But this did not prevent other scientific atheists from taking an interest (Bahl and Klohr 1980). It is worth noting that interest in global ecumenical bodies naturally broadened the geographical horizons of scientific atheists, who also became sensitive to the role of Third World Churches, Black Theology and other emerging phenomena.

World ecumenical bodies were an ideal forum for sounding out ecclesial positions on a range of current issues. Some of these were seen as having an immediate connection with the confrontation between imperialism and

socialism on a global scale. This was the case with Sabine Käppel's diploma thesis on the critique of capitalism expressed in Nairobi. While she attested to the progress made in this area, she felt that the essence of capitalism remained unknown to the Church representatives present (Käppel 1977). Karin Gläser was interested in the positions of theologians and Churches on violence – an important subject to those who consider that the revolution cannot do without it (Gläser 1980, 1981/1982; see also Heyde 1977, 199). The conflicts, sparked by the World Council of Churches' anti-racism programme, were closely examined by Rolf Kopmann. Like Lutter, Kopmann emphasised the political nature of the conflicts (Kopmann 1980, 47–48). To him, human rights were "strongly ideologically relevant" (Kopmann 1977a, 48). Like Bartsch, many called for a philosophical response that generally consisted of "unmasking" and refutation. Kopmann therefore devoted his PhD thesis to Christian claims to "humanise" socialism, claims which, in his view, were anti-communist (Kopmann 1977b). This was also Hans-Ulrich Reichenau's verdict on the "quality of life" discussions in ecumenical circles (Reichenau 1976). Ecumenical debates on the role of women were examined in another diploma thesis submitted at Güstrow, which was an opportunity to recall the emancipatory role of Marxism for a population traditionally oppressed by means of religion, according to the author (Leist 1977).

Two other themes debated in the ecumenical world were the subject of more substantial work and made it possible to establish a link with the ecclesial and political context in East Germany. In 1976, Jürgen Scholze gave a talk "On some problems of human-technology interpretation at the 5th Assembly of the WCC [World Council of Churches] in Nairobi". He attempted to show what was at stake when the Churches turned to "actually non-theological questions". The negative stance of the theologians cited with regard to technical progress – a petty-bourgeois vision, in his view – proved blind to the differences between the capitalist system and the new socialist society, and in criticising both showed itself to be anti-communist. The adoption of such unscientific and "disorientating" conceptions by East German theologians should, according to Scholze, call for vigilance on the part of atheist researchers (Scholze 1977). Two years later, the researcher published an analysis of the interpretations offered by theologians and Churches in capitalist countries of the relationship between people and technology (Scholze 1978). The stated aim was to learn how to counter those who wanted to stabilise the imperialist system and to help the propagandists of scientific atheism spread the Marxist-Leninist conception of the question. The polemic against the "meritocracy" criticised by Christian observers in the GDR was addressed in passing. Finally, in a 1979 article, Scholze turned to the conceptions present in East Germany, regularly referring to the positions circulating in the ecumenical arena and in capitalist countries. He castigated East German theologians for simply echoing bourgeois pessimism. According to him, the majority of East German Christians were, nevertheless, well aware of the difference between

capitalism and the use of technology and supported the SED's modernising and technophile policy (Scholze 1979).

The second theme concerned the theology of creation, the environment and ecology, studied by Joachim Poppe and Heinrich Bahl. This theme was present both in ecumenical debates and among East German Christians and made it possible to take a step back and better analyse the issues at hand. Bahl took part in the Güstrow symposia in 1976 and 1980, and the order of his presentations was significant. In 1976, he focused on ecumenical discussions, quoting American and West German theologians before briefly mentioning two East German participants in the discussion (Bahl 1977). Four years later, his speech was devoted to the "environmental policy activities" of the East German Protestant churches (Bahl 1980). The diversions via the ecumenical scene thus enabled East German researchers to better analyse what was happening in their own country, which, a priori, generated a more immediate need for knowledge and action.

Also discussing environmental issues, Joachim Poppe chose to start at a traditional locus of dogmatics without, of course, ignoring the political implications (Poppe 1980b, 1981/1982). His aim was to defuse the criticism that Churches and theologians might be tempted to level at the socialist state and to bring the crisis back to what it was from the Marxist point of view: A crisis of capitalism, not an ecological crisis or a crisis of humanity as a whole. The use of technology in socialist countries and the reticence of certain theologians were also featured in Poppe's second thesis, which ended with advice for education and propaganda (Poppe 1980a).

In this way, the Protestant theology present in the GDR and the East German Churches was introduced as objects of research into the work of researchers in scientific atheism. The long-standing lack of analysis of these phenomena has been pointed out as a deficiency.[19] The aim of the work was, of course, also to gain a better understanding of the behaviour and motivations of East German Protestants in order to better integrate them into the construction of socialism (Lutter 1978a). Nevertheless, Lutter only gradually came to recognise their autonomy from Western influences. In 1978, a special issue took stock of the situation. According to Lutter, while it was true that in the past "one can almost say that in this country the Western theologians have been widely copied", the situation was beginning to change (Lutter 1978b, 1). East German theologians were slowly beginning to distance themselves from the West. Above all, Lutter described a nascent awareness of the specific context, which would lead to a desire to develop a theology of one's own, better adapted to life in a socialist society. But he warned against too much enthusiasm:

> The fact that they do not orientate themselves towards a 'Church for socialism' is firmly established and self-evident, just as it should be noted that the theological positioning is largely quite strongly linked to social reformist ideology.
>
> (Lutter 1978b, 3)

This made the analyst's task all the more complex. Firstly, because East German theologians had definitively turned their backs on "genitive theologies". Yet:

> as is well known, these theologies had almost dissolved into politics, sociology, ethics, etc. and thus entered a field in which they virtually offered 'broadsides' to Marxist criticism. Criticism has therefore become more complicated; it requires more expertise about theology itself.
>
> (Lutter 1978b, 2)

Lutter therefore laid great stress on the need for training for all those who had to deal with Christians. Only by knowing more than in the past would it be possible to deal correctly with Christians, to do neither too much nor too little, as Lutter explained:

> Marxists now have no reason to interfere in this 'dispute about the right faith' […]. However, knowledge of such politically progressive interpretations of theological-dogmatic statements can be helpful for us, namely whenever conservative or reactionary theologians want to persuade us that they are not in a position to act differently on the basis of their Christian faith, without 'self-abandonment as Christians'.
>
> (Lutter 1978b, 12)

For - and this was the second source of complexity – there was more reason to speak of a "theology of systemlessness", or even of a "downright chaotic state", than of a unified "GDR theology" or "theology of socialism" (Lutter 1978b, 5–6). Even the book *Aufschlüsse. Ein Glaubensbuch*, published in 1977 under the aegis of the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR, which immediately became a reference work for atheism researchers, did not come up with the hoped-for generally valid conclusions (Lutter 1979, 7). According to Lutter, theological diversity was certainly explained by the principles of Protestantism, but also because socialism obliged theology to take a stand on a series of new questions. Yet he was not in favour of a "GDR theology": "Quite apart from the fact that the socialist GDR does not need theology", such a theology "could stabilise the Christian faith where secularisation is to be promoted, it could unify where differentiation is needed" (Lutter 1978b, 16–17) – just as the official Church policy was to differentiate and divide.

Faced with this diversity of theologies, Lutter considered the designations proposed by the theologians themselves to be interesting insofar as they often emphasised the attitude towards the world here below. However, the categories thus obtained did not lend themselves to simple transposition onto a scale of more or less progressive or conservative political attitudes. This is why Lutter recommended proceeding the other way round:

> by making a subdivision according to the political position, i.e. according to the respective concrete relationship to the socialist State, to real

> socialism and its development, in order to then ask from there about the theological justifications for political behaviour.
>
> (Lutter 1978b, 21)

In this way, theology regained its rightful place in the eyes of the Marxists: Not as "fundamentals", but as "justifications", in the knowledge that in the final analysis, material conditions had to determine everyone's position.

In 1978, by reviewing points which crystallised internal debates within the East-German Protestant churches and whose political and practical repercussions could be of interest to Marxists, Lutter highlighted a progressive "turn towards socialism". This fundamental trend was seen as a necessity (Lutter 1978b). A survey conducted by Wolfgang Heyde and Gerhard Lewerenz in 1978 focused more specifically on the position of certain Protestant regional churches with regard to real socialism. They concluded that there was a "learning process", but that its success was less certain and its trajectory less linear than Lutter thought.[20] Gerhard Winter supplemented these analyses with an article on "The understanding of the Church in the Protestant churches of the GDR". His contribution focused on ecclesiology and summarised various theological arguments and debates in order to demonstrate the purpose of the conception of the Church promoted in the GDR: To appear dynamic, to make itself attractive to newcomers and to missionise (Winter 1980). Their colleague Christa Naumann analysed in more detail the "theology of service" claimed by certain East German Protestants, a concept taken over from Hungary and which thus led her work to join that of Hungarian colleagues (Poór 1977, 1980). Naumann saw it as another attempt, doomed to failure, by which the Churches would try to delay their decline (Naumann 1977, 13).

Other studies sought to assess the extent to which the positions reached by the East German Protestant churches were compatible with the principles defended by the SED and Marxist researchers. They therefore reviewed a whole series of subjects, some of which had already been studied from other angles. These included ethics in order to find out how believers could be better integrated in this way (Peine 1981; Kroh 1981); the "socialist way of life" and its reception by theologians (Lucas 1981; Poppe 1981); and the vision of the economic system (Pacholik 1980). Finally, in the 1970s, scientific atheists started taking a keen interest in certain major figures or currents that they considered to be positive sources of inspiration for the East German Churches. Among them, the Lutheran resistance theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis in 1945, gained the greatest notoriety, thanks to the works of Gerhard Winter (Winter 1977, 1978, 1981, 1981/1982). Religious socialism in the first half of the 20th century occupied several scientific atheists (Heyde 1977; Heyde and Kurpakowa 1980; Düsing 1980). This was not just of historical interest. The scientific atheists could no longer ignore East German personalities who claimed to be both Christian and socialist or even Marxist. The issues were both political (how could they

be better integrated into the construction of socialism?) and theoretical (could one be a Marxist without adopting atheism?). Works were devoted to certain movements and personalities only. Of particular note is Petra Zeugner's specialisation on East German Catholics in the 1980s (Zeugner 1985), as well as work on the Protestant theologians Emil Fuchs[21] and Hanfried Müller.[22]

Conflicting concepts to talk about religion

The fields, old and new, explored by researchers in scientific atheism in the 1970s were studied through a certain number of concepts. Not all of them were new, but they were articulated in a way that was characteristic of that decade and formed a coherent system. Recent phenomena and new objects made it necessary to question the relevance of these concepts and rethink their articulation over the course of the 1970s.

Scientific atheists diagnosed a crisis (*Krise*) in theology and religion, to which efforts to adapt (*Anpassung*) were both a symptom and an attempt to respond. Their use of the term "Anpassung" is not to be confused with that of the East German theologian Jenssen (Jenssen 1996), nor with the polemical uses made after 1990 to describe the path taken by the East German Protestant churches. Conceptualised by Lutter in his second thesis, crisis and adaptation were used as analytical tools to explain the state of Christianity in numerous works. "Religious adaptation" was defined as "the active reaction of theology and the Church, forced by changes in material reality, with the aim of maintaining, restoring or increasing religion and its social effectiveness as well as the functionality of the churches" (Lutter 1979, 25). Two opposing strategies for dealing with the crisis were discerned: A flight towards greater interiority; and a social commitment of a new intensity (e.g. Borrmann n.d.). The entire history of Christianity was re-read as a "history of adaptation" (Lutter 1979, 15, 25–26). In the GDR, attempts to adapt were made in three main directions, according to the scientific atheists. Firstly, "conformity", with the evolution of society towards communism; secondly, "disparity", by creating counter-structures opposed to social evolution; and thirdly, "complementarity", which consisted in trying to fill a vacuum (Winter 1981/1982, 3). A motivation to not leave a "vacuum", but to develop Marxist-Leninist answers to all questions, including ethical and existential ones, guided work later on, for instance that of Hannelore Volland in the GDR, and of many Soviet colleagues (Smolkin 2018).

Harmful and reprehensible tendencies in Churches and religions were covered by the concept of "political clericalism", which was older but only really came into its own in the arsenal of scientific atheism from 1973 onwards. The cross-cutting nature of this concept meant that it could be applied to a wide range of research fields and subjects. However, it took a long time to establish a specific line of thought. The archives bear witness to an uncertain vision of the concept, and even a symposium in 1980 did not help to unify its definitions.[23] There was a consensus that "political clericalism" was

linked to anti-communism, bourgeois or petty-bourgeois ideology and anti-Sovietism.[24] In this sense, the concept made it possible to grasp religion as part of bourgeois ideology. For, as Wolfgang Heyde pointed out, "there is no specific Christian or Protestant interpretation of socialism that could be placed alongside the bourgeois and socialist ideologies as a third variant". Any current of thought that did not belong to socialist ideology could only be placed in the opposing camp (Heyde 1977, 309). This question would be discussed anew a few years later.

What remained was to highlight the specific nature of political clericalism. The term did not refer to a predominance of clerics within a Church, but to abuse of religion as a whole by reactionary forces or exploiting classes. According to researchers, the arsenal of political clericalism included proposals to "improve" socialism, rejection of the leading role of Marxist-Leninist parties, and ideological coexistence with the aim of infiltrating socialist countries.[25] The concept of "political clericalism" gave rise to a series of analyses of political and religious actors and movements in West Germany, the United States, the Vatican and internationally.[26] Researchers put considerable energy into refuting attempts to cast doubt on the importance of atheism within Marxism, "revisionism" and the "bourgeois critique of scientific atheism". The references used reveal that the phenomena apprehended via the notion of "political clericalism" remained localised in the West. The East German Churches were merely a possible sounding board for ideas coming from West Germany in particular. "Political clericalism" was not a slogan to be turned against believers in the GDR.[27] Applying the concept of "political clericalism" to faraway lands such as Iran raised fewer difficulties, at least in theory. The Islam specialists, Burchard Brentjes and Eva-Maria Auch, spoke at the 1980 Warnemünde colloquium on political clericalism, without, however, explicitly using the concept in question (Auch and Brentjes 1981).

Unmasking political clericalism was also seen as a service to believers, the victims of such scheming. The aim was to encourage cooperation between Marxists and Christians and to rally certain believers to the fight against political clericalism. The fight against political clericalism and cooperation with certain believers were therefore to go hand in hand as two necessarily complementary approaches.[28] The idea that cooperation (*Zusammenarbeit*) between Marxists and believers was essential, and that it was the task of scientific atheism to study the possibilities and encourage its implementation, was already present in the 1960s.[29] The discipline proved sufficiently broad to be able to become, during the 1970s, a forum for reflection on cooperation rather than opposing atheism as an object to be promoted (against Heise 1998, 162). The East German philosophical and cultural context was favourable to this opening up, not to mention the reflections of some Czechoslovak and Soviet colleagues.[30] East German specialists in Islam such as Robbe and Preißler advocated cooperation with "progressive" currents (Hafez 1995, 264–266, 303–304). This approach was justified by a perceived change in the attitude of religious believers and institutions. Hans Lutter spoke of "the

Christians' turn to socialism" in terms of historical necessity and advocated: "The potential of the Churches must be harnessed in the sense of 'turning towards socialism', without losing sight of promoting the process of secularisation" (Lutter 1980b, 4; see also Klohr 1980b, 15–18).

The imperative not to lose sight of the need for cooperation applied to all scientific atheists.[31] But it was not conceived without the struggle against political clericalism, and for some, the scales still tipped in favour of the struggle. In 1981, it was acknowledged that the scientific atheists had not been able to deal in depth with the issues raised by cooperation.[32] Cooperation was never more than the second term in the equation. Nevertheless, a number of main themes and results emerge from the work undertaken in the 1970s. Researchers in scientific atheism strove to contribute to a climate of respect and an image of respectability conducive to inspiring confidence in believing fellow citizens. Atheistic propaganda had to take this into account. In the second half of the 1970s, the subject of freedom of belief and conscience came to the fore, as a way of reassuring believers. Olof Klohr repeatedly argued against the idea that the GDR was an "atheist state" or home to an "atheist society".[33]

Working hand in hand with Marxists for peace and social progress did not, according to the scientific atheists, require them to abandon their own faith. However, the side-effect of calling their faith into question was neither excluded nor undesirable (Heyde 1977, 271). The individual journey from faith to atheism could be a long one (Lutter 1980b). In the meantime, it was enough that religion did not necessarily lead to reactionary political positions; it was the socialist position, political cooperation, that was important. Conversely, it had to be clear that the Marxist partner did not have to let go of his or her atheism in order to make cooperation possible.[34] Working together practically and politically while maintaining philosophical opposition was the position adopted (Klohr 1975b, 33, and 1980b, 15–18; Borrmann 1978, 191). Subordinating differences in world view to the common struggle, attaching more importance to "the creation of a paradise on earth" than to achieving "unity of […] opinion on paradise in heaven", these were the principles professed by Lenin and now systematically cited (Lenin 1965).

Putting these precepts into practice was less self-evident. Sometimes one perceives a certain discomfort, as if the social commitment of churches and believers had put Marxists on the defensive in the 1970s.[35] Whether believers and Marxists could share only material and political interests and nothing more was beginning to be debated among researchers. It foreshadowed much wider discussions in the following decade. From 1977 onwards, disagreement arose in the field of ethics around notions such as a possible "humanism" in Christianity, Marxists maybe being more "consistent" (*konsequent*), and the possibility or not of spiritual or intellectual "commonalities" (*Gemeinsamkeiten*) (Heyde 1977; Düsing 1977; Klohr 1980a; Luther 1980; Lange 1980b, 1980c).

The primarily political desire to find common ground for action with believers should not suggest that the scientific atheists had changed their view of religion itself: "There is no doubt: the still mass spread of religion hinders the spread of the Marxist-Leninist world-view" (Klohr 1980b, 18). It remained the "opium of the people" (Klohr 1978, 93). At least Franklin Borrmann, Wolfgang Kliem, Roland Krayer, Manfred Düsing, Martin Robbe and Wolfgang Heyde agreed with Klohr's negative assessment.[36] Klohr even criticised Heyde's statements as too conciliatory.[37] It was not until the 1980s that researchers abandoned the comparison with opium.

As for the medium- and long-term outlook for religion, its "withering away" (*Absterben*) was still expected. In the 1970s, scientific atheists were not at all shy about talking and writing about it openly (against Heise 1998, 162). They spoke of the "problems of the future of religion", of "disintegration" and "decline".[38] However, the study of the subject did not meet with unanimous approval, for example within the Ministry, where in 1975 "the political justifiability and practical benefits" were questioned.[39] The work was led by Warnemünde researchers Olof Klohr, Wolfgang Kaul, Udo Lingk and later Ulrike Lucas and Klaus Kurth. With a few exceptions, the concept remained confined to this group instead of permeating work on Protestantism and Catholicism. Islam, too, was seen as ultimately doomed to decline, but researchers were quick to mention it, as if the end was not yet in sight (Auch and Brentjes, 1981, 24). The works shared in the scientific atheism network concealed the opposing positions of specialists in Islam in the 1980s: Berliners such as Robbe doubted a linear evolution towards a secularised society, whereas Leipzig professors such as Preißler and Brentjes continued to believe in it (Hafez 1995, 272–291). Without being considered taboo or politically incorrect, without being discussed, questioned or opposed, the notion of decay was simply not taken up and used by the majority of researchers (see already Engelien 1982,136; against Schuster 2017, 94).

For those who used the concept in the 1970s, talking about the "withering away" of religion meant first of all pointing out the persistent presence of religions, including in socialist countries, and insisting on the length of the process, which was "tedious", "slowed down" and "progressive". It also meant realising and raising awareness of the long cohabitation to come between Marxism and religion in the socialist and later communist countries.[40] The horizon was getting longer: In the mid-1960s, Olof Klohr was optimistic that a religious rate of less than 10% in the East German population would be reached within 10–20 years;[41] in 1978, he estimated this mark would probably be reached by the year 2000. This would still mean more than a million East German believers, presumably in small, dispersed but stable groups.[42] But could one talk about the "withering away" of religion in this case? The Polish colleagues had already distanced themselves,[43] and the Soviets had taken note of a religion that failed to disappear and were struggling with doubts about the future (Walters 1993; Smolkin 2018, 226).

For the GDR, Bernd Schäfer noted "from 1979 at the latest" a "change of theory" in scientific atheism (Schäfer 1997, 179, 185). Klohr's work proves him right. As early as 1975, the Warnemünde professor saw Marx's thesis on the "withering away" of religion about to be fulfilled "because then religion and the Church are cancelled as significant factors in society, even if religious people still live individually and in small scattered groups" (Klohr 1975c, 40). In order to observe the "withering away" of religion, it would be sufficient to note the growing influence of Marxist and socialist thought, a decline in religiosity, attachment to religious institutions, and indicators such as church membership, practice, the number of ceremonies, clerics and church employees, and the financial affluence of the Churches. As a result, the influence of religion and the Churches in society was declining, making them "marginal phenomena". Unsurprisingly, then, the work was sociological in nature and contained a great deal of statistics, criticism of figures and forecasts, in line with the analyses already produced in the 1960s in Jena.[44]

As for the factors "slowing down" the "withering away" of religion, Olof Klohr detailed them on several occasions without provoking debate. In his view, religion no longer had any "social roots" (*Wurzeln*) in a socialist society. Its partial "reproduction" was due to both objective and subjective causes (*Ursachen*): the traditional weight of the Churches, the family, influences from the capitalist world, and others. The Protestant denomination, the most widespread, with its poorly centralised organisation and unified theology, was seen as an element undermining the maintenance of religion. However, religion still held a strong emotional position and played a role in accompanying the conflicts of individual existence.[45] A change of perspective began to emerge in 1980, when Klohr declared that it would be wrong to deny material causes to religion under socialism and even during the first phase of communism (Klohr 1980b, 15–16). In the 1980s, the very idea that religion might one day disappear was called into question. In the 1970s, Klohr still believed in it. The importance of subjective factors warned against expecting a spontaneous process, but it also provided the incentive to take action, as "the active and conscious shaping of social life in all areas […] is the decisive factor that is able to push back religion".[46] Atheist philosophical education for young people was still seen as an effective means and was to be refined by reflecting on the "withering away" of religion. The "socialist way of life" (*sozialistische Lebensweise*) began to gain ground as a positive counterpart to the "withering away" of religion, thanks in particular to Ulrike Lucas, who arrived in the Warnemünde group in 1977.[47] Gerhard Peine also tried to make the link between his research on morality and the "socialist way of life", identified as a "precondition" for the "withering away" of religion and the Church.[48]

The third main centre for scientific atheism, founded at the Academy for Social Sciences in Berlin in 1977, operated to some extent with the same concepts.[49] However, most of its work was characterised by a different approach, organised around major concerns other than those of the Warnemünde and Güstrow groups. Applied to both Catholicism and Protestantism, they

revealed a politicised perspective that was at the same time more pragmatic and more philosophical, less focused on education and propaganda. From a more strictly philosophical perspective, the Berlin researchers wanted to have a clear idea of the convictions and doctrines of religious movements that would be of primary importance in tackling the major challenges of the time together: The Churches' conceptions of society and progress; their economic conceptions (mainly Udo Pacholik); and their ideas on peace, war and justice (mainly Wolfgang Kliem).[50] Their approach took little interest in sociology, never in particular theologians or individual moral standards, nor much in notions of no immediate importance such as the "roots of religion" or its "withering away". Instead, it was more immediately oriented towards "practice", in the sense of a possible political "alliance" (*Bündnis*) with religious movements.

