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GÜNTER GRASS AND GERMAN POLITICS

1960 TO 1974

by

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## S U M M A R Y

This thesis is an historical case-study of the place of the writer Günter Grass in West German political life between 1960 and 1974.

The primary research presented here is of the sequence and context of all the important political initiatives Grass was responsible for in the sixties and seventies. They are brought together here for the first time, using press reports, his publications and details of the origins and progress of the central Sozialdemokratische Wählerinitiative gathered from its Bonn office.

The presentation moves from Grass as writer to Grass as semi-politician; from his novels, through his ideas to political conditions and to the voters' initiatives. I analyse how the treatment of political matters in the novels became increasingly subjective the more active a part Grass took in political affairs. His thinking is examined historically within the changing ideological climate of the sixties and through the language in which he sought to bring his views to bear. This shows how the traditions of liberalism and the demands made on modern social democracy mutually formed his resolve to make a creative contribution to democracy in Germany.

The final part argues that his retreat from politics and the diminishing importance of the social-democratic voters' initiatives after the 1972 election is to be explained in connection with the SPD government's loss of the reforming energy it had had, marked by Willy Brandt's resignation from office. Grass' political career corresponds to the period between the programmatic reform of the SPD in 1959 and the end of Brandt's chancellorship in 1974. I show here how it was in this chapter in the SPD's history under Brandt that Grass' views and commitment could grow and bear fruit in voters' initiatives.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

My first debt for the greatest part of the primary material for this study is to two sources: the Luchterhand-Verlag, Darmstadt, who housed the press archives on Günter Grass in 1975 at the time of my initial research; and the central office of the Sozialdemokratische Wählerinitiative in Bonn, in particular Frau Kramer, who was running the secretariat then. She generously gave me material from amongst the SWI's mounds of publications and internal documents, and also gave me ideas from her own first-hand experience of how the SWI has functioned and how successful it had been in the various areas of its work.

For giving me my first bibliographical directions about the modern SPD and his own views on my subject, I wish to thank Dr Paterson of the Politics Department at the University of Warwick. Without his help I would have had a great deal more difficulty starting work in a previously unfamiliar field. What clarity there is in this study would not have been attained without the regular criticism and unwearying attention to style of my supervisor, Professor Hinton Thomas. I have learnt a great deal that I needed to learn from his advice and am very grateful for his patience.

Finally, I would like to thank Uwe Walther, who constantly reviewed the conclusions I came to through German eyes. The historical feel which flickers through this study owes a great deal to both his criticism and his approval. As he probably knows, without his encouragement this thesis might not have been finished.

PART I

WRITING AND POLITICS



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION:

#### GRASS AND THE STATE OF THE PROFESSION

#### Social and economic conditions in the cultural sector in West Germany

I shall begin this chapter by sketching the conditions of contemporary literary work in West Germany because they played their part in changing writers' attitudes to literature and politics. By the sixties the production and dissemination of culture in the Federal Republic had grown into such a large, industrialised sphere that it took on a collective identity which we must consider when we look at the individual career of any one writer. This collective entity is often regarded as a monolith and given the pejorative title "Kulturbetrieb" in German. Grass' political individuality amongst writers becomes clearer if it is set against the collective experiences of his profession, as we shall see in this relatively brief opening chapter.

Retrospectively we can see the sixties as a whole as a period when people in literary circles were perpetually discussing their attitudes to their work and to their politics. This is not to say that the fifties before or the seventies since then have been stagnant, but they were/are calm compared with the instability of literary theories

and genres, of political identity and political alliances in that decade in between. By the early seventies the questioning of the sixties had brought practical results. People earning a living from literary work had become sufficiently aware of their social and economic position to form a new national organisation of the profession - the Verband Deutscher Schriftsteller (VS). The strident theoretical and political debates amongst writers nurtured this growing awareness of their own material position and vice versa. Thus the marked crisis of social and political identity they experienced accompanied a decisive shift in their professional identity as a group within the whole sector of culture-production in West Germany, because it was a sector where the differences between 'writers', 'journalists' or 'broadcasters' etc. were becoming increasingly blurred.<sup>1)</sup> Writers responded to this situation by founding their organisation and then joining one of the industrial trade-unions. This was a watershed; it showed that writers had achieved a degree of consensus about their political role.

One of the first steps taken by the VS was to commission an investigation into the working conditions of its clientele. When completed this demonstrated how 'people who produce literary work had more or less ceased to form a separately identifiable profession. The distinction between supposedly and traditionally 'independent' writers and all the other people working in all the areas of culture-production was breaking down. According to the report, they were becoming less and less distinguishable from media-employees with fulltime work - contracts. With the

extension of investment in the cultural sector combined with the concentration of control and/or ownership, writers were finding themselves bound to the same conditions and relations of work as colleagues who in economic status were wage-workers in the private and public media:

Im Prozeß der Vermarktung der "geistigen Ware" treten neben die mehr oder weniger originären Leistungen der Autoren diejenigen anderer am Herstellungsprozeß beteiligter Personen oder Gruppen, z.B. anderer freier Mitarbeiter (in den Bereichen Bild, Ton, Darstellung bzw. Realisation), aber auch der angestellten Autoren (Redakteure, Lektoren). Die Funktionsteilung, wie sie vor allem bei den Medien Fernsehen, Film, Publikumszeitschriften und selbst beim Hörfunk für die Produktion erforderlich sind, verlangt daher vom Autor medienbezogene Verhaltensweisen. Die Marktorientierung der Produktion bedeutet aber auch, daß Programmkonzeptionen und Interessen von Auftraggebern teils durch den Autor schon antizipiert werden, teils durch die inhaltliche Festlegung des Auftrages den ursprünglichen Mittler an der Urheberschaft beteiligen. (...) Durch Konzentrationserscheinungen, Konkurrenzmechanismen und Umstrukturierung der inneren Organisation der Medien nach Managementgesichtspunkten, auch durch die Neuentwicklung audiovisueller Medien und Kommunikationsverfahren sowie durch den zunehmenden Berufscharakter ihrer Tätigkeit (Professionalisierung) ergeben sich für die Autoren Leistungszwänge, wie sie in anderen Produktionsbereichen der Wirtschaft längst üblich sind.<sup>2)</sup>

Formally 'independent' writers were finding themselves in this position, subject to the same sort of conditions of work as all other employees in the cultural sector, because they make their living nowadays from short-term commissions rather than from major literary productions:

Ganz eindeutig sind nunmehr die hauptberuflichen freien Autoren dies nicht mehr aufgrund exzeptioneller belletristischer Einzelerfolge; ihre wirtschaftliche Basis ist jetzt klar die kontinuierliche, damit professionelle Produktion. In der Rangliste ihrer Haupttätigkeiten rangiert die Produktion von 'Gebrauchsware' mit den vier Grup-

pen Feuilletonbeiträge (44%), Rezensionen/Kritiken (37%), Glossen/Satire (28%) und Dokumentarberichte (28%) an der Spitze der Nennungen (...) bevor die erste 'klassische' Gattung mit Erzählungen/Kurzgeschichten (25%) überhaupt erscheint. Romane gar haben nur 18% der befragten Autoren in den letzten drei Jahren geschrieben, wobei Überdies die Gruppe der alten Autoren (über 60 Jahre) hier noch deutlich überrepräsentiert ist.<sup>3)</sup>

The report consequently refused to confine its investigation to those writing in the traditional field of belles-lettres. It took all branches into account - television, radio, film, theatre, the press and all the different areas of publishing. It then found that an estimated 55% of people writing for a living are economically dependent on their employers like wage-workers in all the other sectors of the economy.<sup>4)</sup>

These were the material trends confronting literary work across all its different functions in culture-production as a whole. The writers who united in the VS found themselves caught up in this process. The social and economic position of the majority amongst them was becoming insecure; the question facing them was how to retain more than a semblance of conceptual independence and choice in the work they produced.

This combination of circumstances meant that organising writers in a trade-union was a relatively slow and controversial process.<sup>5)</sup> It took some time to arrive at a consensus about priorities : should they concentrate on their legal and financial interests, or should they consider politically how they could defend

what was left of writers' independence. The latter was threatened by the dramatic concentration which had been taking place amongst the private publishing corporations. This divergence of emphasis within the VS membership gave rise to a disagreement which lasted some three years about whether they should join the union which covered the publishing industry and press etc. (IG Druck und Papier) - Grass and Dieter Lattmann led this lobby - or whether they should and could take the whole step of establishing a union for all those working in the cultural field (an IG Kultur). The argument was that the latter would be the only effective counter-weight to the monopolistic structure of ownership and power in the whole culture-sector which was ultimately foreseeable. At the VS' first congress held in the autumn of 1970, Martin Walser was the chief spokesman of those who wanted the VS to face up to this politically and not just as an ordinary trade-union concerned with collective bargaining:

Die zunehmende Monopolisierung im Verlagswesen zwingt uns dazu, die Organisationsfrage endlich ernst zu nehmen. Die Bestseller-Listen sind die andauernde Illustration dieser Monopolisierung. Es sind immer dieselben Verlage und eigentlich auch immer dieselben Autoren. (...) Die meisten von uns sind an kleine und mittlere Verlage gebunden und können also jeden Tag aufwachen im Portefeuille eines Konzerns. Unsere Urheberrechte schützen uns nicht davor, daß wir verhökert werden im Paket und danach vielleicht sofort abgeschrieben werden auf Null. (...) Vielleicht glauben die Gewerkschaften immer noch nicht, daß es sich da, wo Kunst und Information produziert werden, tatsächlich um eine Industrie handelt. Zumindest müssen wir, die in der Kulturindustrie oder für sie arbeiten, schon durch unsere Organisation auf das Stadium der ökonomischen Konzentration antworten, dem wir ausgesetzt sind. Da unser Partner oder Gegner neuerdings immer

nach der Verfügung über alle Medien strebt, ist es nur komisch, wenn Autoren als Schriftsteller, Journalisten, Komponisten, Graphiker, Bühnenbildner, Schauspieler, Maler, Kameralleute, Regisseure in separierten Häufchen herumoperieren. Ich glaube, nur eine IG-Kultur kann aus dem Grüppchen-Wesen eine Gruppe machen, die den Multimedia-Konzernen gewachsen ist. (...) Ich halte es für fast schädlich, Schriftsteller-Interessen isoliert zu organisieren. Ich halte den Schritt in die IG Druck und Papier allenfalls für einen Anfang (...). Ich halte die jetzt sich abzeichnende kentaurische Lösung Edel-Lobby plus Gewerkschaftstouch für einen Verzicht auf politische Vertretung.<sup>67</sup>

However, at the VS' second congress in January 1973, the majority resolved to join the IG Druck und Papier. Walser had called an 'Arbeitskreis Kulturindustrie' into being two years earlier to pursue the possibility of unionising across all branches of the cultural sector, but this grouping also decided in the end to endorse the course the majority had chosen as a first step at least.<sup>71</sup> In joining the union the largest body of writers in West Germany showed that they had left traditional individualism far enough behind to recognise that in economic and social position the fate of each was broadly speaking the fate of all.

#### The Politics of literature

The industrialisation of literary work, the diminishing control its practitioners had over the bulk of what they produced led to a change in the conceptions writers had of what their work was for. It was nothing new for writers to be politically concerned and alert, but, as Urs Jaeggi has said, the first generations of writers in West Germany after the war had rarely brought their politics directly into their texts:

Literatur war nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg eine weitgehend private Angelegenheit. Zwar hatten sich einige Schriftsteller frühzeitig auch wieder politisch engagiert; privat. Ihre politischen Absichten äußerten sich neben ihren literarischen Arbeiten. (...)

Man schrieb, um nicht schreiben zu müssen. - Man sprach, um schweigen zu können. (...)  
Man schrieb nicht ohne politische Gesinnung, aber diese zeigte sich in direkten Antworten weit häufiger als im Geschriebenen, in den Texten.<sup>8)</sup>

This is what changed in the sixties, particularly in response to the student movement. More writers started producing overtly political work and certainly their discussions about their work became overtly political.

It would be stretching the point to say that writers of imaginative literature are under any direct control from publishing corporations, however monopolised these may be. But they are associated with, or integrated into to different degrees, the other branches of the cultural sector whose employees are in a position of dependence and whose products are marketed as commodities.<sup>9)</sup> These links are the source of the dissolution of the faith they commonly held previously in the ideal power and role of culture as a whole, literature in particular and of the individualist image writers had of themselves. Literature found itself face to face with social and political questions about its own function in society because of the industrialisation of its own production and distribution.

This is where we can see the individual character of Grass' political view of himself as a writer. It is hardly necessary to stress how successful he has been ever since the publication of Die Blechtrommel. This success has brought him economic independence as a professional writer

untypical of the broad mass of his colleagues. As a result he has been in a position to take individual initiatives to further the interests of writers. For instance, he had sufficient influence with his publisher, Luchterhand, to push for co-determination for its employees and authors.<sup>10)</sup> He also took a prominent part in collective initiatives to found the VS. But he was not economically tied to the goals of the VS in the same way as the mass of writers. His sympathy for the pressures on authors as a whole, and his own relative freedom from those pressures can be seen as a combination which sustained the span of liberal ideas which inspired his political role in the sixties and early seventies. His social and economic position as a writer left him room for individual manoeuvre, which supported his individualist image of himself as a social and political being, an image he retained at a time when notable colleagues were departing from it. There were certainly others who retained the same control of their work and professional life. Those who went further towards a radical view of their work and of their social and political role, despite comparable economic independence, did so because they recognised the trends affecting the economic position of workers in culture-production as a whole as the nub of a more material and materialist view of the politics in literature. Böll is a prime example here:

Es mag manchen von uns trösten, daß er möglicherweise Ewigkeitswerte schafft, dieser Trost sei ihm unbenommen, wenn er uns nicht hindert, uns hier und heute, gestützt auf diesen Gesamtverband, Gedanken



darüber zu machen und einmal öffentlich darzulegen, wie wir unser Geld eigentlich verdienen. (...) In Wirklichkeit sind wir tarifgebundene Mitarbeiter einer Großindustrie, die hinter einer rational gesteuerten Kalkulationsmystik ihre Ausbeutung verschleiern.

Auch das komplizierteste esoterische Werk wird eines Tages nicht nur über den Bildschirm gehen, es wird als Kassette in Ton oder Bild nach der Organisationsform der Leserzirkel von Tür zu Tür gebracht werden. Wir schreiben, reden, denken, diskutieren und reflektieren viel über das Industriezeitalter - daß wir (...) industrialisiert oder ganz gewiß industrialisierbar sind, sollte uns spätestens zu diesem Herbst klar werden.<sup>11)</sup>

Grass by contrast never showed a great deal of interest in this connection. He saw his own road to politics and political commitment in general as a matter of values and moral responsibilities. As a result, politics came to literature as far as he was concerned from the outside. Politics and literature were compatible in his view (and in his own practice), but he did not see the one as intrinsic to the other. The political part writers could play was not dependent on their work but on favourable constellations outside, in politics and society at large:

Seitdem Gustav Heinemann Bundespräsident ist und es auch Willy Brandt, ein Mann des Widerstandes gegen den Nationalismus, Bundeskanzler ist, finden wir Schriftsteller zum ersten Mal Gelegenheit, aus teils anerzogenen, teils überlieferten Rollen herauszufinden und inmitten, nicht außerhalb der Gesellschaft als verändernde Kraft zu wirken.<sup>12)</sup>

In his speech at the Gruppe 47 conference in Princeton in 1966 he had seen literature as a field of its own which was quite a separate thing from politics, with separate starting points, even though the two could come together:

Und es gibt auch eine Menge Schriftsteller, bekannt und unbekannte, die, weit entfernt von der Anmaßung, 'Gewissen der Nation' sein zu wollen, gelegentlich ihren Schreibtisch umwerfen - und demokratischen Kleinkram betreiben. Das aber heißt: Kompromisse anstreben. Seien wir uns dessen bewußt: das Gedicht kennt keine Kompromisse; wir aber leben von Kompromissen.

