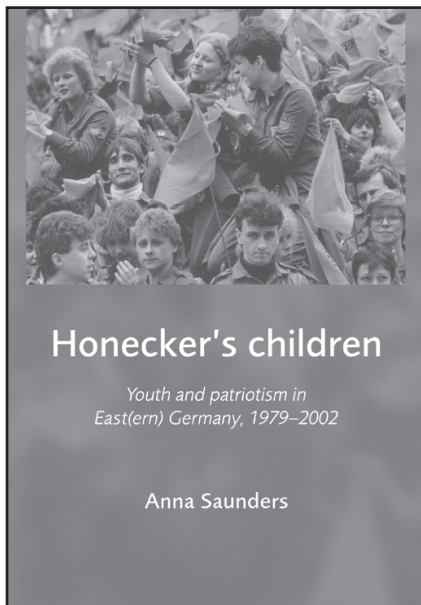


Honecker's children

Youth and patriotism in East(ern) Germany, 1979-2002

Anna Saunders



Anna Saunders is Lecturer in German at the University of Wales, Bangor

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During the final decade of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), young citizens found themselves at the heart of a rigorous programme of patriotic education, incorporating school lessons, extra-curricular activities, ritual ceremonies and organised holidays. As the second generation born in the GDR, they knew nothing other than the 'normality' of German division. However, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, they not only became citizens of a new state, but the emphasis of official state rhetoric, textbooks and free-time activities changed beyond recognition; young soldiers were expected to swear an oath of loyalty to their former enemy, loyalists were denounced as opportunists or informers, and rebels became heroes. For this young generation, 'normality' was turned on its head, leaving a sense of insecurity and inner turmoil.

Using a combination of archival research and interviews, together with educational materials and government reports, this book examines the relationship between young people and their two successive states in East(ern) Germany between 1979 and 2002. This unusual time-span straddles the 1989/1990 caesura which so often delimits historical studies, and thus enables not only a detailed examination of GDR socialisation, but crucially also its influence in unified Germany, and the extent to which a young generation's loyalties can be officially regulated in the face of cultural and historical traditions, changing material conditions and shifting

social circumstances.

In this study, Anna Saunders highlights the nature of the GDR as a state where the divides between state and society, as well as dissent and conformity, were less distinct than is frequently asserted. Her original research finds GDR socialisation to be influential to post-unification loyalties through its impact on the personal sphere, rather than through the ideological propaganda of socialist patriotic education.

At a time of globalisation and European expansion, this lucid study not only provides unique insight into the functioning of the GDR state and its longer-term impact, but also advances our broader understanding of the ways in which collective loyalties are formed.

This book will be of particular interest to those in the fields of German History and Politics, European Studies and Sociology.

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