However, the way in which believers were viewed was not without ambivalence. In a 1979 conference, for example, the director Wolfgang Kliem oscillated between the desire to integrate believers, to show understanding for churches that "are churches, and so they do not 'preach' socialist ideology, but the Gospel", and the temptation to detect bourgeois ideology.[51] Indeed, his group also emphasised "fundamental questions on world-view and ideology" (*weltanschaulich-ideologische Grundfragen*) stemming from scientific atheism by repositioning scientific atheism as a philosophical discipline and not a sociological one. According to Kliem, scientific atheism:

> is regarded as a component of Marxist-Leninist philosophy with a special subject area (comparable to ethics or aesthetics, for example). Scientific atheism examines religion and the Church in their historical and current manifestations, in their emergence and withering away, as well as the development of the scientific-materialist world-view using specific philosophical means.[52]

Although the initial emphasis was to be on the "positive" and constructive side of atheism,[53] this notion was never at the centre of reflection. As for religion, in several of Kliem's notes from this period, which have not been made public, the conception of history was at the heart of the definition. His question was whether religion was not, in fact, withering away by aligning itself with a conception of history without God. Other notes in his hand speak of an "emotional relationship", a feeling of dependence that would have to be overcome.[54]

The second decade of East German scientific atheism thus presented a discipline that was beginning to renew itself. The (weak) fortunes of a concept like the "withering away" of religion, the absence of a single definition of a concept such as "political clericalism", the coexistence of methods and disciplinary foothold, of fields and questioning, were all indications of changes underway. In Simone Thiede's opinion, the 1970s were characterised by the analysis and critique of Protestantism carried out by the Güstrow group, from which she herself came (Thiede 1999, 56). This was certainly

one of the most obvious innovations in this second phase of the discipline's development, but not the only one. As for Hans Lutter, he reconstituted three directions of research afterwards, namely cooperation between Marxists and Christians, the critique of religion, and the struggle against "political clericalism" (Lutter 1994); all concerns that were present without exhausting the content of those years. More and more, scientific atheism was made up of several strata that were added at different points along the way, some of which remained, others faded away. Faced with growing indifference and religious movements perceived as less reactionary than in the past, certain groups of believers were at this stage beginning to be seriously considered as cooperation partners. Still a long way from the dialogue of later years, however, at this stage the scientific atheists confined themselves to talking about believers rather than talking to them.

Quoted archives

Federal Archives (BArch)
Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BArch)
Thuringia Land Archives - Rudolstadt Public Archives (ThStA Rudolstadt)
Leipzig University Archives (UAL)
Rostock University Archives (UAR)
Protestant Central Archives (EZA)
Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research (BISKF)
Private Collection (PC) Düsing
Private Collection (PC) Kleinig

Notes

1 UAL DirF 051, p. 304. On studies on Islam, see also pp. 14–56, 287–292, 306–309; UAL DirF 35 (esp. pp. 78–89); UAL ZM 08464/46.3; UAR R 686. East German *Islamkunde* remains little known, for instance, A. Kirsch does not refer to it (Kirsch 2008, 53–56). See Barthel 1993, 11, and Robbe 1993, 20.
2 BISKF Klohr 98. Preißler 1983; Fuchs 1983; Sturm 1983; Rüstau 1983; Peuke 1983; Hoffmann and Schmidt 1983.
3 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Kaul, St. AG, Protokoll der Beratung am 14.6.1974, p. 3. In the GDR a group of Buddhist believers was officially recognised, in 1985 (Kirsch 2008, 56–59).
4 PC Kleinig.
5 BISKF Klohr 104 Kretschmer to Klohr, 15 March 1986.
6 BISKF Kaul 14.
7 BISKF Klohr 310 Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsprogramm 1976 bis 1980, 10 June 1975, p. 1. Detail about the work on education in BISKF Klohr 96, 98, 308 and 310; BISKF Kaul 12 and 13; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Zur Geschichte der St. AG und zur Atheismusforschung im Bereich des MHF.
8 BISKF Klohr 94, 95 and 310; BISKF Kliem 1.
9 Kaul n.d. The so-called "Kirchenstudien" of the 1980s have been preserved in BISKF Klohr 53–60.

10 BISKF Klohr 98 and 310.
11 BISKF Klohr 302 Borrmann, Katholische Theologie und Kirche in der DDR. On Borrmann's work, see also BISKF Kliem 42.
12 PC Düsing, Borrmann, Die Krise des Katholizismus und neuere Strömungen in der katholischen Theologie, 1978.
13 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsprogramm 1976 bis 1980, 10 June 1975, p. 3; Kónya 1976.
14 BISKF Kliem 5a Winter, Laudatio, p. 6. On the Güstrow group, see also Winter 1988.
15 Lutter 1975 and 1979; PC Düsing Lutter, Neuere Tendenzen in der protestantischen Theologie, 1978.
16 PC Düsing Lutter, Neuere Tendenzen, p. 24.
17 See also BISKF Kliem 42 Lutter, Nowe teologie protestanckie. Moltmann, Cox, Dorothea Solle, 1976.
18 PC Düsing Lutter, Neuere Tendenzen; see also Lutter 1975, 8–9.
19 BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, Atheismus 1976, 27 January 1977, pp. 8–9, and Klohr, Kaul, Forschungsbericht 1976, p. 9.
20 BISKF Klohr 302 Heyde, Lewerenz, Über die Stellung der Evangelischen Landeskirchen in der DDR zum Sozialismus (Thesen), pp. 5–6.
21 A dissertation by Bruno Szameitat is mentioned in the 1960s in BISKF Kaul 14. Later on, see Junick 1976 and 1977; BISKF Kliem 76; Krayer's diploma thesis of 1977 (BISKF Klohr 114); Heyde 1977; Düsing 1980.
22 Winter 1976, 1977 and 1978; Heyde and Werner 1979; Dietze 1988.
23 On the planned work, the realisations and the difficulties, see BISKF Klohr 308, 310 and 311; BISKF Klohr 97. A planned issue on political clericalism does not appear to have been published (one of two issues WA 1/8, preserved in BISKF Klohr 7).
24 Heyde 1977; Klohr 1978, 93; Elm 1980; BISKF Klohr 133 Heyde, Thesen zur Dissertation B, 1977, p. 3; BISKF Klohr 310 IHS, Forschungsbericht für 1977, 30 December 1977, p. 7.
25 Dressler 1980; Elm 1980; BISKF Klohr 97 Dressler, Zur Auseinandersetzung mit dem klerikalen Antikommunismus, Thesen, 1980, and Klohr, 8. Warnemünder Atheismus-Kolloquium, Abschlußbericht, p. 2; BISKF Klohr 139 Klohr, Gutachten zur Dissertation von Broda.
26 Dolsdorf 1976; Zimmermann 1977; Rupprecht 1977; Klohr 1978, 92–98; WA 1/8 in BISKF Klohr 7; BISKF Klohr 97; BISKF Klohr 310 Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsprogramm 1976 bis 1980, 10 June 1975.
27 Klohr 1978; Kaul 1974b, 1974c and 1975; Klohr 1975b; Klohr and Stoppe 1977; WA 1/8 in BISKF Klohr 7; PC Düsing Lutter, Neuere Tendenzen, p. 39; BISKF Klohr 97 Klohr, Antikommunistische Verfälschungen, and Kaul, Bemerkungen zu christlichen Friedensauffassungen, 1980; BISKF Klohr 139 Broda, Kritik der antikommunistischen Propaganda in der DDR, in Russian, 1977, and Klohr, Gutachten zur Dissertation von Broda; BISKF Klohr 310 IHS, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsplan 1975; BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht für das Planjahr 1974, 1 January 1975; BISKF Kaul 1 Fromm, Zur Lage der bürgerlichen Philosophie der BRD, 1978; BISKF Kaul 7.
28 BISKF Klohr 97. From 1975, a group was responsible for both "political clericalism" and "cooperation", see BISKF Klohr 308, 310 and 311; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, B 1429c Kaul, St. AG, Protokoll der Beratung am 14.6.1974.
29 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727 pp. 52, 130a; Robbe 1966; Hoffmann 2000, 60.
30 For instance Kvasnička 1980; BISKF Kaul 1 Mtschedlow in Pravda, 16 November 1979.

31 Various research agendas and rapports in BISKF Klohr 310 and BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544. The 1980 Güstrow symposium included a section on this theme (F.u.B. 22).
32 BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, DDR-FG, Forschungsbericht für den Planungszeitraum 1976–1980, June 1981, pp. 18–19.
33 Klohr 1978; Klohr 1980c, 47–49; BISKF Klohr 133 Klohr, Gutachten zur Dissertation B von Heyde, 18 December 1977, p. 6. See also Loukotka 1981; Werner 1981 and 1981/1982; Heyde 1977, 213, 277.
34 Klohr 1975a, 17; Klohr 1975b; Klohr 1978, 46, 89, 92; WA 1/8 in BISKF Klohr 7.
35 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Zur Geschichte der St. AG und zur Atheismusforschung im Bereich des MHF, p. 2; BISKF Klohr 310 IHS, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht für 1977, 30 December 1977, p. 4.
36 Borrmann n.d., 80; Robbe 1975, 352; Düsing 1980, 38–39; BISKF Kliem 42 Handwritten notes, Dissertation F. Borrmann, 1976, p. 3; BISKF Klohr 133 Heyde, Thesen zur Dissertation B, 1977, p. 7; BISKF Klohr 114 Krayer, Diplomarbeit, 1977.
37 BISKF Klohr 133 Klohr, Gutachten zur Dissertation B von Heyde, 18 December 1977, p. 6.
38 Klohr 1975c; Naumann 1977, 13; several documents in BISKF Klohr 310 and 311 and BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; BISKF Klohr 308 Entwurf, DDR-FG, Forschungsbericht 1973–1975, [1976]. A conference in October 1978 was also to include a talk on the subject (BISKF Klohr 96).
39 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Abteilung ML, Vorlage für die Dienstbesprechung beim stellvertretenden Minister, 9 July 1975, pp. 7–8.
40 Klohr 1975c, 1978 and 1980b, 16; Junick 1976; BISKF Klohr 302 Klohr, Kaul, Ursachen und Tendenzen des Absterbens, Thesen, 1978, pp. 1–2. On this issue, see also Heise 1993, 134.
41 BISKF Kaul 13 Klohr, Jugend - Atheismus - Religion, p. 20.
42 BISKF Klohr 302 Klohr, Kaul, Ursachen und Tendenzen des Absterbens.
43 EZA 2/16547 Gollert, Christlicher Atheismus, 1971, p. I, and circular by Henkys, 20 December 1971; BISKF Kaul 11 Kaul, Reisebericht Krakow, 10–14 October 1988, Teil II, pp. 5–6.
44 BISKF Klohr 311 IHS, FG Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus, Forschungsbericht 1. Halbjahr 1975; BISKF Klohr 302 Handwritten notes; BISKF Klohr 310 Klohr, Kaul, DDR-FG, Atheismus 1976, 27 January 1977; BISKF Kaul without archive box Klohr, Kaul, Der Prozeß des Absterbens von Religion und Kirchen in der DDR.
45 BISKF Klohr 302 Klohr, Kaul, Ursachen und Tendenzen des Absterbens.
46 BISKF Klohr 302 Klohr, Kaul, Ursachen und Tendenzen des Absterbens, p. 4.
47 Research programmes and reports in BISKF Klohr 308, 310 and 311.
48 Various documents in BISKF Klohr 310; BISKF Klohr 302 Klohr, Kaul, Ursachen und Tendenzen des Absterbens, p. 1.
49 Examples in BISKF Kliem 117, 119 and 120.
50 BISKF Kliem 83 and 119; SAPMO-BArch DY 30/IV B2/2.024/54 Pacholik, Information: Der weltanschauliche Inhalt und die Funktion wirtschaftsethischer Positionen, 1980. The Kliem collection at the BISKF contains a wealth of their work.
51 BISKF Kliem 115 Weltanschauliche und politisch-ideologische Standpunkte in den evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR.
52 BISKF Kliem 86 Kliem, Überlegungen zur Präzisierung des Forschungsprofiles, 1. Entwurf, p. 4.
53 BISKF Kliem 86, 116 and 120.
54 BISKF Kliem 42 Handwritten notes.

References

Amberg, Ernst-Heinz et al. 1977. *Aufschlüsse. Ein Glaubensbuch*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Anonymous. 1988. "Informationen." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 9: 826.

Auch, Eva-Maria and Burchard Brentjes. 1981. "Islam. Beiträge vom VIII. Warnemünder Atheismus-Kolloquium vom 28. bis 29. März 1980." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 2/16: 4–36.

Bahl, Heinrich. 1977. "Zu einigen Aspekten der theologischen und ökumenischen Diskussion der Umweltprobleme." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 8: 17–25.

Bahl, Heinrich. 1980. "Zu einigen umweltpolitischen Aktivitäten der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 22: 41–42.

Bahl, Heinrich and Olof Klohr. 1980. "Glaube, Wissenschaft, Zukunft. Eine Dokumentation zur Weltkonferenz des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen in Boston (USA) 1979." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 2/13: 1–66.

Barthel, Günter. 1993. "Die Asien-, Afrika- und Lateinamerikawissenschaften in der ehemaligen DDR." *Hochschule Ost* 2 (5): 5–13.

Bartsch, Manfred. 1977a. "Die Funktion der 'politischen Theologie' in der ideologischen Klassenauseinandersetzung zwischen Kapitalismus und Sozialismus." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 5: 35–45.

Bartsch, Manfred. 1977b. "Der Ideologiecharakter und die Ideologiefunktion 'moderner' Auffassungen im Protestantismus, dargestellt an den Konzeptionen der protestantischen Theologen H. Gollwitzer und D. Sölle (Thesen zur Dissertation A)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 10: 13–27.

Borrmann, Franklin. n.d. "Vatikanum II. Zehn Jahre danach. Zur Krise der katholischen Kirche und Theologie. Thesen zur Dissertation A." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 2/7: 77–81.

Borrmann, Franklin. 1977 (?). "Katholizismus nach dem II. Vatikanischen Konzil." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/10: 3–50.

Borrmann, Franklin. 1978. *Vatikanum II. Zehn Jahre danach. Zu einigen neuen Tendenzen und Strömungen in der römisch-katholischen Kirche und Theologie*. Dissertation A thesis, Jena University.

Borrmann, Franklin. 1983. "Progressiver Katholizismus in Westeuropa." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/25: 21–30.

Borrmann, Franklin. 1989. "Katholische Soziallehre zwischen Antikommunismus und Antikapitalismus." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 45–49.

Dietze, Holger. 1988. "Die Weißenseer Blätter zum Begriff 'Kirche im Sozialismus'". *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 5: 464–465.

Dolsdorf, Margit. 1976. "Zu den gesellschaftspolitischen Auffassungen der ESG (BRD), bezogen auf ihre Stellung zum wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus, zum realen Sozialismus und ihre Auffassungen über den Kapitalismus und Wege seiner Veränderung". *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 3: 19–21.

Dressler, Helmut. 1980. "Zur Kritik des klerikalen Antikommunismus." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/8: 6–20.

Düsing, Manfred. 1977. "Humanismus und Religion bei Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Konsequenzen für eine mögliche Zusammenarbeit von Marxisten und Christen in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 9: 38–46.

Düsing, Manfred. 1980. "Grundzüge der Auseinandersetzung der KPD mit dem 'religiösen Sozialismus' und ihre Aktualität für die Einbeziehung christlicher Bürger

in die Gestaltung der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 24: 35–46.
Elm, Ludwig. 1980. "Konservatismus und politischer Klerikalismus." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/8: 57–62.
Engelien, Almut. 1982. "Die theoretische Auseinandersetzung der SED mit der Religion." In *Die evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Reinhard Henkys, 127–143. Munich: Chr. Kaiser.
EZW. 1980. "Die charismatische Bewegung in der DDR." *Orientierungen und Berichte* 10.
Fuchs, Karin. 1983. " Zum Verhältnis von kommunistischen Parteien und religiösen Bewegungen, von Kommunisten und Gläubigen in islamischen Ländern." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/26: 14–23.
Garadzha, Viktor. 1976. "Die Krise des modernen Protestantismus und die Suche nach einer 'neuen Theologie'." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 2: 1–52.
Garadzha, Viktor. 1977. "Religiöser Glaube und soziale Entwicklung." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 6: 1–4.
Garadzha, Viktor. 1978. "Zur Kritik neuer Strömungen in der protestantischen Theologie." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 14: 1–65.
Gläser, Karin. 1980. "Zu einigen Positionen protestantischer Theologen zum Problem der Gewalt." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 24: 26–33.
Gläser, Karin. 1981/1982. "Zur Kritik protestantisch-theologischer und kirchlicher Auffassungen - zu Wesen und Funktion revolutionärer und reaktionärer Gewalt (Thesen zur Dissertation I)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 29: 41–56.
Hafez, Kai. 1995. *Orientwissenschaft in der DDR. Zwischen Dogma und Anpassung, 1969–1989*. Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut.
Hafez, Kai and Gerhard Höpp. 1998. "Gegenwartsbezogene Orientwissenschaft in der DDR und in den neuen Bundesländern: Kontinuität oder Neubeginn?" In *Wissenschaft und Wiedervereinigung. Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften im Umbruch*, edited by Wolf-Hagen Krauth and Ralf Wolz, 96–163. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
Heise, Joachim. 1993. "Kirchenpolitik von SED und Staat: Versuch einer Annäherung." In *Kirchen in der Diktatur: Drittes Reich und SED-Staat. Fünfzehn Beiträge*, edited by Günther Heydemann and Lothar Kettenacker, 126–154. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
Heise, Joachim. 1998. "'... die Arbeit auf dem Gebiet des Atheismus intensivieren und qualifizieren': Zum Wandel in der atheistischen Propaganda und Lehre in der DDR von den Anfängen bis Ende der siebziger Jahre." In *"Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung..." Jugend im Spannungsfeld von Staat und Kirche in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Horst Dähn and Helga Gotschlich, 150–167. Berlin: Metropol.
Heyde, Wolfgang. 1977. *Der Sozialismus als Idee und Realität in der Interpretation durch den Protestantismus*. Dissertation B thesis, Dresden University of Technology.
Heyde, Wolfgang and Inge Werner. 1979. "Die Theologie vom Tode Gottes - ein Ausdruck der Krise des Protestantismus." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 16: 27–42.
Heyde, Wolfgang and L. P. Kurpakowa. 1980. "Wandlungen des religiösen Sozialismus - Ideologie und Politik." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 20: 1–74.
Hoffmann, Alfred. 2000. *"Mit Gott einfach fertig". Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Leipzig: St. Benno.
Hoffmann, Gerd-Rüdiger and Ulf Schmidt. 1983. "Gesellschaftlicher Fortschritt und Religion im subsaharischen Afrika." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/26: 53–66.

Hüttner, Eberhard. 1975. "Zur Marxismus-Leninismus-Interpretation in den evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* special issue: 14–26.
Jenssen, Hans-Hinrich. 1996. "Zwei Pole kontextbezogener Theologie." *Hochschule Ost* 5 (4): 167–175.
Junick, Klaus. 1976. *Zum Humanismus im Spätwerk von Emil Fuchs und in seinem Kampf für Frieden und Sozialismus an der Seite der Arbeiterklasse (1949–1971)*. Dissertation A thesis, Leipzig University.
Junick, Klaus. 1977. "Zu Leistung und Grenze von Emil Fuchs (1874–1971)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 9: 24–37.
Käppel, Sabine. 1977. "Analyse des Inhalts und des Wesens der Kapitalismuskritik auf der V. Vollversammlung des ÖRK in Nairobi 1975 (Thesen zur Diplomarbeit)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 10: 33–40.
Kaul, Wolfgang. 1974a. *Der Zusammenhang von staatsbürgerlicher Bildung und Erziehung und wissenschaftlich-atheistischer Weltanschauung*. Dissertation A thesis, Rostock University.
Kaul, Wolfgang. 1974b. "Marxistische Veröffentlichungen in der DDR zum Atheismus und zur marxistischen Religionskritik von 1945 bis 1973 (selbständige Publikationen)." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 2/1: 1–58.
Kaul, Wolfgang. 1974c. "Marxistische Veröffentlichungen in der DDR zum Atheismus und zur marxistischen Religionskritik von 1945 bis 1973 - Zeitschriften-Artikel." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 2/2: 4–63.
Kaul, Wolfgang. 1975. "Marxistische Veröffentlichungen in der DDR zum Atheismus und zur marxistischen Religionskritik - Ergänzungen 1974/75 und Nachtrag zu den Heften Reihe 2/H 1 und 2 (selbständige Publikationen/Beiträge und Zeitschriften-Artikel)." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 2/5: 5–37.
Kaul, Wolfgang. n.d. "Die Religionsgemeinschaften in der DDR (Eine Dokumentation)." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 2/6: 5–42 and appendices.
Kirsch, Anja. 2008. "Religionen im Realsozialismus - Widerspruch oder Tatsache? Eine wissenschaftliche Expertise zum aktuellen Forschungsstand." *Zeitschrift für junge Religionswissenschaft* 3 (1): 43–72.
Klohr, Olof. 1975a. "Materialistische Geschichtsauffassung, Atheismus und Religion." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/14: 1–41.
Klohr, Olof. 1975b. "Zur Kritik der Revision des marxistisch-leninistischen Atheismus." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* special issue: 27–37.
Klohr, Olof. 1975c. "Das Absterben von Religion und Kirche im Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der weltanschaulich-atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/16: 1–41.
Klohr, Olof and Bernd Stoppe. 1977 (?). "Zur bürgerlichen Kritik des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus". *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/4: 1–94.
Klohr, Olof. 1978. *Marxismus-Leninismus, Atheismus, Religion*. Rostock-Warnemünde: IHS.
Klohr, Olof. 1980a. "Gutachten zur Dissertation." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 21: 35–42.
Klohr, Olof. 1980b. "Die Rolle der Religion in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft, Thesen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 22: 15–18.
Klohr, Olof. 1980c. "Antikommunistische Verfälschung der Politik des sozialistischen Staates gegenüber Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften in den siebziger Jahren." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/8: 42–56.
Kónya, Istvan. 1976. "Einige Erfahrungen der marxistisch-leninistischen Kalvinismus-Forschungen in Ungarn - Thesen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 3: 29–32.