This view came from his still seeing writers as incorrigible individualists by virtue of their calling:

Dabei lehrt einige Branchenkenntnis, daß Schriftsteller exzentrische Einzelwesen sind, auch wenn sie sich auf Tagungen zusammenrotten. (...) auch (...) die Progressiv-Konservativen, sind aufgespalten in Ein-Mann-Fraktionen, und jeder liest seinen eigenen Marx.<sup>[3]</sup>

Martin Walser was one who criticised Grass' separation of literary and political tasks. He thought that only making them integral to one another was to be really political as a writer:

Schade noch mehr, daß man das Politische eines Schriftstellers weniger nach seinen literarischen Hervorbringungen beurteilt als nach seinem aktuellen Auftritt. (...) Ich glaube, vertrauenswürdiger ist der Autor allemal in seinen Arbeiten. (...) Ich finde, das ist eine bewunderungswürdige artistische Anwendung der Talente eines Schriftstellers. Er wirbt für seine Persönlichkeit, von der er sich Gutes verspricht. Er selber versteht seinen Einsatz aber als politisches Engagement. Da würde ich schon ein wenig zögern. (...) Ich halte alle Empfehlungskampagnen heutiger Wahlkämpfe für Kosmetik.<sup>[4]</sup>

Even up to the early days of the VS Grass had an idealist view of literary production in society as something not bound to ideology even though literature should certainly address itself to political issues:

Umweltverlust und Umweltschutz, Bildungsnotstand und Leistungsgesellschaft, Überdruß am Überfluß heißen die Schlagworte. Welche Schriftsteller werden ihrer abseits vom gängigen Jargon und ohne vorgefaßte dogmatische Diktion geformten Inhalt geben?

Und welche Leser, welche neuen Leser, werden sie finden? Welche Literatur wird den Begriff Eigentum aus doppelt puritanischer Hörigkeit lösen und ihm zwischen westlichem Privatkapitalismus und kommunistischem Staatskapitalismus zwangsfreien Raum schaffen?<sup>151</sup>

Grass had the same attitude to politics in literature as he had to politics as a whole. In the former he implied that the mysteries of the social autonomy of writers still hold, that literature has a special power to defy ideology. In politics as a whole, he envisaged the same power in ideals and morals and also believed that it could lie in certain personalities who stand for these ideals and morals, like Brandt and Heinemann. In fact, a fervent conviction that 'people make politics' has been the driving force behind his political attitudes, activities and his view of his own role in public affairs. This is a rough and ready maxim which could veer between liberal and radical-democratic shades of meaning. As a result his political ideology has been very elastic compared with someone like Böll, who has virtually always stood out against the dominant ideological climate of his society. Grass, on the other hand, has at times been more radical and critical than the mainstream of the SPD with which he allied himself, and at others has completely acquiesced with its politics and supported the status quo. I shall look more closely at this in chapters three and four.

Grass had an individualist view not only of himself, but of everybody as social and political beings. And he made little or no distinction between a writer's part in political life and every adult's - as citizen, voter, taxpayer.<sup>16)</sup> His view of himself was intimately bound to the literal political liberalism which is so characteristic of his convictions. For him, literally every individual's voice and vote counts in a parliamentary democracy and indeed is sovereign. The critical responsibilities of writers and intellectuals were consequently ordinary democratic rights, subject to more abuse than the layman's, but not different in kind or value:

Im Jahre 1937, als Emigrant, entrechtet und ausgebürgert, klagte Thomas Mann: "Es gibt keinen subalternen Hohn als den auf den Dichter, der in die politische Arena hinabsteigt."  
Dieses Wort gilt bis heute. Wen also die ungebundene Sprache des Schriftstellers stört, wer sich aller Kritik entziehen sieht und wie unser Bundeskanzler rasch bei der Hand ist mit plattem Schimpfwort und altvertrauten Obrigkeitsallüren, dem sei gesagt, daß - laut Grundgesetz - die Bürger der Souverän unserer parlamentarischen Demokratie sind. Wäre es anders, es müßte der Rechtsstaat verkümmern.<sup>17)</sup>

He made himself out to be just an ordinary person, just 'der schreibende Bürger',<sup>18)</sup> joining in the political processes of a democracy. A democracy was for everyone, everyone should participate in it, he was setting the example. His approach to politics was always pedagogical - to encourage people to live up to the opportunities and possibilities promised by democracy. Twenty years after National Socialism, West German society still lacked democratic maturity,<sup>19)</sup> he said and was not alone in saying so. When the SPD-FDP coalition was

elected in 1969, he thought for a time that the battle had been just about won. But his literal liberalism gave him a populist concept of democracy which meant it was by no means just who the government were that guaranteed democracy, but how they had gained popular support and what the people's attitudes to the government were. So he did not always take the government's view at all:

Spontane Bürgerinitiativen gegen Mietwucher und die ungewohnte Entschlossenheit der Gewerkschaften zum Streik (weisen) auf demokratische Reife und mündiges Selbstbewusstsein.<sup>20)</sup>

It was because Grass never thought that as a writer he brought any special qualities to politics that he ended up after years of involvement seeing himself as a politician, or at least a part-time politician. He said so, for instance, in an interview in the midst of his second federal election campaign in 1969:

Grass: Ich hab' meinen Beruf. Ich schreibe gern Bücher. Und ich habe vor, noch mehrere Bücher zu schreiben. In einer Regierung jedoch, in der die SPD die Richtlinien der Politik bestimmt, wäre ich bereit, nach meinen Kenntnissen und Fähigkeiten ein Amt zu übernehmen.

St.N.: Sie fühlen sich also nicht nur als Schriftsteller, sondern auch als Politiker?

Grass: Ja, das kommt mit der Beschäftigung dazu. Ich seh' da auch keinen Gegensatz. Beides - Politik und Schriftstellerei - hat mit der Gesellschaft zu tun. Ich schreibe als Schriftsteller und spreche in der Öffentlichkeit als Politiker.<sup>21)</sup>

We can see here that Grass thought of himself in a dual capacity as writer on the one hand and politician on the other, whilst these separate occupations were not mutually exclusive. This was precisely because his political activities

made him politically professional for a time, taking him away from literature. What happened to the politics in some of his literary works will be the subject of the next chapter. The most obvious result of his dual but separate occupations was that his own political ideas became ever more explicitly the material of which he fashioned his literary works.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) I use this term because in a capitalist society the sphere of culture and communication is one of economic activity as well as of ideas. This is meant to be a matter of emphasis and not an abuse of the other sides there are to art and culture. It is an emphasis which is chosen as appropriate to the culture and communication industry in West Germany, and I am taking this approach from, for instance, Enzensberger, who stressed the industrialisation of literary production nearly twenty years ago:

Der Buchverlag hat als Unternehmen lange Zeit an gewerblichen, ja, man könnte beinahe sagen, handwerklichen Formen des Produzierens festgehalten. Der Chef des Hauses kannte im allgemeinen jedes Manuskript, das er veröffentlichte. Jeder Titel warf besondere Vertrags-, Finanzierungs- und Herstellungsfragen auf, die individuell zu lösen waren. (...)  
Der typische moderne Großverlag ist dagegen ein durchaus rationell arbeitender Betrieb industrieller Prägung. Sein Ziel ist ein sehr großes, konstant bleibendes Produktionsvolumen, das die Kapazität des Betriebs völlig auslastet. Das investierte Kapital muß sich rasch amortisieren.

Hans Magnus Enzensberger: "Bildung als Konsumgut. Analyse der Taschenbuch-Produktion", in: Einzelheiten I / Bewußt-seinsindustrie, Frankfurt/M., 1973, pp. 141/2.

- 2) Karla Fohrbeck, Andreas J. Wiesand: Der Autorenreport, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1972, p.19.

- 3) Hannes Schwenger: Schriftsteller und Gewerkschaft / Ideologie, Überbau, Organisation, Darmstadt & Neuwied, 1974, p. 108, referring to the Autorenreport's findings.
- 4) Fohrbeck & Wiesand, op.cit., p. 242.
- 5) as described by Schwenger, op.cit., pp.161-188.
- 6) "IG Kultur?", in Dieter Lattmann (ed.): Einigkeit der Einzelgänger / Dokumentation des ersten Schriftsteller-Kongresses des Verbandes Deutscher Schriftsteller, Munich, 1971, pp. 33 f..
- 7) On the other hand, the idea of a cross-media union was still formally pursued as an ultimate aim of the writers' organisation although it was postponed apparently indefinitely. See resolutions on 'Medienpolitik' in Horst Binzel (ed.): Phantasie und Verantwortung / Dokumentation des dritten Schriftstellerkongresses des Verbandes Deutscher Schriftsteller (VS) in der IG Druck und Papier, Frankfurt/M., 1975, pp. 102 - 108.
- 8) "Politische Literatur / Die Grenzen der 'Kulturrevolution'", in Wolfgang Kutteneuler (ed.): Poesie und Politik / Zur Situation der Literatur in Deutschland, Stuttgart, 1973, pp. 262 & 259.
- 9) Schwenger, op.cit., pp.98/99;



Die historisch aktuelle Form der materiellen Produktion ist überwiegend die kapitalistische Warenproduktion. Die aktuelle Form der geistigen Produktionstätigkeit ist unterschiedlich, aber durch das Vordringen des kapitalistischen Produktionsverhältnisses bestimmt. Sie existiert

- als geistige Lebenstätigkeit des Menschen außerhalb der Wertproduktion
- als Bestandteil des materiellen Produktionsprozesses
- als unproduktive immaterielle Arbeit, entweder in der Form kleiner Warenproduktion oder Dienstleistungen
- als produktive immaterielle Arbeit, entweder als kapitalistische Warenproduktion oder als produktive Dienstleistung.

- 10) As reported by Dieter E. Zimmer: "Gewonnen haben beide Seiten", in DIE ZEIT 18/6/1976; also Der Spiegel 14/6/1976, "Verlage: Grass setzt Mitbestimmung durch".
- 11) "Ende der Bescheidenheit / Zur Situation der Schriftsteller in der Bundesrepublik" (Rede anlässlich der Gründung des Überregionalen Verbandes Deutscher Schriftsteller (VS) am 8. Juni 1969), in Kutteneuler, op.cit., pp. 347/8.
- 12) "Schriftsteller und Gewerkschaft", in Lattmann, op. cit., p. 30.
- 13) "Vom mangelnden Selbstvertrauen der schreibenden Hofnarren unter Berücksichtigung nicht vorhandener Höfe", in Über das Selbstverständliche / Politische Schriften, revised paperback edition, Munich, 1969, p. 89.
- 14) "Engagement als Pflichtfach für Schriftsteller", in Kutteneuler, op.cit., p. 308.

- 15) "Schriftsteller und Gewerkschaft", op.cit., p. 31.
- 16) "Dich singe ich Demokratie", Allgemeine Zeitung Freiburg 13/7/65.
- 17) "Des Kaisers neue Kleider", in Über das Selbstv. etc. op.cit., p. 45.
- 18) "Dich singe ich Demokratie", op.cit..
- 19) Günter Grass - Pavel Kohout: Briefe über die Grenze / Versuch eines Ost-West-Dialogs, Hamburg, 1968, pp. 71/2.
- 20) "Wen wandelt die Annäherung?", in Neue Gesellschaft, No. 6, 1970, p. 783.
- 21) "Ich bin doch kein Bürgerschreck", Stuttgarter Nachrichten 24/5/69.

CHAPTER TWO

POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS IN *DIE BLECHTROMMEL*, *HUNDEJAHRE*,  
*ÖRTLICH BETRÜBT* AND *AUS DEM TAGEBUCH EINER SCHNECKE*

Grass' politics and the reception of his literary works

From the outset *Die Blechtrommel* was greeted by a style of reviewing that distinguished itself by an extraordinarily unembarrassed use of superlatives, as examples from Enzensberger and Walter Widmer illustrate:

Diese Sprache (...) ist (...) von einer Formkraft, einer Plastik, einer Überwältigenden Fülle, einer inneren Spannung, einem rhythmischen Furor, für die ich in der deutschen Literatur des Augenblicks kein Beispiel sehe.

Man ist glatt erledigt, über den Haufen geworfen und weiß nicht, was man mehr bewundern soll, das handwerkliche Können und die sprühende Phantasie des Autors, seine pralle Lebensfüllung und seine unverwundliche Darstellungskraft oder seine naive Verruchtheit, sein bedenkenloses Hinwegschreiten über sämtliche Schranken bürgerlicher Moral.<sup>1)</sup>

Superlatives to excess on the one side, aggressive denigration from the offended on the other, combined to give Grass a 'socially critical' image from the evidence of the Danzig Trilogy. Enzensberger's excitement about him: "Dieser Mann ist ein Störenfried, ein Hai im Sardinientümpel, ein wilder Einzelgänger in unserer domestizierten Literatur", became virtually as well known as the contents of the books themselves. This kind of critical vocabulary appears to be

politically innocent even if it has political implications. Although his first novel brought him a reputation as socially and morally radical, nobody tried to link his political ideology to his literary work, until the issue could no longer be avoided after he had set the pace himself with his first campaign for the SPD in the 1965 federal election. When Holthusen wrote about the political nature of the Danzig Trilogy he did so under the influence of what Grass had done in 1965.<sup>2)</sup>

Up to then reviews and criticism of the Danzig Trilogy had been mainly unpolitical<sup>3)</sup> following the example of Enzensberger's review of the first novel in which he acclaimed the book's ideological innocence or naivety as the very virtue of its realism:

Dieser Autor greift nichts an, beweist nichts, demonstriert nichts, er hat keine andere Absicht, als seine Geschichte mit der größten Genauigkeit zu erzählen. Diese Absicht setzt er freilich um jeden Preis und ohne die geringste Rücksicht durch. Der Skandal, der darin liegt, ist letzten Endes an keinen Stoff gebunden: er ist der Skandal der realistischen Erzählweise überhaupt.<sup>4)</sup>

This approach meant that there was a vague consensus that the third parts of both Die Blechtrommel and Hundejahre, dealing with post-war society in the Federal Republic, were comparative failures, but critics were at a loss to account for this. Reinhard Baumgart tried to explain this failure in both the novelist and his critics, but his sociological explanation was very general and vague:

Der Erzähler Grass, so hieß es, nach der Blechtrommel wie nach den Hundejahren, überzeugt nicht mehr, sobald er auf westdeutschem Boden steht.

Hier kommt es auf solche Urteile nicht an, es geht um eine Diagnose. Auch der Erzähler Günter Grass, so scheint also, mußte entdecken, wie wenig Wesentliches die kleinbürgerliche Perspektive von unserer zeitgenössischen Gesellschaft noch fassen kann. Was er auf intimer Guckkastenbühne nicht mehr darzustellen vermag, sucht er auf breitem allegorischem Podium einzuholen.<sup>5)</sup>

However, after the appearance of Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand Grass' reviewers took an almost entirely political approach, even if some of them argued that his work had deteriorated aesthetically the more politically active he had become.<sup>6)</sup> Now Grass had to try and defend his own idea of his literary work from too literal a political interpretation, arguing that Die Plebejer etc. was not directly hostile to Brecht und that örtlich betäubt was more than a polemic against the radical students.<sup>7)</sup> This practice of literally equating Grass' public political position on the one hand with the social and political contents of his literary work on the other was to some extent provoked by his publishers' marketing policy. örtlich betäubt and Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke were published just before his campaigns for the SPD in the Federal elections of 1969 and 1972 respectively. It is not surprising that the book and the politics came to be interpreted in the light of each other.<sup>8)</sup> Grass' politics provided reviewers with a ready-made critical schema and vocabulary to apply to his literary works. They served as a handy product-description.

Some reviews made free use of the intentional fallacy. It is true that the later books do reflect their author's politics more or less directly. But this is not simply because in content they deal with the same ideas and issues he has been concerned with in his public activities in political affairs. They do so because the textual transformation of authorial conceptions, whether these be implicitly or explicitly to do with politics, has become thinner with each new book. This can also be put positively as Charles Russell has done:

With the shifting of his focus from the war era to the present, Grass recognised that the aesthetic distance of the writer from the subject was no longer tenable. There is no privileged perspective in contemporary society from which a writer can naively direct satiric barbs at his or her subject. It is necessary for the satirist to evaluate his or her own assumptions. The greatest danger for the contemporary writer, Grass shows, is bad faith.<sup>91</sup>

But Russell is yet another critic who equates the text directly with the author's intentions. He does not in any way justify why he takes the author as the subject of the novels in this way. This is a literary question. There is little gained by deducing the politics in the literary texts directly from the author's own position in public affairs. We have to examine first how the political dimensions of social life enter the works taken in their own right. Taking the major prose works up to 1972, this chapter will show how the author's ideology increasingly becomes the dominant ideology of the texts, because between Die Blechtrommel and Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke the experience and responses of the characters of the novels

cease to be bound to a class and a community. The distinction I want to make is between the political character of the material itself within the world depicted, and the author's own political conceptions when brought to his literary material from the outside, or in other words when Grass' own political attitudes appear to the reader to intrude into the texts. The result is that the later novels show us much less about the political character of the society they depict than the earlier ones, and tell us more and more about Grass' own political ideas alone.

Die Blechtrommel<sup>10)</sup>

Die Blechtrommel is a novel full of historical dates and facts which are used ironically to produce a sense of the passive experience of political developments on the part of a petit-bourgeois community, and thus of the ideological situation of this class, not in relation to the historical experience of the whole of German society, but rather as how it was lived by one section of it. The novel concerns itself with the experience of a particular section of society in terms of how it makes sense or non-sense of history and of its political environment.

Some of the dates and facts in the novel are relevant to the chronology of the story<sup>11)</sup>, some of them are mentioned just because Oskar has an idiosyncratic interest in them.<sup>12)</sup> From the very beginning of his supposed auto-

biography Oskar makes a habit of discursively linking events in his story to some arbitrarily chosen details of world history:

Jedenfalls sagte meine Trommel: An jenem Oktober-nachmittag des Jahres neunundneunzig, während in Südafrika Ohm Krüger seine buschig englandfeindlichen Augenbrauen büstete, wurde zwischen Dirschau und Karthaus, nahe der Ziegelei Bissau, unter vier gleichfarbigen Röcken, unter Qualem, Kngsten, Seufzern, unter schrägem Regen und leidvoll betonten Vornamen der Heiligen (...) meine Mutter Agnes gezeugt. (...) Nur um die Spannung etwas zu erhöhen, nenne ich den Narnen jener Stadt an der Mottlaumündung noch nicht, obgleich sie als Geburtsstadt meiner Mama jetzt schon nennenswert wäre. Ende Juli des Jahres nullnull - man entschloß sich gerade, das kaiserliche Schlachtflottenbauprogramm zu verdoppeln - erblickte Mama im Sternchen Löwe das Licht der Welt. (...) Das erste Haus, auch Domus vitae genannt, im Zeichen des Aszendenten: leicht zu beeinflussende Fische ...

With this kind of irony, history is just as irrelevant to the scene-setting as astrology: the geography of the scene is more interesting. This pattern of narrative emphasis divorces the domestic world Oskar depicts from the international and national developments he drolly mentions in passing. Paying lip service like this to historical realism is trivial and banal. The banality is functional, and is in no way woven into the fabric of this social world. The section of Danzig society which is portrayed reduces itself to the private and the provincial. This self-reduction is thrown into relief when Oskar mentions historical conjunctures external to the domestic community, because the 'small world' and the 'large world' only meet ironically through his drum. By means of Oskar's ironical distance and narrative omnipotence through the drum, this community's lack of awareness



of the world outside itself is exposed as precisely its problem. In this way Die Blechtrommel is a novel concerned with the ideological disposition of this section of society. It shows how this class perceives and responds to its historical environment.

The first two parts of the novel depict how nazification creeps into these people's lives without their being aware of it or making conscious responses to it. The political background to this society is glimpsed only through the unexplained, unthinking responses of its members. An example of this is the way the Jewish toy-seller pleads with Agnes Matzerath for her to make a politically opportunist choice between her lovers according to their nationality, German or Polish, when the former is in the ascendant over the latter. The problem of the Jew's own position within this scramble for conformity crops up only in parenthesis:

Setzen Se nich auf de Polen, setzen Se, wenn Se setzen wollen, auf de Deitschen, weil se hochkommen, wenn nich heit dann morgen; (...) Oder wenn Se mechten setzen gefälligt auffen Markus und kommen Se middem Markus, wo er getauft is seit neulich. Gehn wä nach London, Frau Agnes, wo ich Lait hab drieben und Papiere genug, wenn Se nur wollten kommen oder wolln Se nich middem Markus, weil Se ihn verachten, nu denn verachten Se ihn. Aber er bittet Ihnen von Herzen, wenn Se doch nur nich mehr setzen wollen auffen meschuggenen Bronski, dñ bei de polnische Post bleibt, wo doch bald färtich is midde Polen, wenn se kommen de Deitschen! 13

Glimpses such as these of the problem of nationality as part of National Socialist ideology, and of the domination of that ideology over the way people think as the Third Reich

expands, show how political forces are reflected as if they were only the background to domestic choices. In fact they are all the time becoming the very fabric of this world as its members just absorb them passively. This community's very lack of awareness is political. This is the historical picture of the petit-bourgeois class which emerges, by contrast, from the narrator's ironic misuse of chronological material.

Thus the novel does not show the historical causes of political development, but rather how they were lived from day to day in the immediate relationships within this class. Consequently it is appropriate that the aggressive expansion of the National Socialist state enters the story as just so many distant news reports, as distant as those events of the past which Oskar wilfully and gratuitously drums up from time to time. Just about the only time Oskar makes any explicit reference to Nazi domination of the state, he combines it with an ironic, veiled reference to the economic interests of this petit-bourgeoisie in Fascism:

Da gab es zwar immer noch die alte Teppichklopfstange, auch stand in der Hausordnung: Dienstag und Freitag Teppichklopfen, aber das knallte nur noch spärlich und fast verlegen an den zwei Wochentagen: seit Hitlers Machtübernahme gab es mehr und mehr Staubsauger in den Haushaltungen.<sup>14)</sup>

The banality of his commentary emphasises how the economic basis of Nazi ideological and political power is irrelevant to the way the experience of this community is invoked. The whole point of Oskar's narrative stance is that it insists on recognising the political in the trivial, as when he

claims that he felt Sütterlin script to be ominous from the very first, even when he could not yet read it.<sup>15)</sup> The way politics is lived through the habits and symbols of authority in this community is more important than how it was determined in this period of capitalist crisis. History at large, within and without this section of society, is a senseless stream of tragedies and banalities to it precisely because it fails to recognise what is happening to it in the present. Georg Just demonstrates this taking the scene at Kurt's christening (B.tr. p. 247 "Es wollte kein Gespräch aufkommen ...");

Der unreflektierte, großsprecherische Jargon verhindert eine angemessene Erfassung der Bedeutung jener kriegerischen, unmenschlichen Ereignisse; in ihm erscheinen sie abstrakt und verharmlost. Die Mühe, die sich die Personen andererseits geben, die kleinste Peinlichkeit in ihrem privaten Bereich, die Erwähnung Jans, zu vermeiden, zeigt, wie sich die Proportionen im Kleinbürgerbewusstsein völlig verkehrt haben. Die Erkenntnis, daß "geschichtliches" Geschehen und "privates" Geschehen identisch sind, der "Krieg im Osten" und der Tod Jans, wird durch Sentimentalität verhindert.<sup>16)</sup>

The figures depicted in the Danzig community also embody more particular types of the social and political make-up of this society in this period. Matzerath and Bronski represent Germany and Poland respectively, Markus the Jew, Greff the homosexual scout-type, Meyn the SA man. As Just points out<sup>17)</sup>, this is particularly so in their deaths in a number of cases: Matzerath's is correlative to the collapse of the Third Reich, Jan's to the outbreak of war between Germany and Poland, Markus' to the persecution of the Jews, and the Stäuberbande's presumably to the execution of

resistance fighters<sup>18)</sup>. This provincial petit-bourgeois world is thus a microcosm of the agents through whom National Socialism gained control over German society.

This class was the social base of National Socialism by virtue of its very passivity and its lack of an organic ideology - a coherent and meaningful sense of itself-, laying it open to the mythology of an aggressive political movement. Its members here end up playing their political roles, playing with political forces, without being aware of it. They do not 'stand for' the types mentioned out of deference to a broad historical realism, but rather to illustrate by default their lack of awareness that 'geschichtliches Geschehen und privates Geschehen identisch sind'.

The novel thus reproduces in relief the poor political conscience and historical sense of this class at this time. However, as a whole it also gives us a feeling of the senselessness of history in general, independently of the impoverished perception of the Danzig characters.<sup>19)</sup> Oskar is cynical about historical sequences: 'Der Krieg hatte sich verausgabt. Man bastelte, Anlaß zu ferneren Kriegen gehend, Friedensverträge.'<sup>20)</sup> He derisively veils the course of the Nazi Imperialist machine in an image of history as a moving phantom: 'Während die Geschichte lauthals Sondermeldungen verkündend wie ein gutgeschmiertes Gefährt Europas Straßen, Wasserwege und Lüfte befuhr, durchschwamm und fliegend eroberte, liefen meine Geschäfte (...'

schlecht ...'.<sup>21)</sup> And he mystifies the fate of Danzig by caricaturing a school-book account of it:

Ein zerstörerisches und wiederaufbauendes Spielchen treibend, wechselten sich jetzt mehrere Jahrhunderte lang die Herzöge von Pomerellen, die Hochmeister des Ritterordens, die Könige und Gegenkönige von Polen, Grafen von Brandenburg und Bischöfe von Wroclawek ab.??)

Encapsulating itself in its own problem of how to perceive and respond to what was happening to German society at large, Die Blechtrommel does not transcend the class-specificity of this inability to see the sense of and make sense of history and politics, because it is organised around Oskar's self-consciously perverse autobiography. He is continually claiming that his career deliberately ran athwart history, athwart the social and political order of the period of the first two books of the novel. This is further entangled because Oskar also makes us doubt the sincerity of virtually all of the attitudes he professes, including this very cynical attitude towards historical reflection and political commitment. The first warning of this ambiguity comes in the very opening lines, when he slips in the information that his autobiographical tale is 'vorgelogen'. We are set wondering : is he telling lies about lying?

Just claims that Oskar's equivocation challenges the reader to reconstruct the sense of the epoch which the narrative does not communicate , and which its class-perspective could not construct:

Die Beschreibung des kleinbürgerlichen Romanpersonals ist dann zugleich Beschreibung des für eine adäquate Realisation des Textes vorauszusetzenden Lesers.

(...) die Verfremdungsstruktur des Werkes (...) bietet dem Leser gerade die Möglichkeit, sich im dargestellten Milieu (und dessen Einstellungen) wiederzuerkennen, entzieht ihm aber sogleich die Möglichkeit, sich mit ihm affektiv zu identifizieren. Gerade darin besteht ihre kritische Funktion und mögliche korrektive Wirkung.

Die Erzählperspektive realisiert sich in einer Art Reduktionstechnik, wonach die Situationen und ihre Gegenstände nicht gemäß dem ihnen objektiv, d.h. in in der Erwartung des Lesers, eignenden Interesse, Wertes dargestellt werden, sondern reduziert auf das "Interesse" Oskars. (...) Der durch Verfremdung distanzierende Erzählstil erreichte damit eine Emotionalisierung des Lesers, wie sie die zur Identifikation aufrufende, eindeutige Parteinahme des Erzählers und die dadurch bedingte pathetische Darstellung nicht bewirken würde.<sup>23)</sup>

But I believe that this possibility is frustrated because the perspective provided by Oskar is both too confusing and too potent.

It is too confusing because he refuses to commit himself either to a reliable narrative status or even to a definite personality (his accounts of his own motives are hazy to say the least). This leaves us with the problem of either

- a) accepting the ambiguity and/or dishonesty of Oskar and his story, as Just does, regarding it as a critical virtue, or
- b) taking this to be merely Oskar's perverse self-characterisation and not allowing this to detract from the status of his story, or
- c) not knowing how to relate Oskar as character to Oskar as narrator. Oskar's self-consciousness about presenting these problems does not relieve the confusion, it just makes us aware of it.

Oskar's perspective is overpowering because how the members of this society perceive history is overlaid with the dominant character's difficulty in making sense of himself. Oskar is unable to come to terms with himself as much as with the things he experiences, and the same is true of all the narrative figures in the 'Danzig Trilogy'.

In all three novels the first-person narrators ostensibly try to present a view of past and present matters but are really occupied with observing themselves, a process which only reveals how each is incapable of doing this honestly or satisfactorily. His status as first-person narrator gives Oskar too much scope to distort the truth. He pretends to be a winner but is much more a victim; pretends he has power over things with his drum and glass-breaking voice, whereas in fact he is at the mercy of his physical environment; pretends he has control over his own growth for the sake of protecting himself, whereas others have to protect him and it is only Matzerath's loyalty to his late wife's wishes which stops Oskar being handed over to the Nazi health authorities. In Katz und Maus Pilenz avowedly intends to tell the tale of his friendship with Mahlke, but actually attempts to conceal his own part in his friend's destruction. Neither does third person narration succeed in making sense of the self. In the first book of Hundejahre Eddi Amsel does not disclose anything important about himself, neither his thoughts nor the real facts about his activities during and after the war. He only intensifies

the enigma of what he is. In the third book Matern blames everyone else and never recognises his own responsibilities. Narrative irony and dislocation of perspective in the stories point up these contradictions but do not reveal how the unasked and unanswered questions might be understood to relate to each other. The characters and the narratives work through different roles, but an amalgamation of them exposes how they conceal and do not reveal. The contradictoriness of petit-bourgeois ideology is not transcended but reproduced in its absences and limitation.<sup>24)</sup>

Consequently the narrative voices have to retreat for the dimensions of their stories beyond these particular class-perspectives to be introduced. In the case of Die Blechtrommel the 'Glaube - Hoffnung - Liebe' and 'Atlantik-wall' excursions throw into relief how the main course of the story, as told by Oskar, cannot and does not deal with the moral and military dimensions of Nazi power in Europe: in the one the persecution of the Jews as in the 'Kristallnacht' in Danzig; in the other the occupation of France. Oskar retreats in both. Instead the issues are allegorised: in 'Glaube - Hoffnung - Liebe' through the fairy-tale format of "Es war einmal"; in the chapter entitled "Beton besichtigen - oder mystisch barbarisch gelangweilt" through dramatic form.

#### Past and Present

In a sense it is a mere truism that Die Blechtrommel is a novel concerned with how a particular class and



a particular community perceived and responded to its historical environment (is this not true of all novels?). So the matter of real interest is the particular way in which the past and the present's relation to that past are treated in Grass' novels. In Die Blechtrommel this is embodied in Oskar's dual (or even triple) role as 1) an agent himself of the world depicted and 2) as an ironically critical observer and organiser of the tale which is told. This latter role in turn has two aspects to it, roughly applying to the past and present respectively. In relation to the past he is the ironical observer who can throw the matter of the tale into relief and who prevents empathetic identification with it. In relation to the present (as of the time of writing at the end of the fifties) he is the moral memory of the members of the society he addresses.<sup>25]</sup>

Hanspeter Bode assumes that this latter aspect of Oskar as link-man between past and present applies to what the book does with history altogether, so that the novel deals with the history of the Third Reich predominantly as a component of the moral condition of post-war society. This would mean that the moral continuity between past and present German society dominates the picture of the past. As Brode says, the narrative position in the present supports the view that the novel's historical character serves a moral reckoning which he believes the book embodies. He consequently assumes that Die Blechtrommel and Hundejahre are identical in this regard.