Kopmann, Rolf. 1977a. "Aktuelle Tendenzen in der Menschenrechtsdiskussion der protestantischen Theologie, insbesondere ihre Widerspiegelung auf der V. Vollversammlung des ÖRK in Nairobi." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 5: 46–56.

Kopmann, Rolf. 1977b. "Zur Kritik protestantisch-theologischer und kirchlicher Auffassungen und Konzepte einer 'christlichen Humanisierung' des Sozialismus (Thesen zur Dissertation A)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 10: 1–12.

Kopmann, Rolf. 1980. "Das Wirken der protestantischen Kirchen in der DDR im Rahmen des Antirassismusprogramms des ÖRK." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 24: 9–16.

Krauth, Wolf-Hagen. 1998. "Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften." In *Wissenschaft und Wiedervereinigung. Disziplinen im Umbruch*, edited by Jürgen Kocka and Renate Mayntz, 21–78. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.

Kroh, Peter. 1981. "Zur Einbeziehung christlicher Werktätiger in die weitere Gestaltung der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft durch die stärkere Nutzung von Inhalten der religiösen Weltanschauung." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 27: 20–27.

Kvasnička, Bohumír. 1980. "Zu aktuellen Problemen der sozialistischen Integration der gläubigen Werktätigen in der CSSR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 24: 11–21.

Lange, Werner. 1977. "Wesen und Funktion der modernen protestantischen Ethik." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 7: 24–42.

Lange, Werner. 1980a. *Moral und Ethik als Gegenstand der weltanschaulichen Auseinandersetzung zwischen Religion und Atheismus (dargestellt am Verhältnis des Protestantismus zu Moral und Ethik)*. Dissertation B thesis, Halle University.

Lange, Werner. 1980b. "Thesen zur Dissertation II." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 21: 1–19.

Lange, Werner. 1980c. "Autorreferat zur Verteidigung: Grundlinien der protestantischen Ethik des 20. Jahrhunderts." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 21: 20–34.

Leist, S. 1977. "Die Rolle der Frau in der ökumenischen Diskussion (Thesen zur Diplomarbeit)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 10: 28–32.

Lenin, Vladimir. 1965. "Socialism and religion." In *Lenin Collected Works*, 83–87. Moscow: Progress Publishers. First published in 1905.

Loukotka, Jiři. 1981. "Die Freiheit des religiösen Bekenntnisses und ihre Garantien in der CSSR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 25: 1–6.

Lucas, Ulrike. 1981. "Sozialistische Lebensweise und christlicher Lebensstil in der protestantischen Theologie der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 27: 28–37.

Luther, Ernst. 1980. "Gutachten zur Dissertation." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 21: 43–48.

Lutter, Hans. 1975. "Zur Kritik einiger modernistischer Konzeptionen der protestantischen Theologie." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* special issue: 1–13.

Lutter, Hans. 1977. "'Spiritualität des Engagements' - Krisen- und Anpassungsprodukt der Theologie." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 5: 1–26.

Lutter, Hans. 1978a. "Vorwort." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 13: III–IV.

Lutter, Hans. 1978b. "Zu einigen Tendenzen in der protestantischen Theologie." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 1–70.

Lutter, Hans. 1979. "Die gegenwärtige protestantische Theologie in der BRD. Krise - Anpassung - Tendenzen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 15: 1–29.

Lutter, Hans. 1980a. "Gutachten zur Dissertation." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 21: 49–57.

Lutter, Hans. 1980b. "Die Hinwendung der Christen zum Sozialismus - eine Gesetzmäßigkeit des historischen Fortschritts, Thesen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 22: 1–4.

Lutter, Hans. 1994. "Marxismus - Atheismus - Religionskritik." *Berliner Dialog-Hefte* 5 (1–4): 2–17.

Naumann, Christa. 1977. "Die 'Theologie des Dienstes' als Konzeption protestantischer Theologen zur Anpassung von Religion und Kirche an die Bedingungen des Sozialismus." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 7: 13–23.

Pacholik, Udo. 1980. "Zu den wirtschaftsethischen Positionen evangelischer Kirchen und Theologie in der DDR seit 1969. Thesen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 22: 43–46.

Pawelzik, Ralf. 1998. "Zum Säkularisierungsprozeß der DDR-Jugend." In "*Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung...*" *Jugend im Spannungsfeld von Staat und Kirche in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Horst Dähn and Helga Gotschlich, 184–192. Berlin: Metropol.

Peine, Gerhard. 1975 (?). "Marxistisch-leninistische und christliche Ethik zu Rolle und Charakter der Arbeit." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/15: 3–39.

Peine, Gerhard. 1977. "Zur Kritik einiger protestantischer Auffassungen über Rolle und Charakter der Arbeit." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 8: 1–16.

Peine, Gerhard. 1981. "Entwicklungstendenzen der protestantischen Arbeitsethik in der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 27: 9–19.

Peuke, Joachim. 1983. "Buddhismus - gesellschaftliche Verantwortung und Frieden. Bemerkungen zu einigen grundsätzlichen Problemen." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/26: 44–52.

Poór, Jozsef. 1977. "Über die sozialistischen Spezifika der Ungarischen Protestantischen 'Theologie des Dienstes'." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 7: 1–12.

Poór, Jozsef. 1980. "Einige allgemeine Arbeitshypothesen auf Grund des Studiums der ungarischen protestantischen 'Dienst-Theologie'." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 24: 22–28.

Poppe, Joachim. 1980a. *Ökologie und protestantische Theologie - Wesen und Funktion der Schöpfung*. Dissertation B thesis, Güstrow College of Education.

Poppe, Joachim. 1980b. "Zur Wirksamkeit und ideologischen Relevanz der sogenannten Schöpfungstheologie." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 19: 18–57.

Poppe, Joachim. 1981. "Versuche der Rezeption des marxistisch-leninistischen Begriffes 'sozialistische Lebensweise' durch Theologen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 27: 1–8.

Poppe, Joachim. 1981/1982. "Ökologie und protestantische Theologie - Wesen und Funktion der Theologie der Schöpfung." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 29: 21–40.

Preißler, Holger. 1983. "Der Islam und der Kampf gegen Imperialismus, für Frieden und sozialen Fortschritt in Asien und Afrika." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/26: 4–13.

Reichenau, Hans-Ulrich. 1976. "Die bürgerliche Losung von der 'Qualität des Lebens' im Spiegel der ökumenischen Diskussion - Thesen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 3: 33–36.

Richter, Steffi. 1988. "Humanismus und Frieden in Religionen und Philosophien Asiens." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 12: 1121–1123.

Robbe, Martin. n.d. "Religionen in Entwicklungsländern." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/6: 1–32.
Robbe, Martin. 1963. "Philosophische Probleme der Religionswissenschaft." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 11: 1374–1388.
Robbe, Martin. 1964. "Notwendige Maßstäbe religionsgeschichtlicher Forschung - Bemerkungen zu einer Rezension." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 7: 883–886.
Robbe, Martin. 1965. "Religion und Gesellschaft." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 7: 890–898.
Robbe, Martin. 1966. "Marxismus und Religionsforschung." *Internationales Jahrbuch für Religionssoziologie* 2: 157–182.
Robbe, Martin. 1967. *Der Ursprung des Christentums*. Leipzig: Urania.
Robbe, Martin. 1975. Review of the book by Friedrich-Martin Balzer. 1973. *Klassengegensätze in der Kirche*. In *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 2: 351–353.
Robbe, Martin. 1977. "Die 'Dritte Welt' als Subjekt und Objekt im Gegenwartsverständnis der Ökumene." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 6: 10–22.
Robbe, Martin. 1993. "Verlorene Visionen? Entwicklungsländerforschung in der DDR." *Hochschule Ost* 2 (5): 14–24.
Robbe, Martin. 1999. Review of the book edited by Wolf-Hagen Krauth and Ralf Wolz. 1998. *Wissenschaft und Wiedervereinigung. Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften im Umbruch*. In *Hochschule Ost* 8 (3–4): 355–358.
Rupprecht, Frank. 1977. "Aktuelle Aspekte der gesellschaftlichen Rolle der Religion und Theologie und ihrer Unterstüzung durch die bürgerliche Philosophie und Soziologie in der BRD." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 5: 27–34.
Rüstau, Hiltrud. 1983. "Hinduismus und Politik." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/26: 35–43.
Schäfer, Bernd. 1997. "Die KPD/SED und ihr Umgang mit religiösem Brauchtum und kirchlichem Leben im Alltag von SBZ und DDR - unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Mecklenburg-Vorpommerns bzw. der ehemaligen drei Nordbezirke." In *Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung*, volume VI: *Zur Arbeit der Enquete-Kommission: "Leben in der DDR. Leben nach 1989 – Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung". Expertisen und Forschungsstudien zum Thema "Kultur und religiöses Brauchtum"*, edited by Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 158–194. Schwerin.
Scholze, Jürgen. 1977. "Zu einigen Problemen der Mensch-Technik-Interpretation auf der V. Vollversammlung des ÖRK in Nairobi." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 8: 26–38.
Scholze, Jürgen. 1978. "Zur Kritik gegenwärtiger protestantisch-theologischer und kirchlicher Interpretationen des Verhältnisses Mensch-Technik." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 12: 1–38.
Scholze, Jürgen. 1979. "Zur Darstellung und Interpretation des Verhältnisses Mensch-Technik durch die protestantische Theologie." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 16: 1–26.
Schuster, Dirk. 2017. "Das Postulat vom baldigen Ende der Religion. Die DDR-Religionssoziologie über eine Zukunft ohne Gott." In *Zurück in die Zukunft. Die Bedeutung von Diskursen über "Zukunft" in der Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, edited by Klaus Freitag and Dominik Groß, 91–102. Kassel: Kassel University Press.
Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014. "The Ticket to the Soviet Soul: Science, Religion, and the Spiritual Crisis of Late Soviet Atheism." *The Russian Review* 73: 71–97.

Smolkin, Victoria. 2018. *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty. A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press.
Sturm, Dieter. 1983. "Zu einigen Problemen des Dialogs mit Vertretern des Islams und ihren Ursachen." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/26: 24–34.
Thiede, Simone. 1999. *Der Dialog zwischen Religionen und säkularen Weltanschauungen: Dargestellt am Beispiel des christlich-marxistischen Dialogs in der DDR*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
Thrower, James. 1983. *Marxist-Leninist "Scientific Atheism" and the Study of Religion and Atheism in the UdSSR*. Berlin/New York/Amsterdam: Mouton Publisher.
Ugrinovitch, Dmitrii Modestovich. 1977. "Die sogennanten 'Theologien des Genitivs' als eine Äußerung der gegenwärtigen Krise der Religion." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 6: 5–9.
van der Heyden, Ulrich. 2001. "Standpunkte, Hintergründe und Diskussionen zum Für und Wider der Beseitigung der Afrikawisenschaften aus der DDR." *Hochschule Ost* 10 (1): 171–200.
Wahl, Detlef. 1993. "Abwicklung und gegenwärtige Situation der Lateinamerikawissenschaften an der Universität Rostock." *Hochschule Ost* 2 (5): 29–32.
Walters, Philip. 1993. "A survey of Soviet religious policy." In *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, 3–30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Werner, Inge. 1981. "Der Marxismus-Leninismus zur Gewissensfreiheit und ihre Verwirklichung in der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 25: 7–14.
Werner, Inge. 1981/1982. "Zum Problem der Gewissens- und Glaubensfreiheit und ihre Verwirklichung in der DDR (Thesen zur Dissertation I)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 29: 57–75.
Winter, Gerhard. 1976. "Zur Rolle ethischer Auffassungen Dietrich Bonhoeffers im ideologischen Klassenkampf – Thesen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 3: 54–56.
Winter, Gerhard. 1977. "Zur Rolle ethischer Auffassungen Dietrich Bonhoeffers im ideologischen Klassenkampf." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 9: 47–55.
Winter, Gerhard. 1978. "Die Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers in der ersten Periode seines Schaffens (1927–1931/32)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 13: 1–58.
Winter, Gerhard. 1980. "Das Kirchenverständnis in den evangelischen Kirchen der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 19: 1–15.
Winter, Gerhard. 1981. "Aktuelle Aspekte des Wirkens Dietrich Bonhoeffers im 'Weltbund für internationale Freundschaftsarbeit der Kirchen'." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 26: 1–8.
Winter, Gerhard. 1981/1982. "Die Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers - ihre Rezeption und Rolle im Prozeß der Hinwendung der Christen in der DDR zum Sozialismus (Thesen zur Dissertation II)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 29: 1–20.
Winter, Gerhard. 1988. "Bemerkungen zum Wandlungsprozeß evangelischer Theologie." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 60: 607–612.
Zeugner, Petra. 1985. "Zur Zusammenarbeit von Marxisten und katholischen Christen in der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 426–430.
Zimmermann, Horst. 1977. "Zur Strategie aktueller Ost- und Jugendpolitik des politischen Klerikalismus." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 7: 43–55.

7 Towards a theoretical renewal of scientific atheism and new commitments in society in the 1980s

Scientific atheists questioning Marxist positions on religion and atheism

The last years of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) saw a theoretical revival in scientific atheism. The desire to "sharpen conceptual tools" (Roland Krayer)[1] was reflected in a greater freedom of tone, a taste for controversy and in-depth debate on fundamental notions of the Marxist-Leninist conception of religion. The differences in approach were eventually perceived outside the small circle of specialists. In a talk to theologians and clergymen, Hans Lutter chose to tackle head-on the question: "Have Marxists changed their concept of religion?".[2] The days when Marxist scholars tried at all costs to reach a consensus and present a united front to the outside world were gone. They even accepted the major disadvantages this entailed, such as the fact that they could no longer give students a concise and, so to speak, official definition of religion and atheism. After almost 30 years of scientific atheism in the GDR, its scholars felt the need to go back to the sources and were not afraid to spell out theoretical gaps. For, as Kliem put it, "when you talk about religion, you should know what you are talking about".[3]

Religion as the "opium of the people" (*Opium des Volks*) had not been the subject of any reflection in previous years; now Karl Marx's expression came to the fore in the debates, mostly thanks to Bernd Stoppe (1981), Wolfgang Kleinig and Roland Krayer.[4] There could be no question of contradicting Marx, so the whole question was whether religion had changed in the meantime and was now evading a formerly relevant designation. This argument had generally been rejected out of hand by East German Marxists (with the exception of Rupprecht 1966). According to some, the word opium, that "corner-stone of the whole Marxist outlook on religion" (Lenin 1909), remained valid.[5] But more and more scholars were saying that religion was *not only* "the opium of the people".[6] Two rival lines were now conceptualised in religion, one of which would be "progressive" and "humanist".[7] Wolfgang Kliem held this dualistic view: "What has changed and […] obviously continues to change is a shift in the relationship between two opposing traditions in the history of Christianity - a humanist, democratic and an

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322-8

anti-humanist, anti-democratic one - in favour of the humanist or democratic one".[8] In Kliem's opinion, neither movement could claim to express the profound character of religion more authentically. However, Kliem linked two other concepts to this dualism, which betrayed an ever-critical view of "religion". He called the "turn towards the world" (*Wende zur Welt*) the openness to multiple questions concerning man, society, history and creation; in short, "a turn by religions towards greater world responsibility and greater realism", which he approved of. In contrast, in the 1970s there had been a "turn towards religion" (*Wende zur Religion*), which had nothing innocent about it, according to Kliem. For him, it combined irrationality, illusions, the religious legitimisation of politics in capitalist countries, and the instrumentalisation of religion by Western politicians.[9]

The positively evaluated line within religion was also linked to another of Karl Marx's terms, only now put forward by scientific atheists. In 1986, Olof Klohr wrote that "the role of religion as a 'protest against real suffering' (Marx) has generally increased".[10] Other expressions of Karl Marx's, such as "expression of real suffering" (*Ausdruck des wirklichen Elends*) and "sigh of the oppressed creature" (*Seufzer der bedrängten Kreatur*), have not enjoyed the same popularity.[11] Instead, a phrase from Friedrich Engels, which had been absent from arguments so far, was now regularly quoted: "Religion, once formed, always contains traditional material […]. But the transformations which this material undergoes spring from class relations" (Engels 1886). Yet class relations had changed profoundly in socialist countries, the scholars argued, so it was only natural that religion should have changed too. Whether this change extended to the very essence of religion or whether it was simply a more or less superficial "adaptation" was a matter of debate. Most scientific atheists preferred not to get too far ahead.[12]

Marx had also spoken of religion as an "inverted consciousness of the world" (*verkehrtes Weltbewußtsein*), a reflection of a world that was itself "inverted" (*verkehrt*). In the eyes of its architects, socialist society had put an end to the "inverted" world, and it was now important to determine whether religion continued to be an "inverted consciousness" or not. According to Broda, the answer was yes.[13] Kliem arrived at a more nuanced assessment: "The fact that religion is 'wrong' or 'false' (check!) consciousness does not mean that it is 'opium' and certainly not that it is sheer nonsense. It is a non-Marxist interpretation […], in part a very realistic reflection of the global problems and some other questions of progress in our time".[14] Lutter followed suit, playing on the polysemy of the German term used by Marx, which could mean "false" or "upside down".[15] The surrounding society, now "right side up", would reflect positively on religion (Lutter 1989a). Roland Krayer took the most in-depth look at this question, concluding that religion as "inverted consciousness" was specific to capitalist society. However, religion could continue to be "inverted" or "wrong" because the "inverted" world continued to exist across borders and internationally.[16] Krayer and Kleinig introduced also a new historical approach to scientific atheism by

recalling the debates of Marx's time and tracing the use of the opium metaphor by Goethe, Heine, Hess and Feuerbach.[17]

The group of scientific atheists around Wolfgang Kliem delved into the notion of "religious consciousness" (for instance, Broda 1982). For them, "religion is an institutionalised form of social consciousness as a faith-based assumption of the existence of a supernatural absolute to which man feels bound".[18] From other writings it is clear that, in their view, religion was first and foremost a particular scriptural and historical tradition; institution was an important aspect. "Religious consciousness" was seen as part of a wider "religious complex" that also included religious activities, relationships and institutions.[19] "Religious consciousness" could be broken down into "faith in the narrower sense" and "religious ideology".[20] Elsewhere, Kliem specified that "Christian faith" included faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, faith in the truth of the biblical Scriptures (and for Catholics, of the tradition of the Church), but also that there was no such thing as a unified Christianity nor a "pure faith", faith always being already linked to an ideology.[21] On one occasion he asked the question – but it is not certain whether these were his own reflections or notes inspired by a reading: "Is the crisis of religion in the first place a crisis of faith?".[22] One of his readings also led him to note the "decomposition of religious consciousness".[23] His archives show that Kliem above all took "believers" as they declared themselves. On the subject of Christian peace movements, to which he devoted many works, Kliem wrote, for instance:

> The word 'Christian' is not just a negligible self-designation. In my opinion, there is indeed a specificity. It consists mainly in the fact that a Christian religious self-understanding and the Christian tradition play an essential role in their commitment to peace. Another essential characteristic results from the institutionalisation of religion in the form of Churches, which is typical of Christianity.[24]

The criteria used by Kliem therefore remained very formal: To consider oneself a Christian, to draw on a particular tradition, to be organised within a certain institutional framework that Kliem was interested in neither as a sociologist nor as an ecclesiologist. Whether people believed – "still", as his colleagues Klohr and Kaul would have put it – a little, a lot – or not, and in what contents, was not an issue for scientific atheism as Kliem understood it. Instead,

> in my opinion, a basic task of scientific atheism is to contribute to the further development of such common political insights and humanistic values in the struggle to secure peace and thus to deepen and broaden the co-operation between communists and Christian circles.[25]

"Philosophical problems of war and peace" was Wolfgang Kliem's favourite subject throughout the 1980s, and it was a highly topical one in the East German and international political context. He and his colleagues at the

Academy of Social Sciences studied the ideas of Christian movements of many different denominations around the world, delving into their conceptions of justice and their assessments of "the epoch", progress and the future. Each time, the aim was to assess Christian ideas against the yardstick of Marxism and the current political line.[26] The believers judged positively by Kliem saw the gospel as a message of peace for the world here below, made no claim to superior knowledge but emphasised scientific and political competence and common sense and did not aim to achieve any particular "Christian" goals. Rather, they became part of the "Coalition of common sense and realism" that he called for. Understood in this way, "religious faith does not oblige people to flee the world and be anti-socialist, and […] it is not opposed by rational thinking and action orientated towards humanist ideals" (Kliem 1986, 34).

Kliem thus settled the debate on whether there could be "intellectual (or spiritual) commonalities" (*geistige Gemeinsamkeiten*) between Marxists and Christians with a "yes" in case of a reinterpretation of Christianity in a "humanist" sense. For these believers, "saving the sacred gift of life from a nuclear catastrophe" was the supreme objective.[27] Here, scientific atheism joined the theme of humanism, which was gaining ground among East German philosophers.[28] Therefore, believers and communists shared more than just political objectives dictated by urgency. Kliem's handwritten notes reveal a position that went quite far for an East German scientific atheist:

> A Christian can be a socialist / socialist personality / […] recognition of Christian faith as a form of humanism / religion not a bourgeois ideology […] / Christian not a class enemy / Christians have a chance of survival / also for 2nd phase of communist society.[29]

However, "great political and theoretical care" was still required as there was the second, opposing line within religion, always ready to turn against the communist camp.[30]

The location of believers on either side of the barricade touched upon yet another theoretical question, namely the relationship between religion, ideology and worldview. This was an explosive issue insofar as Marxism-Leninism, as officially professed in the GDR at the time, conceived of only two ideologies, that of the bourgeoisie and that of the working class. Dichotomous thinking led to religion being associated with bourgeois ideology and the exploiting classes. Yet this became more difficult to sustain when scientific atheists insisted on the protest nature of religion, on religious movements for peace and social justice and argued for cooperation. Several East German and foreign researchers continued to speak of "religious ideology" and religion having an "ideological nature" and an "ideological function" (Bartsch 1977; Naumann 1979; Triska 1981; Winter 1983). Kleinig and Stiehler preferred to speak of "religion as an ideological relationship" as one of several intermediaries linking the individual and society (Stiehler and Kleinig 1988). Viola Schubert-Lehnhardt imagined religion and ideology to be linked, but without

religion being dependent on any particular ideology (Lehnhardt 1985). Peter Kroh called squarely for "the elimination of the false and harmful view that Christian religion is a priori and for all time identical with bourgeois ideology".[31] His approach, which was original in the GDR but which he said he shared with the Soviet Timofeyev, consisted in recalling the assertion of Yemelian Yaroslavsky of the inter-war Soviet League of the Militant Godless: "The re-evaluation of religious ideology […] is part of our revolution".[32] The impact of the socialist revolution would be enough to lift religion out of the orbit of imperialism and the bourgeoisie. As for the leaders of East German scientific atheism, both Lutter and Kliem came to the conclusion in 1988 that religion was not an ideology (Lutter 1988a, 398) or "not bourgeois ideology".[33]

If religion had no "ideological" function in society, scientific atheists wondered whether it had any other function or none at all in a socialist context.[34] The question was both individual and societal. On the first level, Marxists tended to regard the ecclesial offer as competition – hence the interest in developing atheistic responses to certain problems of individual life.[35] However, the idea gained ground that there might be "really existing religious needs"[36] – areas in which the Church's contribution was "irreplaceable", so that the Church might even help to better achieve the aims of socialism. Kliem came to speak of the Church's "objectively given function".[37] Having dismissed the Church's "integrative" function, another researcher now claimed that "churches make a contribution to the integration of Christians into socialist society that should not be underestimated" (Zöllner 1989, 130). The Güstrow centre even hosted a thesis project on the (possible) role of Protestant pastors in the GDR (Okunowski 1989).

Increasingly, the reflections of the scientific atheists went beyond the level of individual utility to consider religion in society as a whole. They were hostile to the phenomenon of groups sheltered under the roof and protection of the East German Protestant churches during the Peaceful revolution[38] and repeated: "the Church must remain the Church". This assertion again and again confronted them with the difficulty of clarifying precisely what the Church was. Gerhard Winter represented a very restrictive, and clearly minority, understanding, allowing the Church only to "proclaim the Gospel". For him, the Church had no function for society as a whole and did not constitute a "sub-system" (Winter 1989a, 166). Yet this was precisely what more and more of his colleagues were saying. Several lines of enquiry into "what benefit can the Church have" (Dohle) recurred among scientific atheists without forming a systematised and consensual theory before 1990.[39] Proposals put forward by theologians were now viewed with interest by Marxist specialists in Protestantism. Olof Klohr and Horst Dohle, for example, emphasised the status of the Churches as minorities and raised the question of how society treated its minorities, an uncommon question within a regime usually labelled totalitarian.[40]

The scientific atheists were well aware that the question of the Church was slipping into a question of socialism. But socialism was not supposed to be a "pluralist society" (Kliem).[41] There could be no question of granting the

Churches a full place in the system of "socialist democracy" among the political parties and mass organisations. But they had to be involved in one way or another, if possible: "(do not discriminate against the Church!) but show perspective" (Kliem).[42] A consensus emerged that the Church could not be "integrated" into socialist society in the same way as Christians and clergymen. Wolfgang Kliem insisted on this limit and proposed to "make a home" for the Churches (*beheimaten*) in East German society. "What do we concede to Churches under socialism?"[43] Not every political function was excluded. Kliem repeatedly opposed the idea of restricting the Churches' public statements to certain predefined subjects. Neither he nor Horst Dohle wanted to confine them to the role of a "cult church" devoted exclusively to rites and celebrations. Kliem came to recognise the Church's "legitimate claims", for which a "we" (scientific atheists, Marxists, political decision-makers?) would have a great deal of understanding. The autonomy of the Church seemed very important to him, and the principle of the separation of Church and State would set limits for each. In his view, it was also necessary to understand and take seriously the idea that the Church had of the State and society. The Church was necessarily and naturally political, and Kliem saw nothing inherently wrong with that. The challenge was to channel political activity "in the right direction", according to the preferences of the socialists.[44]

There was no consensus among researchers as to how far the (Protestant) Churches could and should go to become better rooted in socialist society. Kliem considered that a "Church for socialism" would no longer be a real Church, while Hartwig was concerned about preserving certain "core beliefs" and "substantive contents of faith", the abandonment of which would, in his opinion, destroy the Church.[45] Klohr, on the other hand, did not hesitate to ask the question: "Why shouldn't there be a 'church for socialism'?".[46] Overall, the idea that "the Party must of course also grant the clergyman the independence of argumentation", or even that they should not be expected to say the same thing as the SED only in different words, was gaining ground.[47] These assertions and a positive and constructive vision of the Church were incorporated into two official studies intended for the Party leadership.[48] They were not, however, intended for the general public.

Defining the place of the Church in socialist society became all the more crucial as the prospect of a "withering away" (*Absterben*) of religion became increasingly remote. The paradigm shift had begun in 1975. All but Gerhard Winter agreed now that the decline was not imminent.[49] But the very principle was openly questioned and abandoned by a number of researchers. Here again, it was the vision of socialism and communism that was challenged by the observation of religious phenomena. Hans Lutter declared that one of the reasons religion would endure was to fill certain "shortcomings" in society. Yet he envisaged that there would never be a society without shortcomings, not even a communist society (Lutter 1989a). Kliem noted that "Christians also have a chance of survival for 2nd phase communist society", not just in the intermediate, socialist stage.[50] For the time being, "real socialism only exists with religion and believers and churches. […] They belong to

real socialism, are the normality of real socialism and not a 'foreign body', not a 'deficiency' or 'lack', 'remnants of past social formations'".[51] A far cry from the propaganda and educational activism of previous decades, Kliem concluded: "We can confidently leave it to history to decide how things will develop. The prediction that religion would wither away relatively quickly under socialism was wrong".[52]

Olof Klohr, the oldest East German scientific atheist, found it much more difficult to abandon the very principle of the "withering away" of religion and the Church. It was not until 1989 that he saw an open future (Klohr 1989b, 27). Religion finally became "a normal part of social life in the GDR".[53] Wolfgang Kleinig and Gottfried Stiehler had made the process easier, again by relativising the legacy of Karl Marx: "In fact, Marx merely reflects in very general terms on the conditions that must be fulfilled for religion to disappear" (Stiehler and Kleinig 1988, 815; see also Kleinig 1987a). Openly abandoning this premise thus no longer caused any qualms.

Finally, the abandonment of a number of principles and terms extended to "scientific atheism" itself. When it was officially established in the GDR in 1963, the name has not been subjected to any critical reflection. Twenty-five years later, the Güstrow research group renamed itself "Marxist-Leninist religious studies" (*marxistisch-leninistische Religionswissenschaft*). For Hoffmann, the change of name did not go hand in hand with a change of substance and content (Hoffmann 2000, 291). Meanwhile, Thiede noted an evolution in the content of the discipline, which she presented as culminating in "scientific atheism" (Thiede 1999, 55); in fact, the opposite was the case. This change of name made visible a trend that had been underway for several years. Questions about the object of scientific atheism had become increasingly animated. Many academics were beginning to feel that there was an unacceptable lack of precision in the use of terms.[54] Bernd Stoppe critically discussed the use of the word "atheism" in his PhD thesis (Stoppe 1981). Klohr praised his effort and advocated:

> It would be good if […] Marxists could agree on the precise presentation and use of the differentiated content of the terms 'atheism', 'criticism of religion', 'scientific atheism', 'atheistic character of Marxism-Leninism', etc. In addition, the field of 'religious studies' proposed by Stoppe (as earlier by Robbe) should be discussed.[55]

In 1984, Klohr submitted the following proposal to his colleagues: "Scientific atheism (Marxist-Leninist atheism) is concerned with religion, in particular its nature, causes, functions and laws of development. It is Marxist-Leninist religious science". According to him, atheism itself was not an object. Here, "scientific atheism" became the equivalent of a Marxist-Leninist science of religion. The view of religion was still largely negative, marked by "anti-communism", "bourgeois ideology and politics" and head-on opposition to the Marxist worldview.[56]

The group of scientific atheists had several lively discussions on "scientific atheism" in 1984 around the questions: "what is scientific atheism?"; "what is atheism?"; "what can scientific atheism achieve?"; "what should its mission (or missions) be?"; "why do we do scientific atheism, what is the specific contribution?"; "can we make our own ethics out of atheism?"; "what is atheist work?"; "would it be better to speak of 'atheist propaganda'?"; and "to whom are scientific atheism and atheist propaganda addressed?". Would it be better to speak of "atheism studies" (*Atheismuswissenschaft*)? As an academic discipline, should scientific atheism be part of philosophy or scientific communism, thus closer to the theory of society?[57] In the Soviet Union, Broda said, atheism was not linked to a discipline. He was against identifying it with a science of religion, which he felt was less broad, whereas scientific atheism would also have positive aspects and a "world-view shaping" function (*weltanschauungsbildend*). Finally, the "atheistic character" of Marxism-Leninism and "atheism as a side of ML" (sic) referred to the place atheism should occupy in Marxism-Leninism more generally.[58]

The gradual disappearance of the notion of atheism from university classes was the subject of numerous and controversial discussions.[59] The very word atheism caused problems because "it appears in a confusing variety" (Kliem).[60] In fact, it referred both to the discipline and to explaining the world by rejecting any religious dimension. The first use thus referred to the object of research and teaching (*Gegenstand*), the second to the "characteristic" (*Wesenszug*) of Marxism-Leninism, to a philosophical principle. Opinions differed on both.

Atheism as a "characteristic of Marxism-Leninism" suffered from what Wolfgang Kleinig and Horst Dohle called an "overload", i.e., "such an exaggerated status […], which is not found in the classics, but which was common in our teaching and propaganda for decades".[61] Elsewhere, Dohle noted: "The basic problem is the unresolved object, atheism has taken on a life of its own!"[62] Poorly integrated into the philosophical system as a whole, it became difficult to determine its rightful place and to maintain it there, in particular so that it did not hinder cooperation and later on dialogue with believers.[63]

As far as the object of scientific atheism as a discipline was concerned, the question was whether or not it should be identified with a "religious science", sociology of religions and religious criticism. Many suggested that its main, or even exclusive, object was to study religious phenomena.[64] But Wolfgang Kliem firmly opposed this idea and instead assigned a threefold object to the discipline of scientific atheism: Religion; atheism as an intellectual and spiritual phenomenon and philosophical current; and finally, more down-to-earth, relations with believers, particularly under socialism.[65] From 1984 onwards, Kliem gave numerous talks on the subject of scientific atheism, taking part in a debate with colleagues from various countries in the socialist Bloc.[66] The Problem Council over which he presided had deliberately been given a different name in 1981. However, Kliem was very keen on scientific atheism as "a discipline of Marxist-Leninist philosophy with all its consequences!"[67]

In fact, he saw scientific atheism as a discipline with a history and an evolving object.[68] The fact that his field of work was shared with neighbouring disciplines – scientific socialism and the history of the workers' movement, alongside Marxist-Leninist philosophy – did not bother him (Kliem 1987b). A "positive" aspect of the discipline, which would give people a sense of direction, optimism and meaning to their lives, was close to his heart, even though he attached less importance to it in his own work. He called it the "humanist aspect" of atheism.[69]

Kliem pointed to the tendency to eliminate the term "atheism" from research programmes and opposed changing the traditional course title, arguing:

> I only consider a name change to be justified if something other than 'Foundations of Scientific Atheism' were taught. But that is not the case. So changing the name of the course would basically amount to teaching scientific atheism under a different name and ultimately renaming the scientific discipline. I consider this […] indefensible and strongly oppose all endeavours that aim in this direction.[70]

However, Kliem was no match for a majority of scientific atheists for whom

> the word 'atheism' is a constant cause of misunderstanding and has a disruptive effect on the Church policy of our State, because the conceptual content that we associate with 'scientific atheism' today is only really and offhand understood by small circles.[71]

"Marxism-Leninism and Religion" was chosen as the title for the course in preference to various other proposals, including "Basic problems of Marxist-Leninist religious studies" (*Grundprobleme der marxistisch-leninistischen Religionswissenschaft*).[72] This term was beginning to spread. Hans Lutter said as early as 1980 that he wanted to "suggest that we probably need a new title for our work and what it should be".[73] It took him several years, however, before he turned decisively away from "scientific atheism"[74] at the end of a journey that he made with others, including Rainer Okunowski (Okunowski 1983), Wolfgang Kleinig,[75] colleagues from the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs,[76] Uwe Funk and Bernd Stoppe.[77] The terms "religious studies research" (*religionswissenschaftliche Forschung*) and "Marxist-Leninist religious studies" (*marxistisch-leninistische Religionswissenschaft*) even appeared in a report submitted to the Ministry;[78] there was nothing shocking about them.

At the 1988 Güstrow symposium and thereafter, these terms were used by several East German researchers, as well as Hodovský from Brno and Timofeyev from Moscow.[79] Timofeyev, however, took an ambivalent stance.[80] Lutter, who had already announced the change of name of his research group (Lutter 1988b), was obliged to justify this several times during the meeting. According to later accounts by Gerhard Winter and Hans Lutter himself,

reactions were mixed, and there was considerable reticence, particularly at an international conference in Moscow that same year. However, these accounts should be treated with caution, as they present the decision as courageous and original while overlooking all the reflection already underway among several East German colleagues.[81] Within the Güstrow collective, the discussion was "stormy and lively", but very short according to Peter Kroh and "long" according to Hans Lutter.[82]

Hans Lutter mentioned a number of reasons for abandoning the old "nameplate".[83] He saw atheism as a negation and as such unsuited to the development of constructive thought. The fact that specialists were still unable to come up with a clear and consensual definition of its subject also bothered him. As for his own research, it had long focused on religion. Finally, but incidentally, abandoning a designation that still provoked "neuralgic reactions" could facilitate cooperation and dialogue with believers. The claim to scientificity, denied to believers at the same time, seemed to him to have no place. It was therefore as much the word "scientific" as the word "atheism" that he was contesting. However, the novelty had its limits, as he tried to reassure his colleagues: "Just as Marxism-Leninism is essentially atheistic, this will naturally also apply to this sub-discipline" (Lutter 1989b, 11). Concluding the 1988 symposium, Hans Lutter announced: "We will attempt to constitute Marxist-Leninist religious studies as a positive scientific discipline" (Lutter 1989c, 143–144).

Scientific atheists in a dialogue with Christians

At the same time as the theoretical renewal underway within scientific atheism, its representatives began in the second half of the 1980s to make new commitments in society without abandoning their role as experts to political decision-makers and working as before in education. But a new practice – direct dialogue with believers – was developing, and scientific atheists became its main advocates. In itself, the dialogue between Marxists and Christians already had a history, and "the story of Christian-Marxist dialogue […] represents a crucial yet neglected vector of transnational intellectual history, both within Europe's borders and between Europe and the rest of the world" (Ramšak, Mithans and Režek 2022b, 9). The origins of this phenomenon with national, international and transnational dimensions date back to the 1950s. But dialogue began to flourish mostly from 1964 onwards, in favourable national contexts in Slovenia and Croatia (Radić 2022; Režek 2022) and in the Czech lands. In the GDR, figures such as Zdenko Roter were not unknown, nor were the first attempts in the Soviet Union with Anatoly Lunacharsky in the 1920s. Leszek Kołakowski and Tadeusz Mazowiecki were known to be active in Poland, and Milan Machovec was active in Czechoslovakia.[84] In the 1960s, all roads led to Vienna. The dialogue became international thanks to the Catholic Paulus Society founded in 1955 (de Margerie 2022). The Second Vatican Council then called for dialogue with the world and paved the way for a period of major international

conferences. Faced with repression, including the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and tense national contexts and expectations that were too diverse, dialogue declined once more from the end of the 1960s onwards (Tóth and Weir 2020; de Margerie 2022).

Some scientific atheists had taken a very active part in the dialogue dynamics of the 1960s, notably the Praguer Erika Kadlecová, Jaroslav Hranička and Ladislav Prokůpek (Matějka 2011, 120; Nešpor 2011). As noted by Tóth and Weir, "a remarkable feature of the 1960s were the many moments of personal transformation, whereby antagonists switched sides or at least came to assimilate elements of the (former) ideological enemy. […] Social scientists often turned from executors of an ideological program into key figures in the Christian-Marxist dialogue" (Tóth and Weir 2020, 132). According to Tóth, "with some caveats, Olof Klohr […] could also be included in this group" (Tóth and Weir 2020, 134; see Tóth 2020, 184–185). It is true that Klohr initially made promising international contacts. In 1965, he reported publicly on a conference organised in Vienna by the Catholic Academic Association of Austria in which he had participated, judging the experience to be very positive (Klohr 1965, 1123). The same issue published a summary, again very favourable, of a Paulus Society conference in Salzburg. Asari Polikarov, a Bulgarian professor whom Klohr worked with as part of the scientific atheism network, had also taken part (Hollitscher 1965). Shortly after, Martin Robbe called for a discussion on "oppositely reflected commonalities" and for a dialogue (Robbe 1965, 1337). However, this initial enthusiasm soon found its detractors, one of whom levelled nominal criticism at Olof Klohr, arguing that "the formula 'dialogue' […] is too narrow and one-sided for political-ideological discussions with representatives of religion for the internal conditions of the GDR, because we are already further along" (Rupprecht 1966). As Tóth has shown, in the East German political discourse of 1957–1968 as a whole, "the *topos* of dialogue between Christianity and Marxism was used […] as means to frame ideological enemies" (Tóth 2020, 175). The archives suggest that Olof Klohr was not ready to fight for dialogue in this generally unfavourable atmosphere. Cautious contacts had been made while waiting for instructions from his superiors;[85] Klohr then gave up without further hesitation, as far as we know. He had distanced himself from dialogue for quite a while, and in the archives there was no question of dialogue when his university chair was closed down in 1968 (against Tóth 2020, 186). The same applied to invitations from East German pastors, which he refused (Guigo-Patzelt 2022, 139).

With the end of the Jena chair, the memory of the initial positive experiences also faded, and the whole of the following decade was dominated by a rejection of "dialogues" – now in quotation marks – as they had been practised before 1968. Practical political "cooperation" (*Zusammenarbeit*) with believers was also seen as a positive objective by contrast to an "abstract" dialogue, a "dialogue on the world-view" (*weltanschaulicher Dialog*) perceived as a "means of ideological diversion", a form of "revisionism" leading

to unacceptable concessions, even to the point of abandoning atheism, which scientific atheists saw as an integral part of Marxism.[86]

As for the Christians in the GDR, the question of dialogue did not even arise. Some scientific atheists shared the aforementioned opinion that dialogue was an outdated form of cooperation (for instance, Robbe 1971, 192). Others subscribed in those years to the judgement expressed by an official in charge of Church policy:

> We will not engage in a discussion with the churches about atheism or religion in the form of a dialogue, which is desired by the Church but rejected by us in principle. The desire for dialogue corresponds to the pluralistic theory of society.[87]

It was not until the collapse of the system and the upheaval of 1990 that socialism could be envisaged as a possibly pluralist society. The Problem Council, founded in 1981, was not intended to stimulate dialogue with believers but simply to reflect (among Marxists) on "cooperation".

A change in discourse was perceptible around 1984. The SED and the West German SPD had engaged in a dialogue. In the GDR, the celebrations of Martin Luther's 500th birthday in 1983 had created links between representatives of the State, the Party and the academic world on the one hand, and Protestant theologians and Church circles on the other. A shift was perceptible in several Soviet Bloc countries; it was commented on at the time and deserved new scholarly interest more recently (Bochenski 1975; Bošnjak 1975; Senge 1983; Pollack 1994, 160, 319–323; Schäfer 1997, 186; Thiede 1999; Hoffmann 2000, 39–40; Krusche 2002, 415–416; Ramšak, Mithans and Režek 2022a). Former East German scientific atheists provided testimonies after the fall of the GDR. This was all the more important to them because, after 1989, a past dialogue with Christians was a way of enhancing their status, of attesting openness, courage and a pioneering role to each other and to East German scientific atheism as a discipline. The more critical opinion of one of the witnesses interviewed by Simone Thiede, who also saw the past dialogue as "system-stabilising, system-compliant", went relatively unnoticed (Thiede 1999, 194). Manfred Düsing, interviewed in 2016, also said: "We actually contributed to the fact that this agony of the GDR lasted for a while", like a "fig leaf" to hide the shame of the SED's policies, in reference to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.[88]

As part of this narrative, Olof Klohr was said to have been the first to reintroduce the term "dialogue", notably at the Güstrow international symposium in October 1984.[89] In fact, the notion was already being discussed more widely at the time. In 1983, the East German scientific atheists became part of a movement supported and made respectable by several socialist countries, thanks in particular to a symposium in Budapest in which Klohr and Kleinig took part along with Soviets, Czechoslovaks, Hungarians and Bulgarians and which brought together renowned Marxists and Catholic and Protestant

theologians from both sides of the Iron Curtain.[90] The same Marxists spoke about the dialogue at the Güstrow symposium in October 1984 (Velikovič 1985; Kónya 1985; Poór 1985; Misov 1985; Kriśtov 1985). However, the speakers from Bratislava notably talked again about the "revisionist" Marxists of the 1960s, and one Polish participant accused the Polish Catholics of intolerance detrimental to any dialogue (Pałubicki 1985).