If we are to accept that the novel treats history in a primarily moral spirit, it is necessary to consider the agent of that spirit. So critics have tried to extrapolate authorial intentions and preconceptions about the readership from the text.<sup>26)</sup> Contending outcries about the morality of the Danzig Trilogy and its author have constantly attended Grass' career as a novelist. Against charges that Grass' work is immoral or amoral, its partisans have simply turned the tables and argued that the lack of regard for conventional sexual and religious tabus is itself inspired by a humanist morality.

This has been a false approach to Die Blechtrommel, precisely because Oskar is the fictional mediator between any intention which may be attributed to the author and the readership. By working at different levels, he prevents his function as moral memory dominating over the other historical parts which he simultaneously plays (Agent-and-observer of a particular period of the past). Authorial intention has thus been objectified successfully to a degree which (I shall argue) Grass abandons thereafter.

The voice of the author becomes more intrusive the further he moves away from historical realism and the more self-consciously he inserts his own ideas and intentions into the social and political ideologies which his fictional or semi-fictional characters embody. In his major prose works, this development can be detected through the consecutive

changes in the balance of historicity to moralism, of realism to the novel of ideas. Grass' prose works move further and further away from the realist mode of Die Blechtrommel towards the novel of ideas, until Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke is a semi-novel of his own ideas alone.

This is a move towards a bourgeois treatment of ideas because they are abstracted from their basis in social life. It happens because Grass' fiction increasingly loses a sense of social context and of class to depict how people live historical and social relations and to depict their perception of them (Die Blechtrommel); it withdraws this living substratum from the picture of how people derive and express their ideas, so that ideas become abstractly and randomly attached to discrete individuals set loose from society (Ürtlich betäubt), and consequently ends up with the individual he knows best, namely himself (Aus dem Tagebuch ...).

#### Hundejahre<sup>27)</sup>

In many ways the transition begins in Hundejahre, where it can be diagnosed as a further reduction of cognitive content in the treatment of history. This novel handles historical experience obliquely, as remembrance. Compared with Oskar's linear looking-back in to his own and his ancestor's past, the opening of Hundejahre in the 'Erste Frühschicht' re-invokes factual particulars

from the past, interwoven into a quasi-mythological texture. These two different ways of referring to the past - the specific and the mythological generality - can be united here because the narrator's purpose is to remember sensuously rather than to make history rationally intelligible, and because his ambiguous social position at this point (as Brauxel) makes him an agent of a moral rather than a cognitive approach to history.

On the first page paragraphs about the person "Der hier die Feder führt, wird zur Zeit Brauxel genannt, steht einem Bergwerk vor, das weder Kali, Erz noch Kohle fördert", are juxtaposed with ones about the River Weichsel's flow through time without beginning or end. This establishes the two aspects of Amsel-Brauxel's narrative function. The first is to re-invoke the past in his fictional capacity as artist, instigator and organiser of the narration; the second to mediate the tension which pervades the novel as a whole between a determinate period of German history between the First World War and the Federal Republic on the one hand, and a symbolically distilled feeling of the German past with mythological connotations on the other.

The narrative present dominates the narrative past in Hundejahre, whereas it does not in Die Blechtrommel, through the distorted fashion in which Brauxel personifies culture-production in contemporary capitalist society. The book is about writing about the past just as much as it is about what happened in the past. As entrepreneur and artist Brauxel

condenses in one person both parties involved in the production and manufacture of art-commodities. Because he is both the capitalist who commissions the work of Harry Liebenau and Walter Matern and the producer of the first book himself, the two different social positions are conflated to what the entrepreneur and the literary producer have in common, namely different sorts of exceptional position. Brauxel is in a dual position which places him doubly above and beside society. By virtue of this elevation he approaches the past from a moral point of departure. But at the same time he is the task-master over his co-authors, which means that none of them is free, and so none of them is capable of assuming proper responsibilities for himself. Brauxel's moral authority over Liebenau and Matern and his organisational control over their literary production form a nexus of dependence which frustrates mutual emancipation. Neither are the individual fictional figures able to take responsibility for themselves, nor does the society the book is being written for take responsibility for itself - so that at the end "Jeder badet für sich", as the very last line puts it.

Having chosen to stick with this frustrating device the novel flees from cognition to moralism and from realistic representation to mythologising allegory. This is evident in the Third Book in particular where social, economic and political developments of the period are gratuitously allegorised. The scenario in which the worms in the flour direct the post war reconstruction of West-

Germany is a notorious case in point. Here the vagueness and lack of seriousness of the narrative voice can be felt:

Und welch kostenloses Vergnügen wäre es, jetzt, da der Schluß dieser Chronik Atem holt, noch dieses und jenes Zwischenspiel einzulegen; denn jeder könnte jetzt Anekdoten erzählen. Etwa das Histörchen von der Ufa, die ihre Treuhänder zu spät nach Neu-Nickelswalde schickt. Jeder könnte jetzt ein Lamento loslassen.<sup>28)</sup>

The whole of the Third Book does not handle post-war-developments in an historically serious fashion; it shows neurosis. It opens with the statement "Der Hund steht zentral" and throughout the dog accompanies Matern as a reification of the guilt he cannot quite suppress but cannot admit either and which is consequently the source of his obsessive vengeful behaviour. His psychological ill-health is caused by his moral failure. In Hundejahre this spiritual responsibility for the past is demonstrated much more powerfully than what the past was. Cepl-Kaufmann has enumerated the structural features of the book through which it removes itself beyond historically and socially locatable behaviour during the periods portrayed, towards the timelessness evoked by the Weichsel.<sup>29)</sup> The river flows through and past a time and a place, Langfuhr, which "war so groß und so klein, daß alles, was sich auf dieser Welt ereignet oder ereignen könnte, sich auch in Langfuhr ereignete oder hätte ereignen können"<sup>30)</sup> (which appropriately comes from the 'Schlußmährchen').

Albrecht Goetze argues that whilst the separate parts of Hundejahre reproduce German amnesia about the Third Reich, taken together they surmount it, and that such was the didactic end Grass aimed for.<sup>31)</sup> This states the case the wrong way around, because the three-dimensional narrative structure does not heuristically help explore and explain a society's political history, it is about how to remember ("Was längst vergessen war, bringt sich büchlings und rücklings als Schwimmer und mit Hilfe der Weichsel in Erinnerung")<sup>32)</sup>. It does have a pedagogical effect, but one which is moral much more than political in emphasis.

Throughout the book the references to Brauxel's commissions to Liebenau and Matern remind us how each narrator has to be nagged into confronting his own memories, but they still all fail to do so. Liebenau appears to in the 'Schlußmärchen', but having written his love letters in the first person he changes in the 'Schlußmärchen' to the third, as if not he but someone else were witness to the atrocities he recalls.

In the Third Book "Matern schreibt Präsenz"<sup>33)</sup>, his helter-skelter language is comically satirical and is another portent of his failure to reminisce critically, instead of which he is just reliving his own delusion. The circling and recircling of the narration in the 'Frühgeschichten'<sup>34)</sup> and the 'Liebesbriefe', the 'Schlußmärchen's' mixture of taking forward and recapitulating the story Harry has revealed<sup>35)</sup>, and the hectic present tense of die 'Materniaden' produce a

sense of remembering, not of historicity. In this process of remembering the agents of the story all remain oblivious to the bearing of their own behaviour on the horrors of the past. But aside from them, Oswald Brunies is a guide to how these things should be remembered, as a figure critical of the National Socialist regime and the paraphernalia of its ideology<sup>36)</sup>, who promotes a moral response in sympathy with the humanism he rather laconically represents.

Thus the triadic narrative structure of the novel does not so much refract complementary perspectives of an intricate historical experience, as Goetze claims<sup>37)</sup>, as embody different aspects and different stages (in descending order of enlightenment from Brauxel and Matern) of the frustrated state or absence of moral memory in contemporary West German society: the artist's ambiguous authority between conscience and capitalism (Brauxel), the insufficiency of privately remembering personal fate alone (Liebenau), the latent neurosis of a society which will not remember (Matern). An authoritative voice is heard only at the end of the last section of Book Two: "Vergessen wollen alle die Knochenberge und Massengräber, die Fahnenhalter und Parteibücher, die Schulden und die Schuld."<sup>38)</sup> This authority is clearly moral and it is one which falls outside the triadic narrative structure. The voice here is effectively the author's own, being quite uncharacteristic of Harry Liebenau.<sup>39)</sup>

Not that the book does not illustrate a particular epoch at all. Certain real features of the National Socialist



era and of the period of its gestation before the seizure of power are there. As in Die Blechtronne they enter the novel as its personae absorb National Socialist ideology. The racial laws of the time are mentioned and the anti-semitism which was behind the persecution of Amsel shows how the other protagonists connived in it and also their lack of a sense of guilt about this. The school's part in the socialisation of the community into militaristic Nationalism is exposed not least in the way Brunies detracts from the general conformism.<sup>40)</sup> As Nazi domination creeps into people's lives it creeps into the language of the narrator of that period, Liebenau. An example is the letter announcing that the pup which Harry's family dog sired is to be presented to Hitler:

jener eingeschriebene Brief (...), der uns über der Unterschrift des Gauleiters Forster mitteilte, man habe (...) im Namen der Partei und der deutschen Bevölkerung der deutschen Stadt Danzig beschlossen, den Schäferhund Prinz dem Führer und Reichskanzler (...) übergeben zu lassen.<sup>41)</sup>

The leitmotif phrase "Führer und Reichskanzler" reflects the mindless subservience of people to the leader-ideology of Fascism, but beyond that only the dog bears witness to the details of Nazi politics, allegorically clustered around the demonic figure of Hitler.

Whilst the private and the political are thus joined through sheer passivity, the social and historical particularity of this passivity, which was tangible in Die Blechtronne, is missing in Hundejahre. The relation between the private and the political does not characterise the

view of a community, it is part of how individuals fail to recognise their moral responsibilities.

In the 'Letzte Prühschicht' Brauxel interviews Harry for the job of second narrator and tests his knowledge of historical details about Danzig. These facts are both relevant and irrelevant to the narrative and they are apparently connected quite gratuitously.<sup>42)</sup>

The interview shows how a knowledge of historical details does nothing to correct Harry's inability to relate this political world to his own memories. There then follows a transition passage to Harry's book of love-letters which conjures up the scene immediately prior to the Nazi period, like the overture of an opera. It ends up obsessively repeating the phrase 'Ala Tulla geboren wurde' which portends the way Harry will be preoccupied with his private passion in the ensuing section of the narrative. Throwing disparate 'public world' and 'private world' contingencies together, this passage suggests that the personal obsession is prone to political forms, that is, allegorically represents them, but it is as if the needle got stuck in the record just before the link was to be made, so that the phrase is just statically repeated.

Indeed throughout the novel political behaviour is determined by characters' predispositions.<sup>43)</sup> Matern's disposition to violent behaviour is a case in point. As a Communist he threatens a Jungvolk leader with a beating and

later starts a fight with him. In the SA he picks fights with a Polish student organisation. He is involved in the attack on Amsel in the snow, and so on.<sup>44)</sup> As a violence that leads him into, through and out of the SA and its brawls, he comes to represent the generalized Nazi violence in which he becomes involved, which leads to the extermination of the war and the concentration camps. Through the symbol of the crows which hover above both the incidents of assault in the snow scenes and over the mountain of bones outside the concentration camp<sup>45)</sup>, the ultimate violence of the gas chambers is presented as an extension of the demonic behaviour of the child Tulla, the connivance of the other children and Matern's own part in the attack on Amsel. In turn, Tulla's nastiness seems to have come simply from hell; Matern's was supposedly inherited, most recently from his grandmother (leitmotif of grinding-teeth for both of them), and all of them are linked together through the archetype of the dog, whose genealogy goes back endlessly through the ages.

If not absolutely timeless, these sorts of links seem to speak of some kind of vague German predispositions. Furthermore, this latent and general propensity to violence is what actually connects the narrative trio. The evidence for this is Amsel's teeth, which Matern knocked out in the snow-scene assault and one of which Harry still carries with him at the time of writing.<sup>46)</sup> Above all else the narrative trio is moulded/<sup>out</sup>of guilt and complicity. They are respectively

the victim, the compliant observer and the aggressor.

Goetze believes that the determinist characterization in Hundejahre reveals "die systembedingte Deformation des Menschen"<sup>47)</sup>. It is true that in the first two books of the novel all the characters have a defined social and economic position, although in Book Three everything of that kind becomes extremely nebulous. Yet it is impossible to see how the social system conditions people's psychology and behaviour because nobody can break out of it. Character exists in a particular social situation, certainly, but there is little sense that the one is formed by the other and vice versa. There is no dialectic between personality and society.

For example, Matern is compulsively subordinate to Amsel and he attempts to break away from this authority by throwing away the knife his friend gave him. This shows that their symbiotic relationship is a matter of economic power:

Nicht Amsel kassierte. Walter Matern hatte, während Amsel gleichgültig tat, den Kaufpreis zu nennen, den Kauf durch Handschlag nach Viehhändlermanier zu besiegeln und die Münzen einzustreichen. Zudem war Walter Matern für den Transport der verkauften wie der ausgebliebenen Scheuchen zuständig. Er geriet in Abhängigkeit. Amsel machte ihn zum Paskack. In kurzatmigen Revolten versuchte er auszubrechen. Die Geschichte mit dem Taschenmesser war solch ein ohnmächtiger Versuch.<sup>48)</sup>

So economic oppression appears to be the cause of Matern's lack of self-awareness. But is it the cause or the effect? Or is there any interaction between the two? Quite the opposite is the case. His psychology is so static throughout

that the symptoms of his character are only tangentially diagnosed in society and in his position within it. Hundejahre does not deal in psychological motivation, only in neurotic effects, reified impulses.<sup>49)</sup> An early image of the relationship between Amsel and Matern is of the latter as a boy poised to throw the knife into the water. The muscular tension of throwing something away is described in slow-motion sequences in the course of four chapters in all:

Auf dem Deich gibt es keinen Stein. Er aber sucht (...). Er will muß will aber schmeißen. (...) Und es knirschen oben Zähne von links nach rechts. Es entspannt sich, während es fließt kommt untergeht treibt kreiselt zu- und abnimmt, die Faust über dem Taschenmesser, daß alles vertriebene Blut in die nunmehr locker geschlossene Hand schießt.<sup>50)</sup>

Whatever is going on in Matern's heart and mind is objectified here in the penknife "als geworfener Gegenstand der Wurfkraft"<sup>51)</sup>. The same impotence which his grandmother gave vent to when she attacked Lorchén with the wooden spoon keeps him tied to this wheel of karma. And Amsel took that assault as the subject of his very first scarecrow-sculpture, the commercial art-production under which Matern becomes subsumed. So the heritage he bears in his character is the occasion of this economic activity rather than the other way round!

Throughout the novel nobody is shown to have an active mind and will. Even Brauxel-Goldmündchen makes all his moves behind the scenes. Motives for action and behaviour disappear into objects. Jenny's appearance in the story is

supposed to be occasioned by a 'Schlagball'.<sup>52)</sup> Tulla's life is a story of obsessions with things: with Jenny's training-bag, later with having a child like a thing. This reification makes her incomprehensible as a person and that is why she is such a demonic figure. Matern's post-war trip of revenge is traced through the same sort of objectified metaphors. His visits are distinguished one from another only by the smells of people's houses. Objects substitute for psychological processes because the novel deliberately refuses to interpret and explain:

Erinnerungen. Dabei sollte niemand versuchen, die Gedanken eines Tischlermeisters zu lesen, der einer leeren Hundehütte gegenüber zögert und den Schritt verhält. Mag sein, er denkt zurück. Mag sein, er denkt an Holzpreise. Mag sein, er denkt an nichts Bestimmtes, sondern verliert sich, seine Fehlfarbe rauchend, zwischen Erinnerungen und Holzpreisen.<sup>53)</sup>

Ultimately, this lack of a psycho-social dynamic robs the fictional social setting amongst the petit-bourgeoisie of any purpose. Hundejahre provides no opportunity to discover the constituents of the protagonists' experience, the why and the wherefore of their behaviour. This virtually robs these people's lives and the political life of their society of any historical intelligibility. We have instead an archetypal mode of feeling about violence, guilt and bad faith. In Die Blechtrommel the lack of a sense of history was particular to a class and a community, it was a symptom of their social ideology. But in Hundejahre the texture of history has become vaguely all-German, and it is not at all obvious why 'Kleinbürger' should continue to appear as the protagonists of the eras depicted.

54)

Örtlich betäubt

The thoughts and actions of the characters in Örtlich betäubt are self-consciously political. Unlike the two novels discussed so far, the political and/or moral significance of their experiences and their behaviour is not a matter of what they make of their lives themselves but of how the narrator views them.

The past is refracted through his biography, and the main concern is how it is related to his present behaviour and through him to the other people he can influence. A sense of history has now become completely abstracted either from a particular class or a particular period. It is attached only to the individual consciousness of the narrator.

It is a symptom of the abstraction from class and time that Starusch, the narrator, is the spokesman of an absurdist view of history: for how could it make sense without any referents?

Denn was, Doktor, und wieviel können wir aus der Geschichte lernen? Gut, zugegeben: Ich war unfolgsam, hielt mich nicht an vermittelte Erfahrungen (...). Nichts können wir lernen. Es gibt keinen Fortschritt, allenfalls Spuren im Schnee.<sup>55)</sup>

However, as this view of history is attributed to an individual mind, it is given no general or absolute status and so it need not lead to nihilistic attitudes:

Meine Schüler lächeln, sobald ich die Lehrbücher in Zweifel ziehe: "Da ist aber kein Sinn, sondern nur organisiertes Chaos. - Warum lächeln Sie, Scherbaum?"

"Weil Sie trotzdem unterrichten und (...) trotzdem einen Sinn in der Geschichte suchen."<sup>56</sup>

Political views are presented as a matter of how to make sense of history in personal terms and how to communicate ones individual experience:

"Sehen Sie, Philipp, im Grunde stellt sich immer wieder die Frage: Können Erfahrungen vermittelt werden? Wir beschäftigen uns seit einiger Zeit mit der Französischen Revolution und ihren Auswirkungen. Wir sprachen über Pestalozzis Resignation und über das tragische Scheitern des Georg Förster in Mainz (...). Sie werden sich fragen, Philipp, was will er mit dieser Geschichte? (...) mir sollte es erlaubt sein, Ihre geplante Tat am historischen Beispiel zu messen."<sup>57</sup>

The individual's perception is paramount in örtlich betäubt. The social basis of people's attitudes has disappeared since Die Blechtrommel. Instead ideas are exchanged from person to person. Starusch is bothered about how he can make Philipp Scherbaum personally respond to his stories. His affection for Scherbaum adds to the feeling of one individual trying to communicate with another. The teacher, the adolescent and the dentist are all presented (through the teacher's eyes) as having different ways of viewing the world. But they are all figures from a 'free-floating intelligentsia' and hence their attitudes are not placed within any picture of a section of society from which they have emerged and within which they could be understood and judged for themselves independently of the narrator's account of them. The reader is forced into dependence on



Starusch. The subjectivity of his view is much more dominant than in Grass' earlier novels. This must be one of the reasons why critics overhastily, but not entirely unsurprisingly, equated Starusch with Grass himself.

This is a novel of political inquiry. Between Starusch, Scherbaum and the dentist it inquires about how values and experiences can form the basis of purposeful political behaviour. In particular the adults talk about how the humanism which inspires Scherbaum's present rejection of prevalent attitudes can be harnessed to reforms which he can participate in: "Da ihn die Welt schmerzt, geben wir uns Mühe, ihn örtlich zu betäuben."<sup>58</sup>) It is assumed that moral and political awareness can be selectively anaesthetized, unlike the total historical anaesthesia of Die Blechtrommel's petit-bourgeoisie. The answer which örtlich betäubt finds to the question it raises, is to make personal experience of the mistakes of the past on the part of the members of the generation who went through the Third Reich the criterion of how the younger generation should choose to act politically. The experience of someone like Starusch must be communicated to this younger generation. His personal problem is that he has trouble admitting to himself what his past has been, and keeps fantasising different versions of it.

Apart from the narrator, none of the personae can offer an alternative basis from which to form judgements, so the various political postures which are shown are manifestly coloured with his prejudices. He gives people political

labels all the time, and they are not characterised in any other way. The dentist is described as "ein bißchen fortschrittstübig"<sup>59)</sup>, and Irmgard Seifert lacks no detail of the stereotyped radical:

Noch vor zwei Jahren marschierte sie mit den Ostmarschierern. Da in Westberlin die DFU nicht zur Wahl steht, enthielt sie sich bei den regionalen Wahlen, aus Protest, der Stimme. Vor ihrer Klasse (...) beauf sie sich gelegentlich auf Marx-Engels und verblüffte aufbegehrende Schüler mit scharfer Kritik an Ulbricht.<sup>60)</sup>

As a result, personalities are composed of political stereotypes and political thinking is expressed as a series of self-confessions.

Critics are mistaken to criticise Scherbaum's plan to burn his dog on the grounds that it is a trivial device to represent extra-parliamentary protest and the opposition to the Vietnam War prevalent in the years depicted.<sup>61)</sup> This is taking the metaphor too literally. Örtlich betäubt does not deal with the opposition on its own ground at all. It is not interested in the people who formed it but in what can be abstracted from the issue at a general level. Even if the tone is tongue in cheek, the basic material of the novel is world views, political ideologies, social philosophies in abstract terms. That is why the concrete social background is notable for its absence:

Sagen Sie, Doktor, was halten Sie eigentlich vom Räte-System?  
Was uns fehlt, ist eine weltweite und sozial integrierende Krankenfürsorge. - (...)  
Aber in welchem System soll Ihre internationale Fürsorge ...?  
Sie soll anstelle aller bisherigen Systeme ...

Aber ist Ihre Krankenfürsorge, die ich im Verhältnis zu meinem Entwurf einer weltweiten pädagogischen Provinz sehe, nicht auch ein System? Die globale Krankenfürsorge ist, abseits jeder Ideologie, Basis und Überbau unserer menschlichen Gesellschaft. 62)

One of the things which is supposed to be shown is the danger of such views becoming extremely dogmatic. 63) The dentist takes a positivist pragmatism to absurd lengths. In his scepticism of this technocratic view, Starusch is prone to violent and romantic revolutionary day-dreams. Irmgard Seifert is already a caricature of extremism. Scherbaum's humanist voluntarism is distorted into vulgar-Leninism in *Varo lewand*. But all these ideologies cannot be seen to be historically relative as coherent aspirations within a particular society, because they just float amidst the 'Bildungsbürgertum', where all the characters in the book belong. And these characters are not social types, because they are not shown in a social texture. They are only psychological types, like the sort of totalitarian personality Seifert represents.

The only relief there is to the narrator's monopoly of perception is through the reader being invited into the text through montage: "Denn schauen Sie, Scherbaum, die Gleichzeitigkeit einer Vielzahl von Tätigkeiten will beschrieben werden." 64) Instead of one set of events superceding another, past, present and future constantly interact. 65) Between narrative devices like the dentist's promptings to distract his patient and the picture on the television screen

into which Starusch projects his fantasies, the reader is invited into the mind of the narrator because the links are left entirely open.

The historical and political environment in which the characters operate is passed over in silence, in favour of how the main protagonist perceives the messages of that environment. The reader's knowledge of this background to the time of writing is presupposed if those messages are to be intelligible. Thus the reader has to meet the author's prejudices about the various types of ideology represented with his own preconceptions. Reading Örtlich betäubt is consequently a silent dialogue between the author's view of political ideas and one's own. We can thus call it a novel of ideas.

Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke<sup>66)</sup>

This semi-fictional diary makes this dialogue even more abstract than in Örtlich betäubt. History has no sociological content whatsoever here. Individual experience (which is now either Grass' or the surrogate for Grassian principles: Ott/Zweifel's) is connected to the socially undifferentiated national past on the one hand, and the Social Democratic Party, its leadership past and present on the other.

These are the two sources of authority in the text, and individual personalities are the pointers for them. One reason for the diary format is that the diary is a medium where people appear as personalities as perceived by the writer. So it is a medium in which Grass can illustrate the two levels of authority which to him are politically decisive through any number of personalities he has known. The way Brandt is treated is a case in point, the case par excellence in fact:

Jemand mit Hintergrund.  
Jemand, der beim Aufstieg von Kehrre zu Kehrre  
Niederlagen gesammelt, verpackt und mitgeschleppt  
hat. (Doch selbst nach Siegen, die immer nur Teilsiege waren, wollte er nicht abwerfen, Ballast verteilen). Sobald er Schritte macht, bewegt er Vergangenheit, <sup>meine</sup>, unsere: die nationalen Wackersteine.<sup>67)</sup>

The book is obviously first and foremost Grass' own story. His political attitudes appear on the very first page:

Liebe Kinder, heute haben sie Gustav Heinemann zum Präsidenten gewählt. (...) Doch wenn ich genau rechne und jede Verzögerung (...) in mein Sudelbuch schreibe, dann wurde dieser Tag zwanzig Jahre lang vorbereitet, auch wenn er, Gustav, Gustav, kaum ahnte, wofür man ihn garkochte und wie zäh in Deutschland nicht nur das Rindfleisch ist.<sup>68)</sup>

Thus Grass' own view of history, progress and political principle informs the whole book. Because it is an autobiographical voice, the authorial voice claims an interpretative authority quite missing in the previous novels. It is a symptom of this authority that unashamed psychologistic stereotyping sits alongside affectionate portraits of political friends and colleagues. Augst is an example of this kind

of derision:

Ich kannte die Aufgerregtheit fünfzigjähriger Männer, die alles, aber auch alles, in einem einzigen, randvollen Bekenntnis loswerden, quittmachen wollen. Ich kannte ihre leeren, Worte beschwörenden Gesten, ihren Kriegsbilderbuchtraum, als Einzelkämpfer (...) auf verlorenem Posten zu stehen (...). Auch kannte ich, da beide alterslos sind, den jungen Augat, bevor der Mäters zu sprechen begann. Beide sind Zeugen des Absoluten. Beide sind süchtig nach Untergang und Erlösung.<sup>69)</sup>

or again as a generalisation:

Jemand ist streng katholisch erzogen worden, hat, noch während des Studiums, den Glauben, aber nicht das Bedürfnis nach Religion abgelegt, ist längere Zeit erfolgreich ironischer Freidenker, wird (seiner Ironie Überdrüssig), wider besseres Wissen Kommunist, betrügt sich neuerdings wieder gläubig, wie er erzogen wurde. (Jemand, parallel, konvertiert vom Kommunismus zum Katholizismus: nichts leichter als das.)<sup>70)</sup>

Personalities and their behaviour here are illustrations, either by example or by default according to Grass' views, of that sociologically bland kind of history which emerged from the murkiness of Hundejahre into örtlich betäubt. This process of abstraction ends here in Grass' philosophising, whose concepts are derived from a view of an undifferentiated collective national experience:

Denn manchmal, Kinder, beim Essen, oder wenn das Fernsehen ein Wort (Über Biafra) abwirft, höre ich Franz oder Raoul nach den Juden fragen: "Was war denn los mit denen?" Ihr merkt, daß ich stocke, sobald ich verkürze. Ich finde das Nadelöhr nicht und beginne zu plaudern: Weil das und zuvor das, während gleichzeitig das, nachdem noch das ... Schneller, als sie nachwachsen, versuche ich Faktewilder zu lichten. Löcher ins Eis zu schlagen und offen zu halten. Den Riß nicht vernähen. Keine Sprünge dulden, mit deren Hilfe die Geschichte, ein schneckbewohntes Gelände, leichtthin verlassen werden soll ...<sup>71)</sup>

The book is testimony to Grass' own political determination not to have this snail's pace evolutionist image of history abused. This is why it is about himself: "Weil immer noch unbestimmt, werde ich langsam zum Schneckenprinzip"<sup>72</sup>, because he believes you can only have a valid sense of the course of history by inserting yourself into it:

Nur wer den Stillstand im Fortschritt kennt und achtet, wer schon einmal, wer mehrmals aufgegeben hat, wer auf dem leeren Schneckenhaus gesessen und die Schattenseite der Utopie bewohnt hat, kann den Fortschritt ermesen.<sup>73</sup>

History is a stream of experiences which in itself has no purpose and only acquires one when individuals make choices and put their experiences to use according to these choices. The distinction between fact and fiction almost becomes irrelevant as a result. Hence the semi-fictional nature of the diary and the semi-biographical nature of the fiction around Ott/Zweifel testify to this haziness:

Auch wenn ich ihn erfinden muß, es hat ihn gegeben. (Eine Geschichte, die mir Ranicki als seine Geschichte vor Jahren erzählt hat, blieb bei mir liegen und lebte behutsam für sich; geduldig besteht sie auf einem gesuchten Namen, auf gesichertem Herkommen, auf einem Keller für spätere Zuflucht.)<sup>74</sup>

In his diary Grass describes himself collecting data about the Danzig Jews and the survivors in Israel to fill in the Ott story. His interest in following them up is not to document the history of a group of German Jews as representatives of their people under the Nazis and after the war. What he does is reproduce a set of facts which are pretty

unintelligible on their own and which he makes sense of for the purposes of his book by inserting the fictional character Ott into their midst. This gives an oblique reminiscence of the history of the Jewish community in Danzig. It breaks up its community-reality and illuminates the fate of people persecuted by the Nazis through the one individual rather than the group, an individual who suffers for his radical scepticism rather than his ethnic identity. Basically Grass is more interested in Ott than in the Jews, perhaps because he feels he must always remain an outsider to their sufferings. However, the result is that again we are looking at one rootless individual rather than a socially coherent group.

Within the diary format Grass does not reflect on the effectiveness of what he was doing in his campaigns. He just describes incidents from them in the light of his conceptions of moderate Social Democracy, expressed in the metaphors of the snail, of grey tones etc. At one point he laconically indicates the response he got to his speech at the SPD party conference,<sup>75)</sup> but he does not then tell us what significance, if any, he attaches to this. Grass highlights his descriptions with personality-sketches of persons he has known, cherished or respected in the course of his political work. The identity of the persons behind these character-portraits is often not explicit in the text,<sup>76)</sup> and the background to episodes he relates is often not clear<sup>77)</sup>. Thus factual details are less important to the picture he conveys of his political activities than



the general principles which can be abstracted from them, just like in örtlich betäubt. When he refers to the SPD's decision to use the colour orange for its publicity because the traditional red was deemed to be too radical, his own attitudes to this commercial approach to what should be a political decision-making process remain inscrutable. He covers over the paraphernalia with a metaphor for his own general principles:

Doch Zweifel, dessen Meinung und Kellererfahrung  
zumindest beiseite gesprochen, Wert hat, ließ mir  
(Über Gaus) die gezinkerte Nachricht zukommen: im  
Grunde ist auch Orange nur ein Deckname für Grau. 781

The sense and the spirit of Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke is entirely congruent with Grass' own political philosophy and he can be taken as his own subject in this book. The nature and basis of political attitudes and actions in class and community have completely disappeared. Instead the ideological colour of the text can be justly identified with its author.