For East Germans, the 1984 symposium was a moment of transition. Many of them used a variety of other terms to talk about constructive relations with believers. Dialogue was only assumed in the talks of Rainer Okunowski and, above all, Olof Klohr. He saw it as a facet of cooperation (*Zusammenarbeit*), which consisted of discussing subjects relevant to this world, in particular "vital questions of humanity" or even humanism, in order to stimulate shared values and similar motivations. Its aim was to prepare for joint action, without any goal in itself. The term should be reserved for specific meetings, notably between Marxist academics and theologians or Church representatives (Klohr 1985). The ensuing discussion underlined all the difficulties and apprehensions surrounding this term (documented in F.u.B. special issue 1985).

These reservations did not prevent Olof Klohr from appearing in 1984 as the main supporter of the term "dialogue". An issue he devoted to the subject afterwards described the balancing act that dialogue required. On the one hand, practical cooperation alone was not enough; one had to talk about values, convictions and motivations; on the other hand, discussion of issues relating to worldviews, beliefs and convictions would have gone too far for Klohr. The path to an acceptable, justifiable dialogue would have to be found between these two extremes (Klohr 1984). Lutter fully shared this "practical" objective of dialogue.[91] Thus, in the GDR, unlike in other countries, cooperation was not an outcome of dialogue but the other way round (see Tóth and Weir 2020, 138).

The Güstrow symposium in 1988 provided an opportunity to take stock of the Marxists' evolution on the term. Lutter proposed a definition: "Dialogue between communists and Christians refers to a form of communication in partnership to reach an understanding of common positions with the aim of working together to solve humanistic tasks" (1989b, 4). Many talks now referred to the dialogue or reported on concrete experiences (Pacholik 1989; Scholze 1989; Winter 1989b; Kroh 1989; Welsch 1989; Freese 1989; Klohr 1989a). According to Düsing and Volland, the prospect of dialogue with Christians stimulated the work of Marxists to clarify their own positions (Düsing 1989; Volland 1989). Some went further, such as Tanalski from Warsaw, who dared to assert "that the future socialist culture will not be monolithic in its world-view, but pluralistic" (Tanalski 1989, 60). Among others, Klohr joined in the vision of a less monolithic, more plural society, where conflicts would be resolved through dialogue and cooperation (Klohr 1989a).

However, certain aspects of the dialogue remained disputed, such as exactly how far to go in terms of content. Olof Klohr included questions of theology, arguing: "We need to know 'what is Christian'?" (Klohr 1988, 22). Wolfgang Kliem also wondered about "the genuinely Christian", and so did Fritz

Welsch. Kroh, on the contrary, considered that "filtering out the core, the 'proprium' of Christian ethics [was] not a task for Marxists" (Kroh 1989, 99). Another unresolved question was the impact a dialogue would have on the Marxists and whether they too would enter into a "learning process" like the Christians. This was a thorny question, because a positive answer would have led them to recognise the imperfection of past positions. But if they limited the learning effect to Christians, it became difficult to maintain the fiction of equal partnership. Olof Klohr tended to expect a change in attitude from Christians alone.[92] Lutter, Dohle and Kroh concluded that there was a learning process for Marxists too.[93] Although dialogue was initially and very largely a matter for discussion between the scientific atheists themselves, they also researched what Christians expected from dialogue[94] – and, eventually, started a dialogue.

The dialogue was to take place between "communists" or "Marxists" on the one hand and "believers" or "Christians" on the other. These terms were mostly used as synonyms, even though it was sometimes pointed out that a political position (communism) and a philosophical position (Marxism) were not on the same level. The term "believers" did not indicate the aim of opening up the dialogue to religions other than Christianity. On the Marxist side, the scientific atheists tried to organise themselves to supervise and provide a framework for this new practice. They sought to make sure the rules were respected – no "dialogue on the world-view" – provide a forum for sharing experiences between "dialogue experts" and get an overview of the initiatives.[95] Conducting a dialogue with Christians was now one of the things a good specialist in scientific atheism needed to know. The theme of dialogue was introduced in all the scientific atheism network's structures and initiatives, even in teaching materials.[96] It was not the work of a few isolated individuals who practised it discreetly, especially since international meetings undeniably played a driving role following the first experience in Budapest. In October 1986, Klohr and Kliem went to Budapest again, this time for an international conference co-organised by the Vatican Secretariat for Dialogue with Non-Believers and the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.[97] Their participation was authorised by the SED Politburo and prepared with various Central Committee contacts.[98] As in the development of research into Protestantism, the diversions abroad made it possible, in a second stage, to take an interest in the Christians present in the GDR itself (for another example of this mechanism, see Radić 2022, 81). It was in Budapest in 1986 that the two professors of scientific atheism made the personal acquaintance of the Catholic theologian Konrad Feiereis, the main Catholic advocate of dialogue with the Marxists in the GDR, who was very interested in their positions.[99] Conversely, Wolfgang Kliem set about collecting some of Feiereis' work.[100] Kliem was particularly well-informed about dialogue at an international level.[101] In November 1988 and January 1989, two West German Protestant academies invited him to conferences with West German politicians and Church representatives from both German States. Wolfgang Kliem's status was somewhat ambiguous, and he was aware of this: "I am not a representative of State Church policy, but of course I represent State Church policy".[102] Dialogue,

humanism, shared values and the separation of Church and State were some of the key ideas evoked in this West German setting.[103]

Güstrow's scientific atheists were part of other international dialogue circles. Together with the Hungarian scientific atheist Istvan Kónya, Peter Kroh and Hannelore Volland took part in a meeting of systematic theologians from socialist countries in May 1986 in Rostock.[104] Kroh was also present at the following meeting two years later in Debrecen. Then there was no longer any need to make a diversion abroad; it had been unthinkable just a few years earlier, but now specialists in scientific atheism were taking part in colloquia organised by Protestant theology departments, Protestant academies and even churches. The archives suggest a division of tasks according to speciality (Protestantism/Catholicism) and rank. Güstrow academics responded to invitations from Protestant academies: Greifswald (Winter in 1987), Meißen (Kroh in 1988), and Berlin-Brandenburg (Lutter in 1988) – conferences that appear in official work reports (Lutter 1988a; Güstrow research group 1988). From 1984 onwards, in particular, Wolfgang Kliem and Hans Lutter attended colloquia of theologians. Kliem was the first to attend an ecumenical symposium on peace issues in January 1984, a subject of particular interest to him.[105] In May 1985, Bernd Stoppe, Wolfgang Kleinig and Wolfgang Kliem took part in a symposium organised by university theologians.[106] This was followed by an ecumenical symposium on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, also attended by Wolfgang Kliem in February 1986.[107] In February 1988, another ecumenical symposium, again on peace, enabled Wolfgang Kliem to familiarise himself with the ideas of Erhard Eppler, a West German politician and Protestant, and one of his interlocutors in the dialogues in the Federal Republic of Germany a few months later.[108] The scientific atheists went beyond the stage of listening and informal exchanges when Lutter gave a talk on "Karl Marx on 'religion in itself'" to some 200 listeners, mainly theologians, bishops and pastors.[109] Outside the academic world, the Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR began to officially enter into the dialogue, invited Hans Lutter for a meeting on 7–8 November 1989[110] and planned to invite Wolfgang Kleinig in April 1990.[111]

In keeping with the usual division, Olof Klohr seemed to be the designated interlocutor for the Catholic minority (Kalb 1987). The most notable example was a public dialogue between Klohr and Konrad Feiereis in Erfurt in April 1988 in front of 350–400 mostly young listeners (Feiereis 1995a, 54, and 2001). The Catholic theologian claimed to have worked with other speakers, including Wolfgang Heyden (sic) from Dresden, Borrmann and Krayer (Feiereis 2001, 718). The latter mentioned experiences of dialogue mainly with Catholics.[112] On another occasion, Wolfgang Kliem was invited to a meeting between Marxists, Protestants and Catholics, including Feiereis.[113] Personal affinities between certain scientific atheists and theologians or clergymen obviously also shaped the dialogue. The idea emerged of institutionalising ongoing discussion circles in small groups.[114] Such a place appeared at Humboldt University under the direction of Fritz Welsch, who was faced with a recurring problem, in that he brought together only people

who were already convinced by the idea of dialogue.[115] On the Marxist side, Klohr pointed out: "Why is dialogue between Marxists and Christians a matter for atheism or religion specialists - does it have to be?".[116]

Because of their position, Wolfgang Kliem, Hans Lutter and Olof Klohr attracted attention and invitations. But this was not just a "dialogue of old men" (quote in Thiede 1999, 131). Even if the documentation remains incomplete, Wolfgang Heyde and Karin Gania seem to have maintained regular contact with believers.[117] Manfred Düsing was involved in the activities of a Protestant fraternity and in contact with several pastors, sometimes together with Bernd Stoppe.[118] Jürgen Scholze joined a house circle and established a close relationship with a superintendent.[119] There is evidence of dialogue meetings involving the Leipzig-based scientific atheists Uwe Funk, Bernd Stoppe and Roland Krayer in 1988–1989.[120] In northern Germany, Klohr's younger colleagues Petra Zeugner and Renate Billinger were not afraid to go out and meet Christians – the former as part of her research into the Catholic minority in the GDR, the latter while working on Christian art in Berlin churches (Billinger 1990, 63). At Rostock University, Sybille Bachmann, a specialist in religion in Latin America, recorded her memories of contacts with Christians from 1986 onwards (Bachmann 1991, 2007). The University of Rostock became known as a centre for dialogue. Several academics belonged to the network of scientific atheism, and a working group dedicated to Catholicism in Latin America had been set up there in the first half of the 1980s.[121] Heinrich Bahl reported on joint colloquia with the theology department as early as 1981 (Bahl 1985). Cooperation continued on research projects such as peace, liberation theology and global challenges. University theology departments, particularly in Berlin and Rostock, began to include the theme of dialogue between Christians and Marxists in their profiles,[122] encouraged by the State Secretary for Church Affairs.[123]

This dynamic reached its climax in April 1989 with the creation of a "university centre for peace and mutual understanding" at the University of Rostock, bringing together scholars of theology, Marxism-Leninism and Latin American sciences. The preparations were of great interest to the scientific atheists, and for the opening colloquium, "Marxists and Christians willing to engage in dialogue arrived from all over the GDR" (Bachmann 1991, 14), including Lutter, Kroh, Klohr, Volland and Winter.[124] The last months of the regime saw an acceleration and intensification of the dialogue. It was during the dialogue with Christians that the scientific atheists were surprised by events. Hans Lutter was due to attend an official consultation with around 20 theologians and pastors on the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall. That evening, 9 November 1989, Horst Dohle from the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs was at the French Church in Berlin to talk about churches, political parties and the GDR (Dohle 1997). The scientific atheists could in fact count on strong support from the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs, several of whose officials were involved in the scientific atheism network and went to all sorts of meetings with Christians.[125]

Yet the idea of dialogue with Christians and their Churches did not become a commonly accepted and shared practice. The scientific atheists found themselves caught up in conflicts between different parts of the SED and the State. The Ministry for State Security, also known as the Stasi, at least sporadically observed the discipline of scientific atheism[126] and tried, with varying degrees of success, to monitor dialogue activities to which it was far more hostile than the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs.[127] According to Sybille Bachmann, the Central Committee's Religious Affairs working group was also far more opposed to dialogue than the Office of the State Secretary. The scientific atheists were aware of their very delicate position, spoke out against the "criminalisation" of dialogue (Kliem)[128] and encouraged their colleagues to persevere (Lutter).[129] The obstacles were concrete: Dialogues were banned or were at risk of being banned;[130] the Rostock dialogue centre met with "brusque rejection" and "rebuff" (Fritzsche 1990, 402); and some had to endure disciplinary measures[131] or faced obstacles in pursuing their career (Bachmann 2007). Thus, some preferred to be discrete about their dialogue activities or waited to be invited by Christians instead of taking responsibility for an event (Lutter 1994a; Thiede 1999, 132–133). The question of who should invite whom was a matter of debate and sometimes gave rise to suspicion or regret.[132] The Marxists did not feel they were in a position of strength as had been the case with "cooperation" in previous years (Naumann 1984, 562). Those who could afford it, mainly Kliem, Lutter and Klohr, publicly pleaded for the cause of dialogue.[133] However, discussions aimed at convincing their fellow citizens of the merits of a dialogue with believers did not always go well.[134]

With Christians, the desire for dialogue also came up against obstacles. The sincere interest of the Marxists was regularly called into question.[135] Konrad Feiereis expressed his disappointment that the contacts established with Wolfgang Kliem from 1986 onwards did not make it possible to influence the content of school textbooks, an expectation that was undoubtedly unrealistic (Feiereis 1995b, 2001). The Marxist participants also had their share of disappointments and unpleasant experiences. For Kliem, one example was a round table at the German Protestant Church Assembly (*Kirchentag*) in West Berlin on 9 June 1989. According to his report, the location and the noise prevented any real exchange, and he was quickly attacked by people who had fled the GDR and by journalists.[136] Wolfgang Heyde seemed to have become disillusioned by his experiences of dialogue with Christians, who he said were resigned, dominated by emotion, lacking in knowledge and without constructive proposals.[137]

The creation of an Association of Freethinkers rekindled Christian suspicions. Attempts to revive a freethinking movement after the Second World War had failed in the GDR, as in other Eastern Bloc countries. As Bubík, Václavík and Remmel noted for socialist-run Central and Eastern Europe, "all other atheistic ideologies were de facto marginalized" (2020, 320). At the end of 1988, the announcement of the creation of an Association of Freethinkers, effective in June 1989, came as a surprise. Its origins and short history are still debated, notably due to a lack of archives (Guigo-Patzelt 2024). The intentions of the various actors seem to have diverged considerably. The Politburo

opened up the possibility of associating it with scientific atheism: "The aim of the Association of Freethinkers of the GDR is to spread the free-spirited [*freigeistig*] world-view. It goes without saying that, in our understanding, a free-spirited world-view means scientific atheism".[138] Records suggest, however, that the scientific atheists were not the originators of this association. Nevertheless, their commitment to dialogue exposed them to expressions of concern from many Christians who had negative associations with the German freethinkers' movements from the beginning of the century and the Soviet League of the Militant Godless.[139] Konrad Feiereis saw the dialogue as under threat, and the idea of highly unfair competition, generously financed by the East German State, did nothing to please Church leaders.[140]

The scientific atheists themselves were divided on the Freethinkers' Association (Guigo-Patzelt 2024). But several members of the network, and not the least important, developed the ambition of becoming main actors in it. Olof Klohr had already frequented freethinking circles in West Germany and Austria when the opportunity arose, and in the 1960s he had taken an interest in international freethinkers' congresses.[141] In 1989, he entered the preparatory committee and established himself in the media as a major voice of the association.[142] Several members of his research group were engaged in the new association, as were their colleagues from Güstrow. Hans Lutter took over the presidency in his region and spoke at the founding congress of the Freethinkers' Association (Lutter 1989d).

The orientation that the scientific atheists tried to imprint on the new association rested essentially on two pillars. On the one hand, they tried to work "against militant atheists" and insisted that it should not contradict the dialogue established with believers.[143] On the other hand, Olof Klohr considered such an association to be useful for atheists in need of advice and spiritual guidance.[144] A constructive content, in the sense of "life assistance", was outlined by developing a culture of celebrations (Renate Billinger), consultation hours and a "telephone of trust" (Wolfgang Kaul). Wolfgang Kaul and Hannelore Volland's involvement in developing secular funerals was in line with ideas and contacts that had already been underway for many years and now found a new framework.[145] The development of a "positive aspect" of scientific atheism had been invoked many times, as in other Eastern Bloc countries (Smolkin 2018; Tóth and Weir 2020, 134), but had thus far seen little progress in the GDR. The Association of Freethinkers, which did not emanate from scientific atheism as such, was apparently perceived as being able to make a constructive contribution. Similarly, planned work on the "socialist way of life" could suggest a positive "aspect" of scientific atheism, but it had no time to come to fruition before the regime's end.[146]

Quoted archives

Federal Archives (BArch)
Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BArch)

Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (BStU)
Thuringia Land Archives - Rudolstadt Public Archives (ThStA Rudolstadt)
Technical University Dresden Archives (TUD)
Leipzig University Archives (UAL)
Rostock University Archives (UAR)
Research Centre for Contemporary Church History Erfurt (FKZE)
Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research (BISKF)
Private Collection (PC) Düsing
Private Collection (PC) Kroh
Private Collection (PC) Scholze

Notes

1 PC Düsing Handwritten notes, Güstrow Symposium, 28–30 September 1988.
2 BISKF Kliem 85 Handwritten notes, Symposium Barth.
3 BISKF Kliem 72 Handwritten notes, Religiöses Bewußtsein.
4 Several documents in PC Kleinig and BISKF Kaul 13; Dohle, Kleinig and Stieler 1988; Kleinig 1987a, 1987b, 1988a, 1988b; Stiehler and Kleinig 1988; BArch DO 4/1023 (pp. 1282–1285) and 1025 (p. 149); BISKF Kliem 112 Krayer, "Verkehrtes" oder religiöses Bewußtsein?; BISKF Klohr 99 Krayer, Inwiefern und mit welchem Inhalt werden durch religiöse Auffassungen materielle Ursachen und Bedingungen widergespiegelt?, pp. 22–26.
5 Robbe 1976, 42; Leist 1977; Scholze 1978, 29; Thielicke 1983; Winter 1987, 69, and 1989a, 149; BISKF Kliem 42 Handwritten notes, Dissertation F. Borrmann; BISKF Kliem 72 Hegenbarth, Untitled.
6 BISKF Kliem 137 Handwritten notes, MdI, 4 May 1988; see also BISKF Kliem 79 Religion - Opium des Volks.
7 Poór 1980a, 13–14, and 1980b, 27; Lutter 1982, 19; PC Kroh P. Kroh, Der Lernprozeß von Marxisten und Christen in der DDR als Impuls für die Entwicklung des schöpferischen Klimas in der DDR; BISKF Kliem 109 Information über Problemstellungen und Ergebnisse der Tagung des Problemrates am 26.11.1982; BISKF Kliem 137 Handwritten notes, MdI, 4 May 1988.
8 BISKF Kliem 91 Kliem, Vortrag zur Theoretischen Konferenz "Religion und gegenwärtiger politisch-ideologischer Kampf", Moscow, 26–27 April 1984, March 1984, p. 9.
9 BISKF Kliem 137 Kliem, Zur Rolle der Weltreligionen im revolutionären Weltprozeß, Vortrag Mierki, 25 October 1983, p. 3.
10 BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr, Forschungsergebnisse 1981–1985 im Hochschulwesen der DDR, p. 5. The expressions stem from Marx 1844.
11 See for instance PC Kroh P. Kroh, Der Lernprozeß von Marxisten und Christen in der DDR als Impuls, p. 9; BISKF Kliem 112 Dohle, Diskussionsbeitrag während des Ehrenkolloquiums zum 60. Geburtstag von Olof Klohr, 7 January 1987; correspondence on slide series in 1988 in BISKF Kaul 12.
12 Klohr 1980; Düsing 1980; Lange 1985; BISKF Kliem 109 Referat Problemratstagung 26 November 1982.
13 BISKF Kliem 116 Broda, Gedanken zu Themen, die sich aus dem Forschungsprofil ergeben könnten, 12 March 1980.
14 BISKF Kliem 79 Religion - Opium des Volks, p. 2.
15 BISKF Kliem 78 Handwritten notes, XI. Warnemünder Atheismus-Kolloquium, May 1989.
16 BISKF Kliem 112 Krayer, "Verkehrtes" oder religiöses Bewußtsein?; BISKF Klohr 99 Krayer, Inwiefern und mit welchem Inhalt.