Within Grass' own political philosophy history is a repetitive rather than progressive dimension to the choices people make about their lives, their ideas and their interests. I shall show this in chapter four. Meanwhile, we can see that it is a notion which is at the least latent in all his novels, but it only raises its head directly and authoritatively in this political and quasi-philosophical, semi-fictional diary. In the first novel a repetitive historical perspective was a characteristic of Oskar's. His place in the structure of the book meant that

it had no absolute authority as the model for interpreting the story. Die Blechtrommel had a class-based and petit-bourgeois sense of politics in half a century of German history. Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke has an individualist and bourgeois one. Hundejahre und örtlich betäubt marked stages between these two poles in Grass' novels. 79)

FOOTNOTES

- 1) "Wilhelm Meister, auf Blech getrommelt", & "Geniale Ver-  
ruchtheit", in Gert Loschütz (ed.): Von Buch zu Buch -  
Günter Grass in der Kritik, Neuwied & Berlin, 1968,  
pp. 12 & 18. resp..
- 2) Hans E. Holthusen: "Günter Grass als politischer Autor",  
in Plädoyer für den Einzelnen, Munich, 1967, pp. 40-68.
- 3) Dirk Grathoff: "Schnittpunkte von Literatur und Politik:  
Günter Grass und die neuere deutsche Grass-Rezeption",  
in Basis 1, 1970, pp. 134-152.
- 4) Enzensberger, op.cit., p. 10.
- 5) "Kleinbürgertum und Realismus", in Neue Rundschau, vol. 4,  
1964, p. 661.
- 6) e.g. Marcel Reich-Ranicki: "Eine Müdeheldenreise", in  
DIE ZEIT 29/8/69.
- 7) Interviews in Christ und Welt 11/2/66 "Ein Staat ist noch  
kein Vaterland", & Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt  
12/10/69 "Günter Grass 'Ich und meine Rollen', Wirklich-  
keit und Roman, Literatur und Politik".

- 8) e.g. Hellmuth Karasek "Zahn gezogen", in DIE ZEIT  
5/9/69, & Fritz Rumler's review of Davor in Der Spiegel  
17/2/69.
- 9) Charles Russell: "Doubt and the Self-Reflexive Politics  
of Günter Grass", in Praxis, Spring 1975, p. 133.
- 10) Die Blechtrommel/Danziger Trilogie 1. Neuwied & Darmstadt,  
1974, paperback edition. Hereafter page references only are  
given for the novels.
- 11) e.g. p. 21:  
  
Es begann damit, daß Koljaiczek, wie in jedem Spät-  
sommer, so auch im August des Jahres dreizehn ...  
  
& p. 217:  
  
Im Juli vierzig, kurz nachdem Sondermeldungen den  
häufig erfolgreichen Verlauf des Frankreichfeld-  
zuges gemeldet hatten, begann die Badesaison ...
- 12) e.g. pp. 17 & 18 quoted below, and p. 104:  
  
(die als Einbruch bezeichneten Fälle) häuften sich  
doch (...) so, daß die Kriminalpolizei kaum zur  
Ruhe kam, (...). Vom November sechsunddreißig bis  
März siebenunddreißig, da der Oberst Koc in Warschau  
eine Regierung der Nationalen Front bildete, zählte  
man vierundsechzig versuchte und achtundzwanzig  
tatsächliche Einbrüche der gleichen Art.
- 13) p. 85.
- 14) p. 141.
- 15) p. 66.

- 16) Georg Just: Darstellung und Appell in der "Blachtromal"  
von Günter Grass, Frankfurt, 1972, p. 54.

17) *ibid.*, p. 179.

- 18) Reddick fails to notice this and say s that the deaths  
illustrate:

the constant slant of the novel (...) that death  
and disintegration are the decisive element in the  
cycle, and that any particular individual's death  
is a barely reckonable quantity in the gross  
infinite of the cycle as a whole.

He supports his contention with the ant-image which occurs  
in the description of Matzerath's death ("Die Ameisen  
fanden eine veränderte Situation vor, scheuten aber den  
Umweg nicht, bauten ihre Heerstraße um den gekrümmten  
Matzerath herum etc., p. 326). Whilst this may justly  
qualify Just's observation, it does not refute it, for  
Reddick fails to take into account that the image  
proceeds from Oskar's ironical mode of observation.  
John Reddick: The Danzig Trilogy of Günter Grass, London,  
1975, p. 30.

- 19) Reddick is on surer ground when, instead of directly  
identifying the perspective of Oskar with the spirit of  
the novel as a whole, he calls on a series of images  
throughout the novel to support his view that the  
novel's "huge apparatus of metaphor (points) to an order  
of reality whose workings are random, inorganic and  
deeply ambiguous."  
*ibid.*, p. 46.

The images he points to include those on Koljaiczek's death under the boats, Agnes' death following the orgy of seals and Jan's house of cards during the fatal attack on the Polish Post Office.

ibid., pp. 10 & 11.

20) p. 32.

21) p. 210.

22) p. 327.

23) op.cit., pp. 49 & 156/157.

24) Russell makes a similar point, whilst not making any social distinctions about the view of history which the characters embody. As a result, when the attitude of Grass' characters to their society, contemporary West German society, changes in the later novels, Russell attributes this change directly and unilinearly to the author's change of attitude; and he skates over the changed social position of the characters:

it is also apparent that they are unable to offer any alternative value system or mode of action that would oppose the direction of that history. Oskar and most of Grass' narrators and artist figures, from The Tin Drum through Local Anaesthetic (...) having neither the perception nor the strength to sufficiently distinguish their values from those of their culture (...) act as agents of Grass' double parody. They reveal (...) the horror and desperation of Germany from the 1930s through the 1960s, while they themselves exemplify the very patterns of avoidance and egotism of the majority of the populace which permitted those events to take place.

op.cit., p. 130.

- 25) Hanspeter Brode: "Die Zeitgeschichte in der 'Blechtrummel' von Günter Grass. Entwurf eines textinternen Kommunikationsmodells", in Rolf Geissler (ed.): Günter Grass Materialienbuch, Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1976, pp. 86-114.
- 26) Brode and Just, for example, both start with assumed authorial intentions, relate them to the contemporary West German readership whom they take to be the addressees Grass envisaged and set out to analyse and prove how those intentions work in Die Blechtrummel.
- 27) Hundejahre/Danziger Trilogie 1, Neuwied and Darmstadt, 1974, paperback edition.  
I skip over Katz und Maus because it is not necessary for the purposes of this thesis to deal with all of Grass' prose works, and the novella, as is wellknown by now, was anyway conceived simultaneously with the writing of Hundejahre.
- 28) p. 354.
- 29) Gertrude Cepi-Kaufmann: Günter Grass/Eine Analyse des Gesamtwerkes unter dem Aspekt von Literatur und Politik, Kronberg/Ts., 1975, pp. 61-3.
- 30) p. 261.
- 31) Albrecht Goetze: Preasion und Deformation/Zehn Thesen zum Roman HUNDEJAHRE von Günter Grass, Göttingen, 1972,

These 1. "Erzählen als reflexives und transitives  
Erinnern", pp. 1-10.

32) p. 11.

33) p. 329.

34) viz. p. 50:

Doch davon darf, laut Vereinbarung des Autoren-  
kollektiva, nicht Brauxel, darüber wird der Herr  
Schauspieler berichten.

35) e.g.p. 277 juxtaposes Harry as a soldier in the last year  
of the war with a resumé of Jenny's origins and child-  
hood.

36) e.g.pp. 232-3:

Studienrat Oswald Brunies fragte einen Ritterkreuz-  
träger (...), was ihm durch den Kopf gegangen sei,  
als er zum ersten Mal einen toten Menschen, Freund  
oder Feind, gesehen habe. Die Antwort des Jagdfliegers  
ist mir entfallen. (...)  
Beliebt und gefürchtet wurde er allen und mir zum  
Vorbild; nur Studienrat Brunies stellte den Feld-  
weibel (...) in Frage, indem er Spottlicherchen  
aufsetzte und Matern bat, an Stelle eines Vortrages  
über die Kämpfe bei Orel ein Eichendorffgedicht zu  
lesen.

37) op.cit..These IV: "Das Kollektiv entspricht der Schilderung  
kollektiver Zeitvorgänge", pp. 28-32, and p. 30:

- 4.1 Indem so Geschichten dämonisiert erscheinen, wird  
Geschichte entdämonisiert.
- 4.12 Geschichte verliert ihre apersonale Zwangsläufig-  
keit. Geschichte wird klar, vollzieht sich nicht  
nach unveränderlichen Gesetzen, sondern ist das  
jeweilige Resultat kollektiver Verhaltensweisen;



38) p. 298.

39) p. 252:

Harry Liebenau (...) eignete sich nur zum Zugucken und Nachplappern.

40) e.-g.-p. 237:

Die Obersekundaner hatten Sprüche des Studienrates mitgeschrieben, die lassen sich zersetzend und negativ. Auf einmal sagten alle: Er war Freimaurer. Dabei wußte niemand, was das war: Freimaurer. (...) ich sagte: Also zum Beispiel an Führers Geburtstag, wenn alle flaggen, dann hängt Studienrat Brunies nie eine Fahne heraus, obgleich er eine besitzt.

41) pp. 129 & 130.

42) p. 95.

43) Cepl-Kaufmann, op.cit., p. 52.

44) Reddick, op.cit., p. 191.

45) pp. 182 & 257.

46) p. 189.

47) op.cit., p. 74.

48) p. 54.

49) Just analyses such an "Entäußerung des Psychischen in die Dinge" in the case of Die Blechtrommel as well, see op. cit., pp. 118-127. But in the first novel this trick of the narrative is entirely bound up with Oskar's perception, as yet another quality of his which distinguished him from those all around him. In Hundejahre it is omnipresent throughout the narrative from all angles. It consequently purveys a fatalism to behaviour and perception in Hundejahre which is left much more open in Die Blechtrommel.

50) pp. 12 & 14.

51) p. 15.

52) p. 94.

53) p. 272.

54) Örtlich betäubt, Frankfurt/M., 1972, paperback edition.

55) *ibid.*, p. 62.

56) p. 92.

57) pp. 146-7.

58) p. 158.

59) p. 22.

60) p. 41.

61) As Durzak puts it:

Die Wahl dieses Motivs ist falsch, da es Überfordert wird. Es kann unmöglich all das enthalten, was Grass ihm aufbürdet: nämlich ernsthafte revolutionäres Menetekel zu sein für Konsumblindheit, politische Abstinenz und allgemeine Gleichgültigkeit der durchschnittlichen Erwachsenenengeneration. Man merkt es diesem Motiv an, wie sehr der Roman der politischen Situation der Entstehungszeit, dem Jahr 1967, verhaftet ist, als die revolutionäre Unruhe unter der jungen Generation erst um sich zu greifen begann.

Manfred Durzak: "Abschied von der Kleinbürgerwelt. Der neue Roman von Günter Grass," in Basis 1, 1970, p. 236.

62) p. 60.

63) viz. Grass:

Das Buch örtlich betäubt behandelt zwar pragmatisches Verhalten und die Verfälschung oder Übersteigerung des pragmatischen Verhaltens zu einer Ersatzideologie, nämlich der des Pragmatismus. Dieser Ersatzideologie hängt in erster Linie der Zahnarzt an. Der Studienrat Starusch sieht zwar die Gefahren, daß sein pragmatisches Verhalten auch zum Pragmatismus werden könnte, deswegen sieht er auch den Zahnarzt sehr kritisch (...): Zwei Pragmatiker untereinander, der eine ideologisch bereits festgelegt. (...) Dieses dauernde Relativieren oder Wegrelativieren von Problemen - das versuche ich ja im Roman zu zeigen.

Interview in Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt, op.cit..

64) p. 13.

65) Irene Leonard: Günter Grass. Edinburgh, 1974, p. 67.

66) Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1974, paperback edition.

- 67) *ibid.*, pp. 175-6.
- 68) p. 7.
- 69) p. 112.
- 70) p. 122.
- 71) p. 12.
- 72) p. 47.
- 73) p. 213.
- 74) p. 17.
- 75) pp. 154-5.
- 76) e.g. for Egon Bahr, p. 124.
- 77) e.g. in a passage about a televised discussion Grass had with Rainer Barzel during the 1969 campaign Barzel is referred to only as 'er' (which also conveys how repulsive Grass found him!), pp. 71-2.
- 78) p. 111.
- 79) See the concluding chapter of the thesis for an afternote on Grass' most recent novel published in 1977.

PART II

GRASS' POLITICAL THINKING

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRASS' POLITICAL IDEAS

##### The tenor of the times

In this chapter I shall show how the most crucial factors which affected Grass' political thinking were the 'Grand Coalition' government between the CDU/CSU formed in late 1966, the student movement of the following two years and the problems of the new coalition between the SPD and the FDP which was first elected in 1969. They were the major political signposts of the second half of the sixties. This period saw the demise of CDU government and acute strains on political consensus in the Federal Republic after the heavily conservative climate of the previous one and a half decades. One way in which these strains made themselves felt around the middle of the decade was in a crisis of political leadership in the ruling Christian Democratic Union.

The most obvious political characteristics of the CDU era had been anti-communism, the patriarchal charisma of Adenauer and Erhard, clerical reaction and the supposedly hallowed principles of the market economy which had served the period of economic recovery and expansion since the war. By the mid-sixties this mixture could no longer cope with approaching recession. There was a crisis of the state's management of the economy and of social institutions.

Jürgen Dittberner describes the CDU's problems and their effects as follows:

Politisch offenbar wurden die inneren Widersprüche der Bundesrepublik in der Zeit von 1961 bis 1969, die hier Krisenphasen genannt wird. Sowohl im politischen als auch im ökonomischen Bereich genügten die alten Methoden nicht mehr, um die Perpetuierung des Systems sicherzustellen. Der Staat war nach der Bundestagswahl von 1961 und der folgenden bis 1963 zeitlich begrenzten Kanzlerschaft Konrad Adenauers sowie während der Kanzlerschaft Ludwig Erhards (1963 bis 1966) und Kurt Georg Kiesingers (1966 bis 1969) in eine permanente Führungskrise geraten, was sich u.a. in Vorgängen wie der "Spiegel-Affäre" und der studentischen Protestbewegung niederschlug. Im ökonomischen Bereich wurden die Schwierigkeiten evident nicht nur infolge der sich aus der wissenschaftlich-technischen Revolution ergebenden Probleme ("Bildungsnotstand"), sondern unter anderem auch aufgrund des seit 1958 sinkenden Wirtschaftswachstums und der strukturellen Schwierigkeiten vor allem in der Energiewirtschaft ("Kohlenkrise"). In dieser Situation erlebte die Bundesrepublik ihre erste spürbare Rezession in den Jahren 1966 und 1967, in deren Folge die Gefahr einer Stärkung des Rechtsradikalismus real wurde. Die politischen, sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Krisen der 60er Jahre wirkten sich im Parteiensystem dahingehend aus, daß die Regierungsparteien CDU und CSU Prestige und Selbstvertrauen verloren, während die Oppositionspartei SPD an Terrain gewann und die FDP sich von einer mehr national-liberalen zu einer mehr sozial-liberalen Partei wandelte.<sup>1)</sup>

In 1965 Erhard made an attempt to rethink the role of government. He proposed a model of a society which he said would be one which: "nicht mehr aus Klassen und Gruppen besteht, die einander ausschließende Ziele durchsetzen wollen, sondern (...) fernab aller ständestaatlichen Vorstellungen ihrem Wesen nach kooperativ ist."<sup>2)</sup> But many people who opposed Erhard thought that the details of this picture sounded as corporatist as its appellation - "eine formierte Gesellschaft" - implied. This slide away from pluralist ideas

about democracy radicalised much liberal opinion at the time against the Christian Democrat government and its leader. Grass criticised it vehemently in his first campaign for the SPD in 1965. One of his speeches "Ich klage an"<sup>3)</sup> illustrates how his position took shape within the context of this rupture in styles of government. It is designed to mobilise liberal opinions against the Christian Democrats' record towards the democratic values the SPD stood for. The SPD claimed a special commitment to democracy. When Willy Brandt became Chancellor in 1969, his catch-phrase was "Wir wollen mehr Demokratie wagen".