17 BISKF Klohr 99 Krayer, Inwiefern und mit welchem Inhalt.
18 BISKF Kliem 110 Handwritten notes. Other reflections on religious conscience can be found in BISKF Kliem 78, 116, 117; Fromm, Loesdau and Plener 1981, 90–111; Militärakademie "Friedrich Engels" 1984.
19 BISKF Kliem 91 and 137.
20 BISKF Kliem 115 Handwritten notes.
21 BISKF Kliem 125 Handwritten notes, Stellung zur Ideologie/"Ideologie".
22 BISKF Kliem 117 Handwritten notes, Krise Religion.
23 BISKF Kliem 117 Handwritten notes, Gegensatz Fundamentalismus - Modernismus (Oisemann, S. 299).
24 BISKF Kliem 5a Kliem, Vortrag (überarbeitet) auf dem wissenschaftlichen Symposium, 21–22 November 1986, Berlin, January 1986, pp. 4–5.
25 BISKF Kliem 91 Kliem, Vortrag zur Theoretischen Konferenz, Moscow, 26–27 April 1984, March 1984, p. 14.
26 BISKF Kliem 1, 5a, 11, 31, 77, 80, 83, 87, 91, 97, 102, 114, 116, 120, 123, 125 and 137.
27 Title of a world conference of religious representatives in Moscow in 1982. See for instance BISKF Kliem 5a Kliem, Vortrag (überarbeitet), January 1986, p. 8.
28 See also BISKF Kliem 74; Kliem 1987a.
29 BISKF Kliem 125 Handwritten notes, Ethische Werte.
30 BISKF Kliem 5a Kliem, Vortrag (überarbeitet), January 1986.
31 PC Kroh P. Kroh, Der Lernprozeß von Marxisten und Christen in der DDR als Impuls, p. 8.
32 Quoted in Timofejev 1980, 7; see PC Kroh P. Kroh, Autorreferat zur Verteidigung der Dissertation B [1985].
33 BISKF Kliem 125 Series of handwritten notes: Ethische Werte, Problemfelder, Stellung zur Ideologie; BISKF Kliem 78 Handwritten notes, Problemratsleitung 14 October 1988.
34 This question was also debated on the 1980 Güstrow symposium, documented in *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 22 to 27. BISKF Kliem 78 Handwritten notes, Problemratsleitung 14 October 1988; BISKF Kliem 110 Handwritten notes.
35 PC Düsing Handwritten notes, Problemrat, 23 June 1989, p. 4; BISKF Kliem 122 Handwritten notes, Atheismus-Symposium 18–19 May 1989; BISKF Kliem 137 Problemkatalog Kirchenpolitik.
36 Zöllner 1989; BISKF Kliem 110 Hinweise der Direktion vom 8.2.1989, p. 1.
37 BISKF Kliem 125 Handwritten notes, Perspektive von Kirchen.
38 BISKF Kliem 137 Handwritten notes, MdI, 4 May 1988; BISKF Kliem 112 Dohle, Diskussionsbeitrag während des Ehrenkolloquiums zum 60. Geburtstag von Olof Klohr, 7 January 1987.
39 BISKF Kliem 122 Handwritten notes, Atheismus-Symposium 18–19 May 1989; BISKF Klohr 99 Zöllner, Funktion von Religion, pp. 13–14, and Schwebs, Positionen evangelischer Theologen, pp. 15–21; BISKF Kliem 112 Dohle, Diskussionsbeitrag während des Ehrenkolloquiums; Lutter 1989b. On this question, see also Pollack 1994, 27–33.
40 PC Düsing Handwritten notes, Problemrat, 23 June 1987; BISKF Kliem 137 Problemkatalog Kirchenpolitik.
41 BISKF Kliem 125 Handwritten notes, Problemfelder.
42 BISKF Kliem 110 Handwritten notes. See also Hinweise der Direktion vom 8.2.1989, p. 2, and Lutter 1989b, 9.
43 BISKF Kliem 122 Handwritten notes, Löffler 21 March 1989.
44 See various handwritten and often untitled notes in BISKF Kliem 125.
45 BISKF Kliem 78 Anmerkungen zur Studie "Kirche im Sozialismus".
46 BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, Leitung Problemrat, 6 November 1981, p. 3.

47 BISKF Kliem 137 Dohle, Gutachten zu Wöllner, 30 May 1986, p. 4; see also Peine 1987, 66.
48 BISKF Kliem 100, 110, 125 and 137.
49 BISKF Kliem 42, 72, 74, 78, 86, 110, 112, 116, 125 and 137; BISKF Klohr 99 Klohr, Forschungsergebnisse 1981–1985 im Hochschulwesen der DDR, 15 April 1986, and Klohr, Religionssoziologie und Prognose, Thesen, 18–19 May 1989, pp. 2–6; BISKF Gysi 3 Sektion Theologie Berlin, 7 September 1981; Lutter 1980, 1983, 1989a, 1989b; Klohr 1980, 1989b; Winter 1987; Lutter and Winter 1987; Tanalski 1989; Zeugner 1989; Zöllner 1989.
50 BISKF Kliem 125 Handwritten notes, Ethische Werte.
51 BISKF Kliem 110 Kliem, Referat GO-Versammlung am 8.5.1989, p. 4.
52 BISKF Kliem 137 Handwritten notes, MdI, 4 May 1988.
53 BISKF Klohr 60 Klohr, Kaul, Kirchenstudie 1989, Prognose 2000, p. 23.
54 For instance BISKF Klohr 308 St. AG, Bilanz 1981–1985 und Aufgaben 1986–1990; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1204 St. AG, Arbeitsstandpunkt, March 1989; BISKF Kliem 137 Hauptrichtungen der Forschung im Fünfjahrplanzeitraum 1991–1995, 1 Feburary 1989; BISKF Pacholik Pacholik, Ergebnisprotokoll der Leitungssitzung des Problemrats am 14.10.1983, p. 1; BArch DO 4/1023, p. 1322.
55 UAL WR 1981/262, p. 16.
56 BISKF Kliem 121 Klohr, Diskussionsthesen zum Gegenstand und Inhalt des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, p. 1.
57 Several 1984 documents stemming from the Problem Council in BISKF Pacholik; BISKF Kliem 74 Handwritten notes: Leitung Problemrat, undated, and Problemrat Leitung, 17 February 1984.
58 BISKF Kliem 74 Handwritten notes.
59 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 and 1040; BArch DO 4/1023 (pp. 1317–1331, 1352–1358), 1024 (p. 1470) and 1025; BISKF Kliem 1, 82, 85, 86, 91, 104 and 115; BISKF Kaul 12; BISKF Klohr 82.
60 BArch DO 4/1025, p. 211.
61 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Dohle to Göhring, 21 March 1988; expression used by Kleinig in DO 4/1025, pp. 131–134.
62 BArch DO 4/1024, p. 1470.
63 BISKF Kliem 78 Handwritten notes, Stieler, Problemrat, 5 June 1987; BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, Problemratstagung, 20 November 1987.
64 For instance BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Borrmann and Freese, Seminarplan, July 1986, p. 1.
65 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kliem, Gutachten zum Entwurf der Studienhinweise, and Kliem, Gutachten zum Lehrprogramm, 5 December 1987.
66 BISKF Kliem 5a, 74 and 121; Kliem 1987b and 1989; PC Düsing Handwritten notes from a talk by Kliem; see for instance Kónya 1989.
67 BISKF Kliem 74 Handwritten notes, Atheismus - Humanismus - Politik, 18 May 1984, p. 1.
68 BISKF Kliem 121 Handwritten notes, Thesen für Lehrgang Leipzig und Artikel nach Bratislava [1985].
69 BISKF Kliem 121 Handwritten notes, Weltanschauliches Problem des Gegenstandes, 30 June 1986, p. 11.
70 BArch DO 4/1025, p. 211.
71 BArch, DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Klohr, Gutachten zum Lehrprogramm, p. 2. Dohle shared this assessment: DO 4/1025, p. 233, as did the working group in charge of atheistic education: BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Göhring, Stellungnahme zum Entwurf des Lehrprogramms, 24 March 1988, p. 1.
72 On the discussion, see various documents in BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1204 Kleinig to Brie, 12 July 1987; BArch DO 4/1025, p. 218.

73 BISKF Kaul Bound book on the 1980 Güstrow symposium, Lutter, Schlußwort, p. 3.
74 His perspective was still different in Lutter 1986a and BISKF Kliem 137 Lutter, Zu einigen spezifischen Bedingungen.
75 BISKF Kliem 91 Kliem, Gutachten zum Artikel von Wolfgang Kleinig, 9 March 1981; BArch DO 4/1024, pp. 1454–1455; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 1204 Kleinig to Brie, 12 July 1987.
76 BArch DO 4/1024, pp. 1474–1488.
77 Interview with Uwe Funk, 23 July 2019; Stoppe 1981, 1; BISKF Kliem 115 Handwritten notes.
78 BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Theorie und Kritik der Religion in der weltanschaulichen Bildung.
79 Kroh 1988; Düsing 1989; Hodovský 1989; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 St. AG, Protokoll der Beratung am 28.4.1989. On the debate in Czechoslovakia, see Smolkin 2018, 225.
80 Timofejew 1989, 59; BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, 28 September 1988; PC Düsing Handwritten notes, Symposium Güstrow 28–30 September 1988.
81 BISKF Kliem 5a Winter, Laudatio auf Hans Lutter, p. 8; Lutter 2001.
82 Interview with Peter Kroh, 7 October 2016; Lutter 1994a.
83 Lutter 1989b, 11, and 1989c, 122, 143–144; BISKF Kliem 5a Winter, Laudatio; PC Düsing Handwritten notes, Symposium Güstrow 28–30 September 1988.
84 BISKF Kliem 112 Groth, Sowjetischer Atheismus und Theologie im Gespräch, Frankfurt 1986; Robbe 1971; Machovec 2001.
85 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1630/727, pp. 46–55; BISKF Kaul 14.
86 Robbe 1971, 179–181; Kaul and Peine 1975; Klohr 1975, 38; Klohr and Stoppe 1977; Junick 1976, 236, and 1977, 33–34; Scholze 1978, 34; BISKF Klohr 92 and 93; BISKF Klohr 80 Lutter, Zur Kritik einiger modernistischer Konzeptionen, p. 9; BISKF Klohr 140 Klohr, Marxisten in der DDR zum Dialog, pp. 1, 4; BISKF Kliem 136; BISKF Kaul 7 Kliem on König, Gibt es einen wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, p. 1; PC Düsing, Borrmann, Die Krise des Katholizismus; BArch DR 3, 2. Schicht, 544 Kolesnyk, Gutachten zu: Beiträge zum Wissenschaftlichen Atheismus, p. 19.
87 ThStA Rudolstadt 5-95-1005/2475, p. 69.
88 Interview with Manfred Düsing, 7 July 2016.
89 *Navigator* 20, 15 December 1989, p. 2; Lutter 1994b.
90 BISKF Kliem 91 Bericht über eine Veranstaltung, Budapest 28 February–1 March 1984, and Anlage: Teilnehmerliste.
91 Quoted in BISKF Klohr 140 Klohr, Marxisten in der DDR zum Dialog.
92 Klohr 1984; BISKF Klohr 99 Klohr, Religionssoziologie und Prognose, Thesen, p. 5.
93 Lutter 1985; BArch DO 4/1024, pp. 1530, 1533; BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, Problemratstagung 23 June 1989, p. 3; PC Kroh P. Kroh, "Lernprozeß" und "Lerngemeinschaft", and Kroh, Zum Lernprozeß von Christen und Marxisten in der DDR.
94 BISKF Kliem 11, 74, 77, 96 and 126; BArch DO 4/1024 and 1025; PC Düsing Lutter, Klevenow, Analyse der Meinungen von Christen zum Dialog, February 1989; Naumann 1984.
95 Documents stemming from the Problem Council in BISKF Pacholik; BISKF Kliem 78 Handwritten notes, XI. Warnemünder Atheismus-Kolloquium, May 1989; BISKF Kliem 85 Luther to Kliem, 18 January 1982, and AG Marxisten und Christen, Zum Dialog, 23 June 1989; BISKF Klohr 140 Inhalte des Dialogs; Bachmann 1991, 14; Thiede 1999, 106, 181, 185–186, 213.
96 BArch DO 4/1023 (pp. 1282–1283, 1352–1356) and 1024 (pp. 1456–1468).
97 Klohr 1988; BISKF Kaul 5 and 6; BISKF Kliem 91 and 100; Feiereis 2001.

98 SAPMO-BArch DY 30/59660, pp. 6, 15.
99 Feiereis 1989c and 2001; BISKF Kliem 74 Feiereis, Wahrheit - Wissenschaft - Fortschritt.
100 BISKF Kliem 74, 96 and 126.
101 BISKF Kliem 79, 91 and 124.
102 BISKF Kliem 75 Vortrag "Kirche im Sozialismus", Mühlheim, 11 November 1988, p. 1.
103 BISKF Kliem 75, 82 and 137, at Mühlheim/Ruhr, 11–12 November 1988, and Bad Boll, 27–29 January 1989.
104 BArch DO 4/1024, pp. 1521–1525; Kroh 1987; Volland 1987.
105 BISKF Kliem 91.
106 BArch DO 4/1024, pp. 1656–1662.
107 BArch DO 4/1024, pp. 1557–1597.
108 BISKF Kliem 137.
109 BArch DO 4/1024, pp. 1514, 1517–1520, 1549–1552; Lutter 1986b.
110 EZA 101/3089 and 3302.
111 EZA 101/3302 Schröder to Harmati, Kocsis, Fritzsche, 1 August 1989.
112 UAL ZM 08464/10.1 Krayer, Einige persönliche Bemerkungen zur Studie, 25 June 1987, p. 1.
113 BISKF Kliem 17 Einladungen für Kliem 1989.
114 BArch DO 4/1024, p. 1520.
115 Welsch 1989; EZA 101/3302 Generalsuperintendent des Sprengels Berlin to Zeddies, 12 December 1988.
116 BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, 28 September 1988, p. 2.
117 TUD 044 Heyde, Einige Fakten zu meinem Werdegang, 12 March 1985, p. 1; TUD HfV zu 1.4.1./#98 Heyde, Gutachten zur Dissertation von Frau Karin Gania, 18 April 1990, p. 1; TUD HfV 3.2.1./a/070 Bellmann, Arbeitsplan, 9 November 1989.
118 PC Düsing and interview with Manfred Düsing, 7 July 2016.
119 PC Scholze and interview with Dagmar Scholze, Zittau, 2 March 2018.
120 UAL R 1263; UAL ZM 08464/10.1; interviews with Uwe Funk, 23 July 2019, and Kurt Fleming and Bernd Stoppe, 27 July 2019; Krayer and Winzeler 1988.
121 BISKF Klohr 311 Klohr, Forschungsergebnisse 1981–1985 im Hochschulwesen der DDR, 15 April 1986, p. 5.
122 BArch DO 4/1025, pp. 104–112.
123 For instance DO 4/1024 (pp. 1489–1494, 1510–1511) and 1025 (pp. 190–191).
124 Several handwritten notes stemming from the Problem Council in BISKF Pacholik and BISKF Kliem 78 and 122; DO 4/1023, pp. 1272–1280. On the centre, see BArch DO 4/1023 and 1025 (pp. 61–63); EZA 101/3302; UAR R 806 Übersicht über Vorschläge für komplexe, interdisziplinär zu bearbeitende Forschungsprogramme und -aufgaben 1991–1995; PC Kroh P. Kroh, Zum Lernprozeß von Christen und Marxisten in der DDR.
125 BArch DO 4/1024 and 1025; BISKF Gysi 3 Diktat vom 23.9.1987, p. 3; Bachmann 1991, 15.
126 BStU MfS - ZAIG Nr. 33295, pp. 2–20.
127 Interview with Manfred Düsing, 7 July 2016; PC Scholze Mendt, Zeugnis zur Person von Dr. sc. Jürgen Scholze, 31 August 1990; Bachmann 1991, 13; Feiereis 2001. On the discrepancy between the Stasi and the Office of the State Secretary for Church Affairs, see Brown 2010.
128 BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, Leitung Problemrat, 19 October 1989.
129 PC Düsing Lutter to Liebe Genossen, 21 October 1989, p. 2.
130 Interviews with Manfred Düsing, 7 July 2016, and Uwe Funk, 23 July 2019; Thiede 1999, 202–203.
131 Funk 1994, 71, and interview with Kurt Fleming and Bernd Stoppe, 27 July 2019.

132 BISKF Kliem 17 Einladungen für Kliem 1989; BISKF Klohr 140 Klohr, Marxisten in der DDR zum Dialog, pp. 15–16; BISKF Gysi 4 Stolpe to Gysi, 2 October 1989; PC Düsing Lutter, Klevenow, Analyse der Meinungen von Christen zum Dialog, February 1989, p. 10.
133 BISKF Kliem 74, 78, 91, 96, 124, 126 and 137; SAPMO-BArch DY 30/27216, pp. 6–128; BArch DO 4/1023, pp. 1250–1252; BISKF Gysi 3 and box "Originale"; PC Düsing and PC Scholze; series of articles in ELAB 55.1/343 and 389; *Navigator* 2, 27 January 1989, pp. 1, 3; Lutter 1985; Kroh and Naumann 1989; Lutter 1989e.
134 For instance BISKF Kliem 91 Kliem, Information über einen Diskussionsabend, 6 November 1986, and Kliem, Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit Herrn Karl Will aus Altenburg am 6.6.1984; UAL R 1399, pp. 30–32.
135 Examples in EZA 101/3302 W. Krusche to Lutter, 16 December 1988; interview with Susanne Höser, 29 August 2018; Thiede 1999, 95–98.
136 BISKF Kliem 84 Kliem, Information über ein Podiumsgespräch, June 1989.
137 BISKF Kliem 78 Heyde, Einige Erfahrungen aus Diskussionen mit Christen, [June 1988].
138 Information zur Bildung des Verbandes der Freidenker der DDR an 1. Sekretäre der Bezirksleitungen vom 22.12.1988 bzw. 9.1.1988, document II-8 reproduced in Groschopp and Müller 2013, 86.
139 BISKF Kaul 14; ELAB 55.1/343 epd Landesdienst Berlin Nr. 53 vom 15.3.1989, Kritik an Freidenker-Verbandsgründung in der DDR; see also Hoffmann 2000, 292–293.
140 Feiereis 1989a, 1989b, 1990; FKZE Feiereis.
141 BISKF Kaul 14 Untitled document on international contacts, p. 10; *Atheistische Forschungen* 2, pp. 10–12.
142 Groschopp and Müller 2013, documents 13, 14, 25, 26 and 42; "Initiative zur Bildung des Verbandes der Freidenker." *Berliner Zeitung* 12, 14–15 January 1989, pp. 1, 5; "Mitwirken an Veränderungen." *Berliner Zeitung* 252, 26 October 1989, p. 4; BISKF Klohr 140 Klohr to Bachmann, 6 January 1989.
143 BISKF Kliem 122 Handwritten notes, Leitung Problemrat, May (?) 1989; SAPMO-BArch DY 24/11713 Klohr/Lutter, Das Verhältnis des Verbandes der Freidenker zu Religion - Christen - Kirchen, p. 1.
144 BISKF Pacholik Handwritten notes, Leitung Problemrat, 17 February 1989; Klohr 1989c.
145 Rathmann 1990; Bezirksvorstand Rostock des Verbands der Freidenker in der DDR 1989 and 1990; BISKF Kaul without archive box 5. Themengruppe: "Das Absterben von Religion und Kirche in der DDR"; BISKF Klohr 310 Lucas, Forschungsabrechnung 1979; BISKF Klohr 311; Diederich 1997, 216.
146 BISKF Kliem 42, 127 and 137; BISKF Kliem 86 Jahresforschungsplan 1987; Zeugner 1988.

References

Bachmann, Sybille. 1991. "Zum Staat-Kirchen-Verhältnis und dem Miteinander von Christen und Marxisten in der DDR 1945–1990 (Referat an der Universität Würzburg)." Unpublished talk.

Bachmann, Sybille. 2007. Untitled talk, 15 May 2007.

Bahl, Heinrich. 1985. "Zu einigen Fragen und Ergebnissen der Zusammenarbeit von Theologen und Kommunisten im Bereich der Wissenschaft." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 505–508.

Bartsch, Manfred. 1977. "Der Ideologiecharakter und die Ideologiefunktion 'moderner' Auffassungen im Protestantismus, dargestellt an den Konzeptionen der

protestantischen Theologen H. Gollwitzer und D. Sölle (Thesen zur Dissertation A).” *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 10: 13–27.

Bezirksvorstand Rostock des Verbands der Freidenker in der DDR, ed. 1989. *Freidenker. Argumente, Aufgaben, Informationen.*

Bezirksvorstand Rostock des Verbands der Freidenker in der DDR, ed. 1990. *“… den Sinn des Menschen hat der Mensch geschaffen…”. Anregungen für die Gestaltung weltlicher Trauerfeiern.*

Billinger, Renate. 1990. “Christliche Kultur und Kunst in der DDR.” *Religionswissenschaft Forschungsbericht* 51: 5–64.

Bochenski, Joseph M. 1975. “Marxism-Leninism and religion.” In *Religion and Atheism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe*, edited by Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John W. Strong, 1–17. London/Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Bošnjak, Branko. 1975. “Marxism-Leninism and religion.” In *Religion and Atheism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe*, edited by Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John W. Strong, 18–36. London/Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Broda, Robert. 1982. “Sowjetische Gesellschaftswissenschaftler zu Problemen der Struktur des religiösen Bewußtseins (Literaturstudie).” AfG, Zentralstelle für philosophische Information und Dokumentation, *Thematische Information Philosophie* 6 (1): 1–48.

Brown, Stephen. 2010. *Von der Unzufriedenheit zum Widerspruch. Der Konziliare Prozess für Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und Bewahrung der Schöpfung als Wegbereiter der friedlichen Revolution in der DDR*. Frankfurt am Main: Otto Lembeck.

Bubík, Tomáš, David Václavík and Atko Remmel. 2020. “Nonreligion in the CEE region. Some remarks.” In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe. The Development of Secularity and Nonreligion*, edited by Tomáš Bubík, Atko Remmel and David Václavík, 310–324. London/New York: Routledge.

de Margerie, Agathe. 2022. “Blurring the lines between academic debate, theological enterprise, and political engagement: The early years of the Austrian *Paulus-Gesellschaft* and its advocacy for ‘dialogue’ in the late 1960s.” In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 197–216. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

Diederich, Georg. 1997. “Die staatlich erzwungene Einführung atheistischer Riten in der DDR am Beispiel des Bezirkes Rostock.” In *Religiöses Brauchtum und kirchliches Leben im Alltag der DDR - zwischen Anfechtung und Behauptung. Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung*, vol. VI, edited by Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 195–217. Schwerin.

Dohle, Horst, Wolfgang Kleinig and Hans-Günther Stieler. 1988. “Vorbemerkung der Herausgeber.” *Beiträge zur Theorie und Geschichte der Religion und des Atheismus* 1: IV–VIII.

Dohle, Horst. 1997. “… damit wir nicht glauben, die Zukunft sei bloß die Verlängerung der Gegenwart.” *Berliner LeseZeichen* 6. https://berlingeschichte.de/lesezei/blz97_06/text03.htm.

Düsing, Manfred. 1980. “Grundzüge der Auseinandersetzung der KPD mit dem ‘religiösen Sozialismus’ und ihre Aktualität für die Einbeziehung christlicher Bürger in die Gestaltung der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft.” *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 24: 35–46.

Düsing, Manfred. 1989. “Wissenschaft und Glaube - Anmerkungen zum Thema ‘Geistige Gemeinsamkeiten’.” *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 113–119.

Engels, Frederick. 1886 (1946). *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Feiereis, Konrad. 1989a. "Das Freidenkertum - ein Problem für Christen?" *Tag des Herrn* 13, 2 April 1989, p. 6.

Feiereis, Konrad. 1989b. "Das Freidenkertum - ein Problem für Christen?" *Tag des Herrn* 15, 16 April 1989, p. 6.