Erhard's clumsiness was a sign that the CDU had arrived at an ideological block which rendered it incapable of producing a suitable policy to steer the economy away from imminent recession<sup>4)</sup>. Such a policy was what the SPD brought to the Coalition government<sup>5)</sup> following a rupture between the CDU/CSU and the FDP over the tax requirements for the 1967 budget. They could not agree on whether or how far to go with deficit financing of state spending to invigorate the ailing economy. The pact between the CDU and the SPD accentuated the militancy of the student movement in West Berlin and the Federal Republic. This movement was growing the while in response to various problems. Chief amongst them were the death of a student during demonstrations in West Berlin in 1967 against the visiting Shah of Persia, the war in Vietnam and the state's extension of its control in the field of higher education, with its attempts to rationalise courses



and teaching structure. The moral issues combined with the threatened restraints on their autonomy in their studies, politicised the students at a time when the political tempo overall was gathering new pace, which was to bring the change over to Social Democratic government and its interventionist management of the economy.

As a result of the CDU's political deficit and of the hand the SPD had in the readjustment of government policies, impulses for new, or renewed, political ideas were released. Grass' most important political work was done in this climate. His attitudes were jolted beyond the constitutional priorities he held at the outset of his political interests in the early sixties. The radical stimuli from the student movement on the one hand and the political decisions made by the SPD on the other, between them made him more intellectually concerned with the traditions and aims of Social Democracy.

He invariably used negative contrasts in the first instance to endorse the Social Democrats. It is clear from this that he evolved his political ideas by negotiating successive malaises in his society as and when he was obliged to come to terms with them, rather than deriving his views from any theoretical understanding. He saw Social Democracy as the alternative to successive groups of twin-evils: the "Kra Ulbrich/Adenauer", then the radical left in the student movement and the extreme right, and finally to Capitalism and Communism.<sup>6)</sup>

What Social Democracy represented itself remained unclear for a long time.

Although the Sozialdemokratische Wählerinitiative (SWI) which Grass brought into being was something new, a new kind of support for a political party, it too tended to present its case for voting SPD only in terms of various reasons for rejecting the contenders. Virtually all the articles in the two magazines the SWI published for the 1969 Federal election argue simply for a change of government rather than for particular policies.<sup>7)</sup> The positive tones amongst this propaganda are almost entirely limited to a few essays in appreciation of a number of leading SPD politicians. So the SWI's approach is another example of how Grass' political views and attitudes developed in a very direct sense according to the dictates of the times and the issues which arose therein. It is important that the period which moulded the man's politics was overall one of strain and tension, the symptoms of a transition towards a period of reform politics under the Brandt government in the early seventies. For, at least in a general sense, the turbulence of these years explains why Grass became so very political at all, so energetically active for the SPD and for various other causes he supported. Not having started out in the socialist movement, he acquired the social democratic convictions he now holds from the resurgence of socialist ideas of the sixties. I shall now sketch what those convictions are and where he got them from.

The supremacy of parliamentary democracy

It was not any prospect of a socialist society which made Grass support the SPD when he first did so with colleagues in 1961.<sup>8)</sup> His open letter to Anna Seghers in that year<sup>9)</sup>, in which he exhorted her to say something publicly about the Berlin Wall, spoke of Socialism and Communism being dreams he respected but did not share. Four years later when he campaigned for the SPD himself, his reasons for doing so became clearer, and they were to do with parliamentary democracy and not with socialism. His foremost argument was to criticise the CDU-led governments of the last decade and a half for having abused the rights and freedoms which were formally guaranteed in the Federal Republic's Basic Law. He thought that constitutional rights were the most important things to be defended in a democracy<sup>10)</sup> and that improving social welfare was just a matter of legislation. He did not think it was up to him to make any proposals about social and economic programmes, and entrusted that job to the SPD politicians.<sup>11)</sup> It is clear that so far he was more interested in the methods and means of politics than with policy objectives. He supported the Social Democrats for their gradualist methods<sup>12)</sup> and said little about their ends.

Grass was not out just to raise support for the SPD. He proclaimed rather grandly that the choice which the people would make in the election would not be only for the short term but would be crucial to the whole future of

democracy in West Germany. In his speeches he used the phrase 'Wir haben die Wahl' in a dual and mutually reflexive sense. It referred straightforwardly to the forthcoming election but it also had larger dimensions. It was not just an election but also a choice facing West Germans between an entrenchment of undemocratic practices if the government remained unchanged, or a new lease of life for the values and constitutional principles of parliamentary democracy under the SPD:

Wer sich aller Kritik enthoben sieht und wie unser Bundeskanzler rasch bei der Hand ist mit plattem Schimpfwort und altvertrauten Obrigkeitsallüren, dem sei gesagt, daß -laut Grundgesetz- die Bürger der Souverän unserer parlamentarischen Demokratie sind. Wäre es anders, es müßte der Rechtsstaat verkümmern. Wird es anders, dann darf der Polizeistaat wieder einmal seine engen Reviere abstecken. Wehret den Anfängen. Wir haben die Wahl.<sup>13</sup>

So thus far Grass had shown no interest in the particular traditions of German Social Democracy. Instead he had seen the SPD's traditions entirely in the light of liberal democracy:

Die SPD mit ihrem Reformwillen und ihrer demokratischen Tradition fußt auf Vernunft und Aufklärung. (...) mit ihrer erprobten Verfassungstreue haben die Sozialdemokraten mehrmals die Weimarer Republik gerettet.<sup>14</sup>

The motto he had chosen for this campaign was "Dich singe ich Demokratie"<sup>15</sup>, deliberately à la Whitman, and he celebrated the virtues of the SPD in the context of expounding the values and principles of parliamentary democracy, regardless of its social content.

Reaction to the Grand Coalition

Grass' response to the Grand Coalition marks a change from the essentially liberal basis of his original allegiance to the Social Democrats. In his correspondence with Willy Brandt on this matter he defended a concept of Social Democracy as something greater than what ever the SPD presently might decide to do. In the name of Social Democracy with capital letters, he upheld the principles of a tradition which went beyond the parliamentary priorities which had apparently been his own and the SPD's up to that time. But now he derided the way the SPD leadership had interpreted those priorities to get a foothold in government, and called the decision to enter a coalition with the CDU cowering to the "Fallgesetze der Taktik"<sup>16)</sup>. The SPD had betrayed its electoral mandate by deserting from the opposition in parliament, which had now been reduced to a handful of FDP members. Faced with this distortion of parliament's representative function and the SPD's responsibility for this situation, Grass could no longer equate the SPD with the democratic values enshrined in the constitution. Consequently he had to reexamine either his faith in the SPD or his own unqualified faith in parliamentary democracy. In the course of time he did both.

He began with the former. He redefined Social Democracy for himself and for Brandt as a body of principles whose logic could not be expropriated by any one leader because it was built into the whole history and tradition of

"die Partei eines August Bebel".<sup>17)</sup> He did not describe how this differed from the SPD leadership's view. When Brandt warned him that "Das Gewissen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei schlägt nicht außerhalb dieser Partei" he could only counter negatively and say that whatever Social Democracy stands for, it is not homogenous and Herbert Wehner's design betrayed its pluralism. He was no more precise than this. The dilemma about what Social Democracy was if it had compromised the spirit of parliamentary democracy as the SPD had done, could not be clarified as long as Grass thought that democracy itself was in crisis. In an open letter to Novotny, President of Czechoslovakia, in 1967, he said that democracy was crumbling world wide and in the West was corrupted by opportunism. But he said nothing about whose interests this "bloße Interessenhörigkeit"<sup>18)</sup> served, or about what kind of democracy could better fulfill the political will and social interests of the people. Later he was to have some clearer ideas about this. In 1966/67 his original faith that justice and freedom were guaranteed by the SPD on the one hand and the Basic Law on the other had been shaken, but he had nothing yet to put in its place.

He gradually found something in the course of his own political work and his disagreements with the student movement. Within two years this experience had reconciled him to the SPD's record within the Grand Coalition. This was partly because of the policies that the Cabinet had introduced, particularly economic policies which appeared to cure the recession. But it seems that the main reason was his

objection to the radicalism of the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition of the day. By autumn 1968 he was still criticising the Grand Coalition but his greatest virulence was directed at the students:

Denn ziemlich allein gelassen, zermürbt sich die SPD an den Folgen ihrer Entscheidung vom Dezember 1966 (...).

Doch wer meint, links von der SPD zu stehen, und wer glaubt, nun Anlaß zur Schadenfreude zu finden, der möge sich bewußt sein, daß mit dem Abgesang dieser großen demokratischen Partei auch und wieder einmal der Abgesang der Demokratie in Deutschland angestimmt werden könnte.<sup>19)</sup>

So he came to the conclusion that to rescue democracy, one would have to rescue the reputation of the SPD even if it meant putting up with the coalition it was in:

Wenn mich vor zwei Jahren der Abschluß der Großen Koalition ernsthaft und grundsätzlich an der SPD zweifeln ließ, der Generalangriff der links- und rechtsextremen Flügel auf diese Partei hat mich darin bestärkt, weiterhin als Sozialdemokrat den langsamen und permanent von Rückschlägen gezeichneten Weg der Reform zu wählen.<sup>20)</sup>

This was still rather defensive. Before long he was supporting the SPD's position positively, on the grounds that its actions in government were helping to break down conservatism and to foster democratic attitudes as he said during the 1969 election campaign:

Die Bürger der Bundesrepublik beginnen mündig zu werden und auf demokratische Weise erwachsen. Allzu lange war die Politik hierzulande auf den Slogan der CDU "Keine Experimente" gestellt. Seit drei Jahren haben die Sozialdemokraten begonnen, ihre Reformpolitik gegen den lähmenden und krisenfördernden Stillstand zu setzen.<sup>21)</sup>

Being a man of initial liberal priorities, Grass had reacted to the severely compromised parliamentary situation on the one hand and the radical anti-parliamentary opposition on the other by criticising virtually all the important political forces of the day to a greater or lesser extent. This was a futile experience and as the prospect of a resolution drew near with the approaching federal election in 1969, he put his faith in a change of government, which is one reason why he concentrated so much of his political energies into that campaign.

However, by the time of the actual change of government, he could not just breathe a sigh of relief and rest content on his laurels again. For in the meantime he had been faced with the student movement's radical politics and its challenge to liberal democracy, which in 1965 he could afford to deride as just so much elitist intellectualism<sup>22</sup>). This political confrontation, which was a confrontation of ideas as well as actions (even if Grass despised the action the students took) meant that he had to think about the long-term purpose and potential of social-democratic government. It had to promise more than a resolution to this latter period of parliamentary stagnation and extra-parliamentary polarisation.

Grass' own political disposition brought him face to face with the extra-parliamentary campaigns. He supported their right to freedom of speech and assembly, and when



things in his view got out of hand, he felt continually behoven to take the student movement to task in defence of both the parliamentary democracy which he supported himself, and of the reformist perspective which he thought ought to inform their criticism of West German society and their activities<sup>23</sup>). Thus his own opposition to their politics brought him up against the revolutionary traditions which the student movement reclaimed. This exchange of rhetoric influenced his view of what social-democratic politics stood for and what they should be. For the match between the Social Democrats and the meaning of democracy which he had cherished in 1965 to be remade in 1969, democracy had to be conceived in greater depth than it had been before. Liberal democracy had come under fire under the influence of the student movement. And from the trade union's policies too, Grass learnt that democracy could not be left as political democracy, but ought to involve social and industrial democracy as well.

#### Defence of Social Reformism

Roughly speaking Grass defended the gradualism of reform politics against ideas of revolutionary change before he ever gave the public any account of what social reforms could or should achieve. This chronology is not surprising considering that his earliest political statements said little or nothing about social objectives either. His altercations

with the student left introduced a lot of socialist terms and names into his political vocabulary. On various occasions, for instance, he sketchily defended Marx against Lenin, whom he saw as a fiendish traitor (so his polemics often implied) to what was worthwhile in Marxism.<sup>24)</sup> He damned Lenin's politics in the name of Rosa Luxemburg<sup>25)</sup>, but as he did not elaborate on the issues they had disagreed about, these names served little more than polemic. At the same time, this polemic was part of his response to the student left. He took up their own points of reference to criticise them, whilst this criticism was also an introduction to the history of Marxism and the traditions of Socialism for himself. He ultimately saw his own political ideas in the light of the historical split in the socialist movement between Communists and Social Democrats, between Revolution and Reformism.

The reasons Grass gave in the late sixties and around the turn of the decade for rejecting revolutionary change were partly ethical, partly historical and partly psychological, welded together into a combination which led to inescapable disaster - the "Mechanismus der Revolution"<sup>26)</sup>. Ethically he had a horror of revolutions for what he sees as their inevitably consequential terror.<sup>27)</sup> He is convinced that this is inevitable from the history of the French and Russian Revolutions and the dictatorships which arose after them.<sup>28)</sup> He also talked about a psychological dynamic in violent politics, identically pathological whether associated with the right or the left:

Dabei ließe sich leicht beweisen, daß ohne die monatelange Hetze mehrerer Springer-Zeitungen der Dutschke-Attentäter, Josef Bachmann, kaum ein Ziel für seine latente Aggressivität gefunden hätte; dabei ließe sich leicht beweisen, daß es ohne die Gewaltaufrufe des SDS (...) kaum zu den Frankfurter Kurzschlußstaten gekommen wäre. Es handelt sich in beiden Fällen um irrationale Gewalttaten. Bachmann ist ein Psychopath: die Kaufhausbrandstifter in Frankfurt sind exaltierte Neurotiker.<sup>29)</sup>

Grass was an angry man in these times and he thought that the far left was no better than the far right, because its actions polarized and poisoned the climate in which supporters of gradual reform wanted to work.<sup>30)</sup> In 1968 he derided:

die Gratisproklamation der Revolution in einem Land ohne revolutionäre Rasse, ohne revolutionäre Vergangenheit und Tradition inmitten einer Gesellschaft, die mehrheitlich konservativ denkt und wählt ...<sup>31)</sup>

The only people to benefit from revolutionary movements in his view were conservatives. The victims were the reformists. This is why his main argument for gradualism was his opposition to revolution. How far parliamentary gradualism can change society has always been a secondary question to him. He sometimes said that Britain and Sweden showed what could be done through degrees of socialism.<sup>32)</sup> There were no other precedents available. West Germany's first experience of a programme of reforms was to be the Social-Liberal government under Brandt. Until that government had been in office a few years there were few examples which could help Grass substantiate his ideas; he had to insist that reforms should be made to work.