Feiereis, Konrad. 1989c. "Zusammenleben und Kooperation von Christen und Marxisten in der Gesellschaft." *Die Christenlehre* 42 (*5*): 141–152.

Feiereis, Konrad. 1990. "Das gemeinsame europäische Haus. Bereiche der Zusammenarbeit zwischen Ost- und Westeuropa." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 38 (*5*): 411–421.

Feiereis, Konrad. 1995a. "Katholische Theologie in der DDR - Chance, Grenze, Selbstverständnis." *Hochschule Ost* 4 (4): 46–56.

Feiereis, Konrad. 1995b. "Weltanschauliche Strukturen in der DDR und die Folgen für die Existenz der katholischen Christen." In *Materialien der Enquete Kommission "Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland"*, tome VI, 1: *Rolle und Selbstverständnis der Kirchen in den verschiedenen Phasen der SED-Diktatur*, edited by Deutscher Bundestag, 583–614. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Feiereis, Konrad. 2001. "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Dialogs aus der Sicht eines katholischen Theologen." *Utopie kreativ* 129/130: 709–721.

Freese, Karl. 1989. "Die Theologiestudenten von heute - kirchliche Amtsträger von morgen. Über die Verantwortung der Mitarbeiter des MLG in ihrer Arbeit mit den Theologiestudenten." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 120–121.

Fritzsche, Helmut. 1990. "Dialog und Verständigung. Erwägungen zu einer modernen Verständigungskultur." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 38 (*5*): 401–410.

Fromm, Eberhard, Alfred Loesdau and Ulla Plener, ed. 1981. *Denken gegen die Zeit. Die geistige Krise des Imperialismus*. Berlin: Dietz.

Funk, Uwe. 1994. "Regionalisierung als interne Differenzierung der DDR-Kirchenpolitik." In *Staat-Kirche-Beziehungen in der DDR und anderen ehemals realsozialistischen Ländern 1945 bis 1989*, edited by Joachim Heise, 71–79. Berlin: Evangelische Akademie Berlin-Brandenburg.

Groschopp, Horst and Eckhard Müller. 2013. *Letzter Versuch einer Offensive: Der Verband der Freidenker der DDR (1988–1990). Ein dokumentarisches Lesebuch*. Aschaffenburg: Alibri Verlag.

Guigo-Patzelt, Eva. 2022. "'An inner-marxist dialogue on the dialogue': Stumbling blocks in East German Marxist scholars' exchange with christians." In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 135–150. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

Guigo-Patzelt, Eva. 2024. "The East German Association of freethinkers (1988–1991), 'last ideological offensive' and ultimate troublemaker to the political system." In *The Non-Religious and the State: Choices and Frameworks for Seculars from the Age of Revolution to the Current Day*, edited by Jeffrey Tyssens, Niels de Nutte and Stefan Schröder, 357-372. Berlin: de Gruyter.

[Güstrow research group]. 1988. "Ergebnisse unserer Forschung 1986–1988 (Aug.)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 58: 496–510.

Hodovský, Ivan. 1989. "Zum Begriff der Weltanschauung in den Arbeiten von Karl Marx." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 14–20.

Hoffmann, Alfred. 2000. *Mit Gott einfach fertig: Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Leipzig: Benno-Verlag.

Hollitscher, Walter. 1965. "Ein Dialog zwischen Marxismus und Christentum." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 13 (9): 1123–1131.

Junick, Klaus. 1976. *Zum Humanismus im Spätwerk von Emil Fuchs und in seinem Kampf für Frieden und Sozialismus an der Seite der Arbeiterklasse (1949–1971)*. Dissertation A thesis, Karl Marx University Leipzig.

Junick, Klaus. 1977. "Zu Leistung und Grenze von Emil Fuchs (1874–1971)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 9: 24–37.

Kalb, Hermann. 1987. "Lieber Herr Professor Dr. Klohr." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 40: 7–8.

Kaul, Wolfgang and Gerhard Peine. 1975. "Zur weltanschaulich-atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung im mlG." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 23 (9): 1221–1225.

Kleinig, Wolfgang. 1987a. "Genesis und aktuelle Diskussion des Marx'schen Satzes 'Religion ist Opium des Volks'." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 40: 46–57.

Kleinig, Wolfgang. 1987b. "Das Problem der Zusammenarbeit von Marxisten und Christen - wesentlicher Aspekt in der theoretischen Arbeit Olof Klohrs." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 41: 22–26.

Kleinig, Wolfgang. 1988a. "Erörterung des Marxschen Satzes Religion 'ist Opium des Volks' im Interesse der Herstellung einer breiten Vernunftkoalition." *Beiträge zur Theorie und Geschichte der Religion und des Atheismus* 1: 1–13.

Kleinig, Wolfgang. 1988b. "Zum Marxschen Religionsverständnis (Erörterung eines Satzes von der Religion als Opium des Volkes im Interesse der Herstellung einer breiten Vernunftkoalition)." *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität Berlin* 37 (9): 893–900.

Kliem, Wolfgang. 1986. "Aktuelle Entwicklungen im Engagement christlicher Kirchen und anderer christlicher Kräfte für Frieden, Abrüstung und Entspannung." *Thematische Information und Dokumentation*, B series 59: 7–36.

Kliem, Wolfgang. 1987a. *Es geht ums Leben - Gedanken zum sozialistischen Humanismus*. Berlin: Dietz.

Kliem, Wolfgang. 1987b. "Bemerkungen zum Gegenstand des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 41: 6–15.

Kliem, Wolfgang. 1989. "Zur Rolle christlich-religiöser Visionen in den Kämpfen unserer Zeit." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 60: 580–590.

Klohr, Olof. 1965. "Neue Tendenzen im Katholizismus?" *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 13 (9): 1120–1123.

Klohr, Olof. 1975. "Das Absterben von Religion und Kirche im Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der weltanschaulich-atheistischen Bildung und Erziehung." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/16: 1–41.

Klohr, Olof and Bernd Stoppe. 1977 (?). "Zur bürgerlichen Kritik des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus". *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/4: 1–94.

Klohr, Olof. 1980. "Die Rolle der Religion in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft, Thesen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 22: 15–18.

Klohr, Olof. 1984. "Zu politischen und weltanschaulichen Problemen der Zusammenarbeit von Marxisten und Christen." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/30: 4–61.

Klohr, Olof. 1985. "Was könnte und was sollte der Dialog zwischen Marxisten und Gläubigen leisten?" *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 306–309.

Klohr, Olof. 1988. "Der Vatikan, die Katholiken und der Dialog zwischen Marxisten und katholischen Christen." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 45: 5–31.
Klohr, Olof. 1989a. "Was hat der Dialog zwischen Marxisten und Christen geleistet?" *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 21–23.
Klohr, Olof. 1989b. "Wandlungen im Verhältnis des Marxismus zu Religion, Kirchen und Christen." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 48: 21–31.
Klohr, Olof. 1989c. "Warum heute Verband der Freidenker?" *Freidenker. Argumente, Aufgaben, Informationen* 1: 7–13.
Kónya, Istvan. 1985. "Religionspolitik und Kirchenpolitik im Sozialismus." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 300–305.
Kónya, Istvan. 1989. "Die Veränderung des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus in der Gegenwart." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 60: 613–617.
Krayer, Roland and Peter Winzeler. 1988. "Marxisten und Christen auf dem Weg zur Kooperation." *Weißenseer Blätter* 4: 22–24.
Kriśtov, K. 1985. "Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Marxisten und Gläubigen beim Aufbau des Sozialismus in der VR Bulgarien." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 439–443.
Kroh, Peter. 1987. "Arbeiten wir, um zu leben, oder leben wir, um zu arbeiten - Anmerkungen zu einem Streitpunkt zwischen Marxismus-Leninismus und Religion." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 51: 33–49.
Kroh, Peter. 1988. "Geistige Gemeinsamkeiten von Marxisten und Christen - ideengeschichtliche und philosophische Hintergründe." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 58: 474–475.
Kroh, Peter. 1989. "Geistige Gemeinsamkeiten von Marxisten und Christen - ideengeschichtliche und philosophische Hintergründe." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 96–102.
Kroh, Peter and Christa Naumann. 1989. "Christen und Kirchen in den politischen und geistigen Kämpfen unserer Zeit." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 37 (5): 452–454.
Krusche, Hans-Martin. 2002. *Pfarrer in der DDR. Gespräche über Kirche und Politik*. Berlin: Verlag am Park.
Lange, Werner. 1985. "Weltanschaulich-theoretische Probleme der Entwicklung sozialistischer Wertvorstellungen bei Gläubigen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 456–459.
Lehnhardt, Viola. 1985. "Zu einigen theoretischen Fragen der Analyse der Bewußtseinsentwicklung Gläubiger im Sozialismus." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 397–399.
Leist, S. 1977. "Die Rolle der Frau in der ökumenischen Diskussion (Thesen zur Diplomarbeit)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 10: 28–32.
Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich. 1909 (1973). "The attitude of the workers' party to religion." In *Lenin Collected Works* vol. 15, 402–413. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
Lutter, Hans. 1980. "Die Hinwendung der Christen zum Sozialismus - eine Gesetzmäßigkeit des historischen Fortschritts. Thesen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 22: 1–4.
Lutter, Hans. 1982. "Werte und Religion." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 30: 1–25.
Lutter, Hans. 1983. "Sozialistischer Staat und Evangelische Kirche in der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 36: 308–326.
Lutter, Hans. 1985. "Lernprozeß auf beiden Seiten." *Weißenseer Blätter* 5: 24–28.
Lutter, Hans. 1986a. "Theorie und Praxis des wissenschaftlichen Atheismus." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 49: 193–212.

Lutter, Hans. 1986b. "Karl Marx zur 'Religion überhaupt'." *Weißenseer Blätter* 4: 19–25.
Lutter, Hans and Gerhard Winter. 1987. "Evangelische Theologie in der DDR zur Zukunft von Religion und Kirche in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft - eine kritische Analyse." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 54: 199–224.
Lutter, Hans. 1988a. "Auf bewährtem Wege weiter voran." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 57: 396–406.
Lutter, Hans. 1988b. "Christen und Kirchen in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 58: 478.
Lutter, Hans. 1989a. "Ursachen und Bedingungen für Religion im Sozialismus." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 48: 12–20.
Lutter, Hans. 1989b. "Evangelische Christen und Kirchen in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 1–13.
Lutter, Hans. 1989c. "Schlußwort." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 143–144.
Lutter, Hans. 1989d. "Vertrauensvoller Dialog mit Gläubigen." In *Freidenker. Dokumente und Informationen*, edited by Zentralvorstand des VdF der DDR and Rudolf Bensel, 32–33. Leipzig: Urania-Verlag.
Lutter, Hans. 1989e. "Evangelische Christen und Kirchen in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft der DDR." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 37 (5): 385–393.
Lutter, Hans. 1994a. "Marxismus - Atheismus - Religionskritik." *Berliner Dialog-Hefte* 5 (1–4): 2–17.
Lutter, Hans. 1994b. "Erinnerung an Olof Klohr." *Neues Deutschland* 28 October 1994.
Lutter, Hans. 2001. "Zur Geschichte des Atheismus in der DDR." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 43 (2): 72–83.
Machovec, Milan. 2001. "Den Andersdenkenden entdämonisieren. Gespräch mit Simone Thiede." *Utopie kreativ* 129/130: 695–708.
Marx, Karl. 1844 (1970). "A *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introductio*n." In Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"*, translated by Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley, edited by Joseph O'Malley, 129–142. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Matějka, Ondřej. 2011. "Between the academy and power. Czech Marxist sociology of religion (1954–1970)." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East Europe*, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 107–132. Munich: Oldenbourg.
Militärakademie "Friedrich Engels", ed. 1984. *Die Philosophie des Friedens im Kampf gegen die Ideologie des Krieges*. Berlin: Dietz.
Misov, N. 1985. "Religion und Atheismus, Ideologie und Politik." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 524–530.
Naumann, Christa. 1979. "Die Annäherung der Standpunkte zwischen der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche und den protestantischen Kirchen in der DDR zum Wirken der Kirche in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 17: 27–46.
Naumann, Christa, ed. 1984. "Standpunkte evangelischer Christen in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zur Zusammenarbeit von Kommunisten und Christen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 40: 548–594.
Nešpor, Zdeněk R. 2011. "Czech sociology of religion under the communist regime 1948–1989." In *Sociology and Ethnography in East-Central and South-East*

Europe, edited by Ulf Brunnbauer, Claudia Kraft and Martin Schulze Wessel, 59–86. Munich: Oldenbourg.

Okunowski, Rainer. 1983. "Zu einigen philosophischen und methodologischen Fragen der Religionswissenschaft." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 32: 81–90.

Okunowski, Rainer. 1989. "Der evangelische Pfarrer in der DDR - historische Voraussetzungen und gegenwärtige Situation (Thesen zur Dissertation I)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 61: 52–69.

Pacholik, Udo. 1989. "Ökonomischer Fortschritt und menschliche Entwicklung aus der Sicht der Enzyklika 'Sollicitudo rei socialis' vom 30.12.1987." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 36–42.

Pałubicki, Władysław. 1985. "Die Toleranz als Voraussetzung der erfolgreichen Zusammenarbeit von Gläubigen und Nichtgläubigen in der VR Polen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 537–540.

Peine, Gerhard. 1987. "Zu einigen katholischen Auffassungen über das Verhältnis von wissenschaftlich-technischem Fortschritt und Umwelt." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 40: 64–69.

Pollack, Detlef. 1994. *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft: Zum Wandel der gesellschaftlichen Lage der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.

Poór, Jozsef. 1980a. "Einige allgemeine Hypothesen über die ungarische protestantische 'Diensttheologie', Resümee." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 22: 13–14.

Poór, Jozsef. 1980b. "Einige allgemeine Arbeitshypothesen auf Grund des Studiums der ungarischen protestantischen 'Dienst-Theologie'." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 24: 22–28.

Poór, Jozsef. 1985. "Einige theoretische Fragen des protestantisch-marxistischen Dialogs in Ungarn." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 464–469.

Radić, Radmila. 2022. "The Yugoslav authorities and the Christian-Marxist dialogue of the late sixties and early seventies." In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 71–93. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

Ramšak, Jure, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, ed. 2022a. *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

Ramšak, Jure, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek. 2022b. "Introduction." In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 5–17. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

Rathmann, Hans. 1990. "Bestattungskultur und Trauerarbeit. Fachverband für weltliche Bestattungs- und Trauerkultur im VdF gegründet. Interview mit Dr. Wolfgang Kaul." *Freidenker Journal* 3: 25–26.

Režek, Mateja. 2022. "Searching for a path to dialogue between Christianity and Marxism in early socialist Slovenia." In *Christian Modernity and Marxist Secularism in East Central Europe: Between Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Jure Ramšak, Gašper Mithans and Mateja Režek, 43–55. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

Robbe, Martin. 1965. "Religionskritik im marxistisch-christlichen Dialog." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 13 (10–11): 1332–1337.

Robbe, Martin. 1971. "Ideologische Aspekte des antiimperialistischen Bündnisses von Marxisten und Christen." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 19 (2): 176–192.

Robbe, Martin. 1976. "Die Haltung der Kommunisten zur Religion und zu ihrer Zusammenarbeit mit Gläubigen im Kampf für den gesellschaftlichen Fortschritt." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/9: 5–42.

Rupprecht, Frank. 1966. "Weltanschauung und Politik im Dialog zwischen katholischem Christentum und Marxismus." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 14 (8): 931–944.

Schäfer, Bernd. 1997. "Die KPD/SED und ihr Umgang mit religiösem Brauchtum und kirchlichem Leben im Alltag von SBZ und DDR - unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Mecklenburg-Vorpommerns bzw. der ehemaligen drei Nordbezirke." In *Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung,* volume VI: *Zur Arbeit der Enquete-Kommission: "Leben in der DDR. Leben nach 1989 – Aufarbeitung und Versöhnung". Expertisen und Forschungsstudien zum Thema "Kultur und religiöses Brauchtum"*, edited by Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 158–194. Schwerin.

Scholze, Jürgen. 1978. "Zur Kritik gegenwärtiger protestantisch-theologischer und kirchlicher Interpretationen des Verhältnisses Mensch-Technik." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 12: 1–38.

Scholze, Jürgen. 1989. "Zur Rezeption des konziliaren Prozesses für Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und Bewahrung der Schöpfung in den christlichen Kirchen, Gemeinschaften und Organisationen in der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 66–71.

Senge, Angelika. 1983. *Marxismus als atheistische Weltanschauung: Zum Stellenwert des Atheismus im Gefüge marxistischen Denkens*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.

Smolkin, Victoria. 2018. *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty. A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Stiehler, Gottfried and Wolfgang Kleinig. 1988. "Materialismus - Religion - Engagement für Frieden und Fortschritt." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 36 (9): 807–816.

Stoppe, Bernd. 1981. *Die Religionsauffassung von Karl Marx und Kritik ihrer theologischen Kritik*. Dissertation A thesis, Karl Marx University Leipzig.

Tanalski, D. 1989. "Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus und Glauben in der sozialistischen Kultur der Zukunft." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 60–62.

Thiede, Simone. 1999. *Der Dialog zwischen Religionen und säkularen Weltanschauungen: Dargestellt am Beispiel des christlich-marxistischen Dialogs in der DDR*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Thielicke, Heinz. 1983. "Der Marxsche Atheismus - nur politisches oder weltanschauliches Grundprinzip? Über Marx' Weg zum wissenschaftlichen Atheismus." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus* 1/23: 4–61.

Timofejev, V. D. 1980. "Die Erhöhung der sozialen Aktivität der Gläubigen als Faktor der Überwindung der Religiosität." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 24: 1–10.

Timofejew, V. D. 1989. "Aktuelle Fragen der wissenschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung mit Religion, Kirche und Gläubigen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 58–59.

Tóth, Heléna. 2020. "Dialogue as a strategy of struggle: Religious politics in East Germany, 1957–1968." *Contemporary European History* 29: 171–186.

Tóth, Heléna and Todd H. Weir. 2020. "Religion and socialism in the long 1960s: From antithesis to dialogue in Eastern and Western Europe." *Contemporary European History* 29: 127–138.

Triska, M. 1981. "Zur Problematik des Friedens und des Kampfes für den Frieden in der Tätigkeit der christlichen Kirchen im heutigen Europa und in der CSSR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 25: 23–33.

Velikovič, L. N. 1985. "Probleme des Kampfes für den Frieden im Dialog von Marxisten und Christen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 294–299.
Volland, Hannelore. 1987. "Bericht über die III. Tagung der internationalen Konferenz der systematischen Theologen aus den sozialistischen Ländern Europas." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 51: 24–32.
Volland, Hannelore. 1989. "Evangelische Theologie zum Verhältnis von Mensch und Natur." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 138–140.
Welsch, Fritz. 1989. "Erfahrungen und Prinzipien des Dialogs zwischen Marxisten und Christen." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 91–95.
Winter, Gerhard. 1983. "'Krise der Religion' - ein Beitrag zur Diskussion." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 36: 327–342.
Winter, Gerhard. 1987. "Perspektiven und Perspektivlosigkeit der Religion (Ein Beitrag zur marxistisch-leninistischen Theorie von der Überwindung der Religion)." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 52: 60–127.
Winter, Gerhard. 1989a. "Religion in den Wechselbeziehungen von Politik und Weltanschauung: Ein Essay." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* 63: 134–171.
Winter, Gerhard. 1989b. "Zur Rezeption des Darmstädter Wortes in den evangelischen Kirchen der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 79–84.
Zeugner, Petra. 1988. "Aufbau und Gestaltung des Sozialismus in einem Gebiet mit mehrheitlich katholischer Bevölkerung (Eichsfeld)." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 45: 39–50.
Zeugner, Petra. 1989. "Einige Erfahrungen und Probleme beim Aufbau des Sozialismus im Eichsfeld - in einem Gebiet der DDR mit mehrheitlich katholischer Bevölkerung." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 123–125.
Zöllner, Norbert. 1989. "Funktionen von Religion im Sozialismus. Zu Standpunkten innerkirchlicher Diskussion." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 130–133.

Conclusion

The German reunification put an end to the development of scientific atheism. During the peaceful revolution, its specialists thought about reorganising the network, renamed their groups and journals and tried to establish new contacts or intensify exchanges with West German colleagues and with representatives of religions. The year 1990 was particularly rich in meetings between Marxist scholars and Christians.[1] The rapprochement was also expressed in the form of psychological and even spiritual support offered by certain Christian friends to Marxist academics facing an uncertain future.[2] The use of religious language in the letters from this period is striking, as if the imaginary language of the Bible was the best way of expressing the experiences of former scientific atheists. This phenomenon was not unique to them; Droit highlighted the frequent use of religious vocabulary in 1989 (Droit 2019). The dismissal of all teachers of Marxism-Leninism, a political decision of 23 May 1990, meant that the vast majority of former specialists in scientific atheism had to fight for their professional and material survival. Olof Klohr, Hans Lutter and Wolfgang Kliem went into early retirement. Many of their younger colleagues, willingly or unwillingly, gave up their academic careers as well as their work on religious subjects and atheism. Others, such as Wolfgang Kleinig, were examples of how careers could continue after the turning point of 1990. Jürgen Scholze and Manfred Düsing found jobs in institutions belonging to the Protestant Church. Some personal links remained from the old network of scientific atheists, and a Society for the Promotion of Christian-Marxist Dialogue (*Gesellschaft zur Förderung des christlich-marxistischen Dialogs*) was founded by Hans Lutter.[3] A number of former scientific atheists tried to highlight the value of their life's work, their personal commitment to dialogue before 1990, or the evolution of the entire discipline in this direction.[4]

Indeed, the content of scientific atheism in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) changed considerably over the three decades of its existence. From frontal opposition aimed at denigrating religious positions and believers, scientific atheism as a discipline shifted towards a more benevolent view, first under the same label and then, in the last phase of its existence, attempting to transform itself into a "Marxist-Leninist religious science"

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469322-9

(*marxistisch-leninistische Religionswissenschaft*). Many Marxist researchers became involved in dialogue between Christians and Marxists in the 1980s and maintained relations with certain ecclesial circles, particularly Protestants. In 1990, East German scientific atheism was not at the end of its tether. A theoretical renewal had begun, the debate had never been so lively and a handover was underway, despite persistent recruitment difficulties. It was in the midst of their work that the scientific atheists were surprised by the end of the regime. Contrary to widespread opinion in historiography (Pollack 1994, 323; Kowalczuk 1995; Sperlich 2002, 9), at least the scholars whose work has been studied here did experience and express doubts and were capable, to a greater or lesser extent, of stimulating a theoretical development specific to their discipline. Of course, the renewal of scientific atheism was not without references to the work of Marx and Engels, and academics defended themselves against "pretending that we have discovered something new" (Lutter 1987, 33). However, the words of the founding fathers gave rise to many interpretations, and this overall framework did not prevent all new ideas on principle.

One of the most visible consequences of the changes undergone by scientific atheism was the evolution of research themes and the very gradual abandonment of the configuration of conflict in the sense of Georg Simmel (Simmel 1908). From highly combative publications in the 1950s and 1960s, the authors moved on to highly empirical and descriptive studies, as well as to reflections on cooperation and ultimately dialogue with believers. This was not without many misgivings and ambivalences. Competition, aimed at supplanting the other "world-view" by different means, including involvement in the Freethinkers' Association, was the end point of this abruptly interrupted history. With the exception of Jürgen Scholze, there was no documented abandonment of the personal atheistic convictions of the discipline's proponents. What remained of the discipline as atheism, as a particular, historically situated form of irreligion?

Scientific atheism on atheism, indifference and religion

As the team led by Wohlrab-Sahr pointed out, the "agnostic spirituality" (*agnostische Spiritualität*) so widespread in the new German *Länder* developed for a long time by confronting atheism as propagated in the GDR (Wohlrab-Sahr, Karstein and Schaumburg 2005, 172). Over and above this indirect challenge, the scientific atheism, which the present study has endeavoured to define more precisely, calls for three comments.

The first question is whether this form of atheism left any "positive" contribution beyond the negation contained in its very name. According to Smolkin, this was the main challenge facing scientific atheism in the USSR. But she concluded that it had failed, that it was incapable of filling the void left by religious beliefs by offering convincing answers to the existential questions posed by the population (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014). The same need was

felt by representatives of the discipline in the GDR. Hans Lutter invoked it to justify the change of name of his research group and even stated in 1994: "At that time, we also asked ourselves the question of the possibility of transcendence in Marxism, but were not yet able to deal with it theoretically" (Lutter 1994a, 13). This statement is not borne out by the archives accessible today. Some scientific atheists did try to improve the "substitution rites", but only belatedly, partially and without ever making it a priority. Similarly, the elaboration of the values of socialist society and of the new Man was ultimately more a matter for Marxist-Leninist ethics – a neighbouring but distinct field in which the opposition between religion and atheism had largely been overcome.

The challenge of indifference is precisely the second area on which East German scientific atheism sheds light as a form of irreligion. The phenomenon was massive in the GDR, and it was the specialists in scientific atheism who noted and deplored it. The end of the regime did not lead to a reversal of the trend, as far as we can tell, since the exploration of different forms of non-belief is still in its infancy. However, this "practical atheism of indifference" (*praktischer Atheismus der Gleichgültigkeit*, Richard Schröder quoted in Thiede 1999, 62) soon found its way into the work of scientific atheism as a third term in the conflict between atheism and religion and changed the way it was articulated. As Hans Lutter put it in a public talk in 1986:

> the ideologically indifferent is ambiguous, unpredictable and therefore an insecure partner. The ideologically stable, yet other [from ourselves] may be complicated, but potentially understandable and therefore potentially also a secure ally […] [this] includes the question of whether Marxists and Christians must not downright be substantially good allies.[5]

Their alliance was first and foremost a political one, but it was also an alliance against indifference. In a society where religion and atheism were tending to become indifferent to an ever-growing proportion of the population, the representatives of atheism were among those who maintained the link. This was firstly done through combat, which was also a form of socialisation (*Vergesellschaftung,* Simmel), and finally through dialogue. In 1989–1990, they and their Christian partners were still attesting to each other's importance in a society in the throes of change. Davie raised the question: "Why should mainstream sociology, or indeed any other discipline, take seriously a phenomenon which is reputedly disappearing as the modernization process takes its inevitable course?" (Davie 2007, 4). For the scientific atheists, it was a question of nothing less than the success of their project for a socialist society, undermined by the indifferent. In this respect, their actions reveal that the GDR never succeeded in breaking out of the frameworks inherited from a religious world and always needed citizens who believed in something, preferably Marxism-Leninism, if not something else, be it God or Jesus.

In this respect, the experience of scientific atheism illustrates the difficulty of developing a science of irreligion that is not magnetised by religion and does not define its object solely by what it is not (on this question, see for instance, Quack, Schuh and Kind 2020).

This insight about the GDR as a regime and as a project goes hand in hand with a question that challenges researchers in the social sciences of religion independently of their context, namely, the definition of religion. At the end of the 1980s, the question of how to grasp religion was once again the subject of intense debate. Nevertheless, there were specific features to this approach in the context of East German scientific atheism. Hoffmann has described them as "the 'de-subjectivisation' of the Christian as a Christian", a phenomenon that this Catholic theologian judged severely (Hoffmann 2000, 78). According to him, it meant "Marxists and Christians met in an area where God was not discussed", in a "quasi religionless field", in defiance of what, in Hoffmann's eyes, was characteristic of believers (Hoffmann 2000, 297). The relevance, in the context of scientific atheism, of the question of what was peculiar to Christianity or what made it specific was a matter of debate among specialists. For researchers who declared themselves to be atheists and were responsible for promoting the discipline of scientific atheism, the "reduction of the divine to the human" (Gabriel Le Bras quoted in Mary 2006, 17) was a starting point, fully assumed and recalled by Hans Lutter after the regime's end (Lutter 1994a). One may doubt if it could have been otherwise. The question of whether and to what extent a professional from a non-religious, non-confessional discipline or institution is prepared and willing to engage in a debate on God is not specific to the GDR and constitutes a choice of principle.

The dominant definition of the religious in East German scientific atheism was therefore not based on the religious dimension, nor on institutions, rites or tradition; it was eminently political. In the 1960s, it took the form of an emphasised statistical correlation between religion and reactionary political attitudes. Subsequently, every religious movement was scrutinised from the angle of its political consequences, and religion was understood as one possible motivation, among others, as a source of values for life in society. Cooperation, exclusively in the political sphere, could be envisaged once phenomena such as liberation theology had proved, in the eyes of Marxist researchers, that religion did not exclude left-wing political commitment. This observation about East German authors is not new. Engelien, Schlosser and Hoffmann have already stressed that "Marxism-Leninism interprets religion as a political phenomenon" (Schlosser 1970, 1). However, Schlosser was quick to prefer a philosophical approach, while the other two authors questioned the reality of this observation beyond the rhetoric (Hoffmann 2000, 243–244; Engelien 1982, 136, 138). At the end of the analysis presented here, however, this approach proves to be consistent with the reversals and ambiguities in scientific atheism. What remains is in fact an "ideological" discipline, in the East German sense; that is to say, for which the "historical

mission of the working class" constituted the fundamental value and the criterion for separating the adjuvants and (potential) allies from the adversaries. In this sense, scientific atheism was above all political. For a political party that claimed to pursue a scientific policy, this did not mean contradiction or reduction in its value as a science.

As a form of irreligion, scientific atheism draws attention to a third characteristic aspect. This is its abandonment of an aggressive attitude towards the forms of religious life with which it had to deal. Its capacity for dialogue may be judged to have been a very limited one, both in practice and because of its perhaps reductive vision of religion. The fact remains that scientific atheism, in its final phase, was less militant than certain forms of atheism that have developed since. In the typology of atheisms proposed by Vainio and Visala, it could be placed in the category of philosophical atheism, which seeks and values arguments (Vainio and Visala 2015). The "new atheism" that caused such a stir at the beginning of the following century tended, on the contrary, to present Christians as either backward or hypocritical, as Löffler summed up (Löffler 2010). At the same 2008 colloquium on the "new atheism", Kreiner noted what closely resembled a return to conflict in Simmel's sense, namely "the expectation that in the battle between faith and unbelief, only one can ultimately leave the court as the winner and that the decision must finally be made - the sooner, the better" (Kreiner 2010, 18; see also Zenk 2013). Dialogue between believers and non-believers often remains a challenge for both sides. Some non-believers have also expressed the impression that for Christians, "a dialogue is only successful if the atheist grovels. And if he observes the rules for a dialogue, which of course only the theologian can establish" (Krebs 2012, 6).

A specific East German path for scientific atheism

The trajectory from conflict to dialogue described by scientific atheism in the GDR was not common to the discipline within the Soviet Bloc. A transnational history of communist experts on religion still remains to be written. The archives consulted offer glimpses from the point of view of the GDR, for instance, on the colloquia organised within the Eastern Bloc in the 1960s; they suggest a divergence as to whether the work should focus on religion or make room for atheism. In the 1970s and 1980s, East German scientific atheists found other ways of engaging in international exchanges. While retracing the growing differences between East German researchers and their Soviet counterparts, it became clear that the reference to the USSR, which was rarely used to establish the discipline in the GDR, was considered to be of little value. Over the three decades of its existence, East German atheism has taken a different trajectory from its Soviet counterpart. The forces at work and the issues at stake must also be seen in the context of East German history.

As in neighbouring countries, East German scientific atheists made efforts to become part of and gain influence over a range of discourses and measures

that could influence the atheisation of society. This included through their students, colleagues and the population in counselling decision-makers, as the regime's experts on the topic, and within the Freethinkers' Association. Parallels can be drawn with other communist-ruled countries or communist movements. Compared to the Soviet Union, for instance, the GDR lacked an efficient "atheist establishment" (Smolkin 2018). They had no League of the Militant Godless to draw on, and the systematic use of Urania – the Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge – for atheist purposes could not be established. Compared to Czechoslovakia, East German scholars never directly engaged in politics. What was more, it has to be said that, throughout the three decades of its existence in the GDR, there were many persistent difficulties in establishing and developing the discipline. It never reached such comfortable positions as in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia or elsewhere; there was never an institute of scientific atheism, let alone several. The problems of "cadres" run like a red thread throughout its entire life. This widespread problem in the GDR was compounded by a lack of interest and even particular resistance in a number of higher education establishments. The indifference to religious and atheist phenomena among university colleagues and decision-makers was an obstacle that could not be overcome.

In academia, scientific atheism had difficulty finding its place and breaking out of its isolation. Initially a sub-discipline of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, it never succeeded in forging genuine links with the neighbouring fields of scientific communism and political economy, nor in becoming part of a lineage and enriching itself with a historical dimension; nor even in being accepted as a relevant issue for other sub-disciplines of Marxism-Leninism, such as ethics. It is true that the subordination of atheism to the political struggle, a principle enunciated by Lenin and regularly recalled, did not make it easy to spotlight its intrinsic value. However, as Portier has pointed out, "for a discipline to assert itself beyond its field, its object of study must appear decisive in the understanding of social facts" (Portier 2018, 223). On the whole, this must be called a failure in the GDR. Opening up to other cultural areas – Latin America, the Middle East and, to a much lesser extent, Asia, with Catholicism and Islam – was more successful. This cooperation did not, however, consolidate the positions of scientific atheism, especially as every scholar could leave the specialisation and return to dialectical and historical materialism more generally.

In the face of resistance from the academic world, the State Secretariat and later the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education proved powerless, and even the injunctions of the Politburo of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) were insufficient. In the GDR, scientific atheism enjoyed two periods of strong political support, in 1963–1964 and 1972–1973. The 1972 Politburo resolution provided support and legitimacy for the entire subsequent development of the discipline. At the same time, they were insufficient, especially as scientific atheism in the GDR did not benefit from regular reminders as it did in the Soviet Union. As soon as political support waned, internal opposition within the university took over again. The discipline was

unable to expand without massive political support, with the result that the objectives set out in 1973 were never achieved.

Scientific atheism obviously did not count for enough in the eyes of SED officials. The most systematic and well-thought-out use was made of it during the time of the Jena chair, at least according to the current state of the archives. It was at this time that Olof Klohr was asked to be part of a commission at the national level and worked with the regional leadership of the SED. In the 1980s, Wolfgang Kliem and fellow historians at the Academy of Social Sciences were preparing reports and discussion papers for the Central Committee. This activity was more episodic than influential on policy.

The scientific atheists did not withdraw into their research but ended up establishing themselves as a group with a particular political agenda. They were part of the internal dissension within the SED at the end of the regime over the policy to be followed in relation to the Churches. There is still much debate among researchers about what kept the GDR afloat for so long and then precipitated its downfall. The analysis of the last years of scientific atheism shed light on the "1989 moment" in its own way. It confirmed Sabrow's interpretation that there was a "dissolution of the socialist discourse community" and that a common "imaginary world" cracked. This was what he called a "dictatorship by consensus" (*Konsensdiktatur*, Sabrow 1999, 97). Mary Fulbrook characterised the Honecker era as one of "passive conformity", seen as "an acceptable compromise if outright ideological commitment was unattainable" and ultimately as "the collapse of the will to rule" (Fulbrook 1995, 5). The same "impression of impotence" of a "managerial socialism that abandons the idea of directing processes and people" has been highlighted by Droit (2009, 208). Zwahr criticised its "lack of momentum" and "its long hollowed-out vision of the future" (Zwahr 1994, 555, 557), and Goeckel spoke of a "lazy monopolist" incapable both of achieving its objectives and of changing them (Goeckel 1993, 180).

In this atmosphere of the end of the reign, the small group of scientific atheists, who could not be suspected of dissidence, still had visions for the future: A different future, in a State that was certainly not pluralist but where the Churches and dialogue would have their place. In their specialist field, these SED "ideologists" were beginning to reflect on the treatment of minorities and to reconsider the State as separate from religions. The Association of Freethinkers was changing the regime itself (Guigo-Patzelt 2024). The ideas of the advocates of scientific atheism, or of the very recent Marxist "religious science", were not heard; the long habit of reflecting internally and refraining from publishing did not help. What remains and what has been valued, often without openly saying so, were some of the scientific atheists' sociological results on Church membership and secularisation in the GDR.

Quoted archives

Federal Archives (BArch)
Humboldt University Berlin (HUB)

Technical University Dresden Archives (TUD)
Protestant Central Archives (EZA)
Protestant Church Archive in Berlin (ELAB)
Berlin Institute for Comparative State-Church Research (BISKF)
Private Collection (PC) Düsing
Private Collection (PC) Kleinig
Private Collection (PC) Kroh

Notes

1 On this period, changes and initiatives, see Krayer 1990; Lutter 2001. TUD HfV 000099 Personalakte Heyde; TUD HfV Akte: zu 1.4.1./#98 Promotionsverfahren A Dipl-Phl. Gania, Karin; HUB Personalakte Kleinig, Wolfgang; EZA 101/3303; BISKF Kaul 14; BISKF Kliem 78, 82, 85 and 137; BISKF Pacholik; PC Düsing; PC Kleinig.
2 Examples in PC Düsing and BISKF Kliem 82 Kliem to Metzger, 5 February 1990.
3 See the *Dialog-Hefte* (1990–2001) and *Neue Dialog-Hefte*, and correspondence in PC Düsing, PC Kleinig, PC Kroh and EZA 101/3303.
4 See especially Klohr 1993; Lutter 1994b, 2001; Thiede 1999; BISKF Kliem 5a Gerhard Winter, Laudatio [printemps 1998]; Bachmann n.d.
5 ELAB 55.1/389 Lutter, "Karl Marx zur 'Religion überhaupt'", Vortrag, 8 May 1986, p. 4. See also Lutter 1989, 4, and BArch DO 4/1024, pp. 1545–1546.

References

Bachmann, Sybille. n.d. Powerpoint "Ziele und Person." https://silo.tips/download/dr-sybille-bachmann-aus-liebe-zu-rostock-ziele-und-person.

Davie, Grace. 2007. *The Sociology of Religion*. London: SAGE Publications.

Droit, Emmanuel. 2009. *La Stasi à l'école. Surveiller pour éduquer en RDA (1950–1989)*. Paris: Nouveau Monde.

Droit, Emmanuel. 2019. "Temps et histoire du temps présent: le moment 1989." Unpublished talk at the Maison Heinrich Heine, Paris, 23 May 2019.

Engelien, Almut. 1982. "Die theoretische Auseinandersetzung der SED mit der Religion." In *Die evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Reinhard Henkys, 127–143. Munich: Chr. Kaiser.

Fulbrook, Mary. 1995. *Anatomy of a dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949–1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goeckel, Robert. 1993. "Der Weg der Kirchen in der DDR." In *Kirchen in der Diktatur: Drittes Reich und SED-Staat: Fünfzehn Beiträge*, edited by Günther Heydemann and Lothar Kettenacker, 155–181. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Guigo-Patzelt, Eva. 2024. "The East German Association of freethinkers (1988–1991), 'last ideological offensive' and ultimate troublemaker to the political system." In *The Non-Religious and the State: Choices and Frameworks for Seculars from the Age of Revolution to the Current Day*, edited by Jeffrey Tyssens, Niels de Nutte and Stefan Schröder, 357–372. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Hoffmann, Alfred. 2000. *"Mit Gott einfach fertig". Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des Atheismus im Marxismus-Leninismus der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Leipzig: St. Benno.

Klohr, Olof. 1993. "Atheismus und Religion in der DDR." In *Kirchen in der Diktatur: Drittes Reich und SED-Staat: Fünfzehn Beiträge*, edited by Günther Heydemann and Lothar Kettenacker, 282–293. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Kowalczuk, Ilko-Sascha. 1995. "Die Durchsetzung des Marxismus-Leninismus in der Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR (1945–1961)." In *Historische Forschung und sozialistische Diktatur*, edited by Martin Sabrow and Peter Th. Walther, 31–58. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitäts-Verlag.

Krayer, Roland. 1990. "Mitteilung." *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 38 (10): 952.

Krebs, Siegfried R. 2012. On *Dialog und Auseinandersetzung mit Atheisten und Humanisten,* edited by Reinhard Hempelmann. In *Humanismus Aktuell* 3 (1).

Kreiner, Armin. 2010. "Was ist neu am 'Neuen Atheismus'?" In *Neuer Atheismus wissenschaftlich betrachtet*, edited by Albert J. J. Anglberger and Paul Weingartner, 1–19. Frankfurt am Main/Heusenstamm: Ontos Verlag.

Löffler, Winfried. 2010. "Zur Argumentationsstruktur und Pragmatik gegenwärtiger atheistischer Positionen." In *Neuer Atheismus wissenschaftlich betrachtet*, edited by Albert J. J. Anglberger and Paul Weingartner, 21–49. Frankfurt am Main/Heusenstamm: Ontos Verlag.

Lutter, Hans. 1987. "Die Zusammenarbeit von Kommunisten und Gläubigen und Fragen nach Gemeinsamkeiten und Gegensätzen - Ergebnisse und Aufgaben der marxistisch-leninistischen Atheismus-Forschung." *Wissenschaftlicher Atheismus Forschungsbericht* 40.

Lutter, Hans. 1989. "Evangelische Christen und Kirchen in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft der DDR." *Forschungsberichte und Beiträge* special issue: 1–13.

Lutter, Hans. 1994a. "Marxismus - Atheismus - Religionskritik." *Berliner Dialog-Hefte 5* (2): 2–17.

Lutter, Hans. 1994b. "Erinnerung an Olof Klohr." *Neues Deutschland* 28 October 1994.

Lutter, Hans. 2001. "Zur Geschichte des Atheismus in der DDR." *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 43 (2): 72–83.

Mary, André. 2006. "Les Archives... Cinquante ans... après." *Archives des sciences sociales des religions* 136: 9–24.

Pollack, Detlef. 1994. *Kirche in der Organisationsgesellschaft: Zum Wandel der gesellschaftlichen Lage der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.

Portier, Philippe. 2018. "Conclusion: Marginalité et reconnaissance. Le statut paradoxal de l'objet religieux dans les sciences sociales." In *Sociologues en quête de religion*, edited by Céline Béraud, Bruno Duriez and Béatrice de Casquet, 215–228. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.

Quack, Johannes, Cora Schuh and Susanne Kind. 2020. *The Diversity of Nonreligion. Normativities and Contested Relations*. Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2020.

Sabrow, Martin. 1999. "Der Konkurs der Konsensdiktatur. Überlegungen zum inneren Zerfall der DDR aus kulturgeschichtlicher Perspektive." In *Weg in den Untergang. Der innere Zerfall der DDR*, edited by Konrad Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, 83–116. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Schlosser, Herta. 1970. *Marxismus und Religion. Die politische Interpretation des Religiösen in der DDR, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Auseinandersetzung mit der Schönstattbewegung*. Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain.

Simmel, Georg. 1908 (1958). *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014. "The ticket to the Soviet soul: Science, religion, and the spiritual crisis of Late Soviet Atheism." *The Russian Review* 73: 171–197.

Smolkin, Victoria. 2018. *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty. A History of Soviet Atheism*. Princeton, NJ/Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Sperlich, Peter W. 2002. *Rotten foundations: The conceptual basis of the Marxist-Leninist regimes of East Germany and other countries of the Soviet bloc*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002.

Thiede, Simone. 1999. *Der Dialog zwischen Religionen und säkularen Weltanschauungen: Dargestellt am Beispiel des christlich-marxistischen Dialogs in der DDR*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Vainio, Olli-Pekka and Aku Visala. 2015. "Varieties of unbelief: A taxonomy of atheistic positions." *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 57 (4): 483–500.

Wohlrab-Sahr, Monika, Uta Karstein and Christine Schaumburg. 2005. "'Ich würd' mir das offenlassen.' Agnostische Spiritualität als Annäherung an die 'große Transzendenz' eines Lebens nach dem Tode." *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 13 (2): 153–173.

Zenk, Thomas. 2013. "New atheism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 245–260. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zwahr, Hartmut. 1994. "Kontinuitätsbruch und mangelnde Lebensfähigkeit. Das Scheitern der DDR." In *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, edited by Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka and Hartmut Zwahr, 554–558. Stuttgart: Klett.

Index