It is characteristic of the Idealism of Grass' politics that he used the term 'democratic socialist' for

at least four societies whose socialist common denominator is far from obvious: Britain, Sweden, Czechoslovakia in its six months of freedom in 1968, and potentially the Federal Republic. This must mean that he is not talking about the structure of the economy at all. Democratic socialism must describe the general tenor or direction of a society. He foresaw no limitations to reforms and what they could achieve towards a better society, because the tasks of the democratic socialism he has in mind vary from country to country and are not trapped in the mechanical logic of revolutions, which, he has implied, is universally homogenous and of iron necessity, however varied the conditions of revolutionary societies. He certainly judged with two sets of standards here.

So in his opposition to revolutionary methods Grass did not at first get as far as defining the content of social democratic politics, any more than he had done when he had opposed the methods of the Christian Democrat governments. In the course of berating the students for the revolutionary theories they proclaimed, he took sides himself on the great split in the Marxist tradition. His intellectual advocate for the reform-politics he supported was Eduard Bernstein. He considered that his own views were faithful to the spirit and principles of the theoretical Revisionism which is linked to Bernstein's name. He took up from Bernstein what appears to be a theoretical premise that social formations require constant revision:

- Ich bin ein Revisionist. Dieses folgenreiche und nach Säuberung schreiende Schimpfwort trifft mich nicht. Keine Gesellschaftsform, die nicht der unablässigen Revision bedurfte. Keine Reform ohne Revision des Bestehenden.<sup>33)</sup>

In Grass' hands this premise was less theory than a maxim for practice, for supporting and working through the existing social system and its institutions:

Wir leben in einer nur unzulänglich von Reformen bewegten, insgesamt mittelmässigen parlamentarischen Demokratie. Ihre Fehler liegen offen zutage. Man muß nur hinlangen, hindeuten, und schon reagiert sie, entweder hilflos oder polizeistaatlich, insgesamt unsicher und für den, der genau hinhört, oft auch einsichtig und vernünftig.<sup>34)</sup>

We can see a reason for Grass making this link with a theoretical tradition in his need to come to terms at this time with the SPD's position in the Grand Coalition without abandoning his critical stance. In the name of Revisionism he could accept the existing state of affairs even when as deformed as this, because the maxim that societies always need reforming meant that his acquiescence was only relative. Thus, apparently paradoxically, he appeared to move away from the left into a closer alignment with the SPD leadership at the same time as he adopted a theoretical view which would later allow him to criticise his society more substantially; more substantially in fact than he had done in his original objections to the Grand Coalition, when he had appeared to be a natural ally of the emerging radical left. Armed with the principles of Revisionism Grass could justify his more benign attitude to the government against the critique of the student left and of other writers and intellectuals.

Thus his political premises and attitudes were modified, but they did not move intellectually beyond the common re-shuffle of views which was going on at this time. He readjusted his attitudes along with the trend to the left in this brief heyday of socialist ideas. The sort of references he made to Lenin, Luxemburg and Marx when stating his positions, his stand for reforms against revolution, his alignment with Revisionism and Democratic Socialism made up his individual blend of political ideology. But that blend was drawn from the pool of available ideas which were released, or re-released, in the ideological and social turbulence of those years between the middle and the end of the decade.

The particular concepts he took up were his cudgels against the far left who appeared to be menacing the SPD's road to power. But when the SPD did get into power in 1969, those ideological weapons turned into his tools of analysis for assessing the new government's performance critically. For once Grass had articulated his revisionist position, its own logic presupposed a critical view of the social order and of the aims of Social Democracy. So he was able to endorse the SPD's record over a hundred years, including the Grand Coalition, in the name of ever greater degrees of social reform<sup>35)</sup>, whilst he preserved a seat for himself on the leftish wing with a more radical view of social-democratic objectives in the long term.

The Reform-Government and Democratic Socialism

The centre of Grass' ideas on democratic socialism is power-sharing: Mitbestimmung. He was keen to see existing legislation on workers' co-determination extended, so that, for instance, participation in management decisions would include pricing and profits.<sup>36)</sup> In his view Mitbestimmung was the cornerstone of socialism if it were extended horizontally in a radical fashion. Power-sharing as envisaged in industry could only be effective if people participated in decision-making in all areas of social life, in education, in legal institutions and so on:

nur als eine Gesamtform in allen Bereichen der Gesellschaft wird (die Mitbestimmung) sich -in den Schulen und Universitäten, am Arbeitsplatz wie im Rechtswesen- verwirklichen lassen.<sup>37)</sup>

Without this parliamentary democracy is only formal democracy, "der nur formal-demokratische westliche Kapitalismus".<sup>38)</sup> a counterpart of Communism, for under both systems the state holds sway beyond genuine popular control. He spoke of "der formalistische Leerlauf der Staatsapparate beider Gesellschaftssysteme".<sup>39)</sup>

Grass has no view of a final design of society which is to be worked towards. The details of how democratic socialism is to function must be established through trial and error. The propositions he made as a propagandist and a political intellectual were throughout the years of his active commitment to the Social Democrats for the most part of the most general kind:

Veränderungen werden durch Veränderungen möglich und lösen Veränderungen aus, die abermals Veränderungen ermöglichen. Deshalb wird jede Reform, die sich isoliert versteht, am Mangel an Einsicht in ihre eigenen Konsequenzen scheitern. (...) Da sich die SPD ihren Wählern oft nur ungenau und ihrem Selbstverständnis widerspruchsvoll darstellt, soll die Partei die Grundlage der Sozialdemokratie immer wieder überdenken und ihre langfristigen Reformaufgaben konkret formulieren.40)

He is essentially a mentor of German political life, and he only made statements about specific problems and proposals when they had already been raised by other people. The mentor position defined the limit of his political thinking. He arrived at his idea of democratic socialism after at least five years (i.e. from the end of 1966 to 1972) of declaring his allegiance to Social Democracy as a political method and tradition and to Revisionism as a theory, whilst only latterly addressing himself to definite policies. He built upon his party-political affiliations with ideas from a number of external sources.

In the first place, his own public image since his campaign in 1965 encouraged him to raise the banner of Social Democracy around 1967 to 1969 in order to distinguish himself from both the Grand Coalition and from the extra-parliamentary opposition. This banner gave him a kind of historical respectability. It allowed him to define himself against the right and the left and gave him a bulwark against the arguments of the left, which the virtually pure constitutionalist position he held before 1967 could not have done. After the SPD took office in 1969 he began to talk



about some kind of a long term social-democratic programme. Here he took up co-determination from the trade unions and from the SPD's own legislative intent. His ideas for extending it to a range of social spheres and his belief that it could represent a qualitative change of power were basically the ideas of the Young Socialists in the SPD. The very fact that the SPD had got into power, particularly after 1972 when the SPD-FDP's Ostpolitik<sup>41)</sup> had a secure future, was a spur for him to find to a forward-looking view of why he supported that government for more than the fresh air it brought with it after twenty years of Christian-Democrat government.

Having originally seen Social Democracy as a purer kind of democracy, Grass first began to think about it as a kind of Socialism when the reforms in Czechoslovakia in 1968 showed him that if a state with a socialist economy could be politically democratised, socialist reforms should be made in a parliamentary democracy with a Capitalist economy:

Für mich als Sozialdemokraten bedeutet das: im gleichen Maß, wie sich der Sozialismus seinen Geschwistern aus Zeiten europäischer Aufklärung, nämlich den demokratischen Grundrechten, zu nähern versuchte, sollte sich die Sozialdemokratie vom kurzfristigen Konsumenten lösen und einen Sozialismus der siebziger Jahre entwerfen, in dem durch qualifizierte Mitbestimmung und Mitverantwortung die Kontrolle der Macht- und Produktionsmittel auf demokratische Weise gesucht wird.<sup>42)</sup>

Co-determination was thus in his view the key area of reform for a modern socialist strategy. This was not a very ambitious vision of democratic socialism. Mitbestimmung was an issue

which was revived on all sides at this time. The government's economic planning required the cooperation of the trade unions to control wage increases and to have reasonably reliable expectations of what they would be in order to be able to project how the economy would develop. The German Trade Union Federation (DGB) was willing to cooperate if it was promised legislation to improve and extend industrial co-determination. That is the main reason why there was such a lively interest in the subject of participation. In March 1968 the DGB published its own model legislation to cover the biggest companies. The CDU's labour wing (the Sozialausschüsse) also produced proposals in May. And in December, the SPD published a draft bill with a view to the elections which were due the following year (Entwurf eines Gesetzes über die Unternehmensverfassung in Großunternehmen und Konzernen).

After the SPD-FDP coalition won that election, it showed little sign of advancing towards socialism. The halting progress it made to fulfil its election promises about participation in particular made Grass disillusioned with piecemeal reform for its own sake, and he began to think that reforms needed some kind of theoretical structure.<sup>43)</sup> He criticised the way that the government's pragmatism depoliticised the principles of Social Democracy. Now that the SPD was in power, it needed to rethink how it should act upon those principles. Its current programme, the Godesberg Programme, which had been adopted in 1959, no longer met this requirement. The SPD as a whole felt this

was the case and the leadership needed something which would help alleviate the strains between the government and the party membership. As a result, years were spent discussing two versions of an extension to Godesberg. In 1975 the party conference finally resolved upon an Orientierungsmaßnahmen 1985. 44)

Grass entered this debate about programme-planning. He saw that it was imperative to structure a programme of reforms and to clarify their aims. The task would then be to make it carry popular support:

Ich habe in meinem Beitrag in Saarbrücken darauf hingewiesen, daß die einzelnen Reformen in ihrem Zusammenhang dargestellt und auch von der Planung her als eine Einheit begriffen werden müssen. (...) Wenn ich dabei davon ausgehe, daß natürlich für das Gesamtmosaik, d.h. für Umweltschutz, Mitbestimmung, Vermögensbildung, Realisierung des großen Schulkonzepts der integrierten Gesamt- und Hochschule, Wohnungsbau, Gesundheitswesen, ganz neue enorme Mittel bereitgestellt werden müssen, dann wird es gelingen müssen, den Bürger zu Überzeugen. 45)

He is talking here of what is desirable. Whether it is feasible seems to be entirely a matter of will-power, for Grass never said anything about the economic limits of a capitalist system and of its tolerance of reforms. He is an idealist in his determination that the support of individual citizens can be gained whatever their material concerns, so long as everyone can understand what the long-term aims are.

To sum up, Grass' earliest public statements about politics were essentially liberal in the sense that he concentrated on the polity and relegated the social and economic

dimensions of politics to a subsidiary position. He assumed that if people took parliamentary democracy at face value, the spirit of democracy would flourish. Legislative loopholes and cracks in the social fabric would be a purely technical matter regulated by the four-yearly choice between contending sets of experts. In the seventies he looked at these things the other way round and saw that the values of the constitution could only be brought to fruition when social, economic and political questions were related to each other.

Nevertheless, this was all part of the same way of thinking. It was the very literalness of his commitment to democratic values, civil rights and freedoms that made him move beyond the parliamentary realm eventually in his understanding of what democracy is and what it should include. He thought that participation should be extended to all social spheres, his primary reason for advocating co-determination being that he saw it as a means of fostering democratic attitudes. It was the lack of these in his compatriots which was his most important reason for entering politics in the first place.

Thus by the mid-seventies, Grass' view of what social-democratic strategy should be certainly changed, (and no doubt is changing still), but the values he brought to politics have not. His consistently literal view of democracy as the sovereignty of the people unites his political attitudes from the time when he thought of that sovereignty in purely parliamentary terms to the time when he advocated it

in as many levels of society as possible. It is this consistency rather than the actual ideas which gives Grass' ideology its individual character, for none of his main ideas were unusual at the time he advocated them. In this chapter I have described what those main ideas were. In the next I shall look at them as a whole, as an ideology as opposed to a series of ideas, and I shall attempt to probe that ideology analytically.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Jürgen Dittberner: "Die Parteitage von CDU und SPD", in J. Dittberner & R. Ebbighausen (ed.): Parteiensysteme in der Legitimationskrise, Opladen, 1973, pp. 100-101.
- 2) As quoted by Jörg Hufschmid: Die Politik des Kapitals/ Konzentration und Wirtschaftspolitik in der Bundesrepublik, Frankfurt/M. 1969, p. 113.
- 3) In Über das Selbstverständliche/Politische Schriften. Munich, 1969, revised paperback edition, pp. 58-67.
- 4) For the general argument concerning the qualitative change of economic policy in the mid-sixties and the modification of prevailing ideology about the government's role in the economy, see Hufschmid, op.cit., as a whole. For the particular argument here about Erhard's ideas, see *ibid.*, chap. IV, part II "Erhards 'formierte Gesellschaft'", pp. 111-114.
- 5) For an account of the first measures of state intervention in the economy undertaken under the Grand Coalition see Hans-Hermann Hartwich: "Konturen einer neuen ökonomischen Politik", in Zeitschrift für Politik, Vol. XIV, 1967, pp. 428-458.

- 6) e.g., "Die kommunizierende Mehrzahl", in Über das Selbstverständliche etc., op.cit., p. 153; "Radikalismus in Deutschland", ibid., pp. 186-196; "Sieben Thesen zum Demokratischen Sozialismus", in Der Bürger und seine Stimme / Reden Aufsätze Kommentare, Darmstadt & Neuwied, 1974, pp. 178-181, resp..
- 7) dafür, No. 1, May 1969, & No. 2, August 1969.
- 8) i.e. Martin Walser (ed.): Die Alternative oder Brauchen wir eine neue Regierung, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1961.
- 9) "Und was können Schriftsteller tun?" in Heinz Ludwig Arnold & Franz Josef Görtz (ed.): Günter Grass - Dokumente zur politischen Wirkung, Munich, 1971, p. 6.
- 10) viz. "Es steht zur Wahl", in Über das Selbstv. etc., op.cit., pp. 14 & 15:

Unser Grundgesetz ist unser größter Besitz. Noch nie hatte ein deutscher Staat eine so gute, das heißt, freiheitlich rechtliche Grundlage. Laßt uns vorsichtig und mit Geduld an ihm weiterbauen. Meine Vorschläge für den nächsten Bundestag, der im September gewählt wird, lauten:

- Erstens: Im Grundgesetz sollte unser Wahlsystem verfassungsrechtlich festgelegt werden.
- Zweitens: Die Fünf-Prozent-Klausel widerspricht der grundgesetzlichen Forderung nach der Gleichheit der Wahl. Sie sollte aufgehoben werden, da sie das Prinzip der Rechtsstaatlichkeit verletzt.
- Drittens: Abänderung des Artikels 38 Absatz 2 oder des betreffenden Wehrpflichtgesetzes. Denn wer mit dem vollendeten achtzehnten Lebensjahr verpflichtet wird, sollte auch wahlberechtigt sein.

- 11) viz. *ibid.* p. 19:

Es kann nicht meine Aufgabe sein, die SPD und ihr Programm unausgesetzt anzupreisen; Willy Brandt und Professor Schiller, Fritz Erler und Gustav Heinemann, Professor Schellenberg und Helmut Schmidt sind Männer, die ihre Sache zu vertreten wissen.

- 12) "Rede über das Selbstverständliche", *ibid.*, p. 82.

- 13) "Des Kaisers neue Kleider", *ibid.*, p. 45.

- 14) "Ich klage an", *op.cit.*, p. 66.

- 15) "Es steht zur Wahl", *ibid.*, p. 12.

- 16) "Das Gewissen der SPD", *ibid.*, p. 102.

- 17) *ibid.*.

- 18) DIE ZEIT, 8/9/67.

- 19) "Die angelesene Revolution", in Grass-Dokumente etc.  
*op.cit.*, p. 130.

- 20) "Was unterm Strich steht", *ibid.*, p. 154.

- 21) "Die runde Zahl zwanzig", *ibid.*, p. 174.

- 22) viz. "Rede über das Selbstverständliche", *op.cit.*, p.76:

Gottähnlich tünzelnd über den Abgasen unserer Gesellschaft, ordnen sie ihren Seminar-Marxismus gleich Schäfchenwolken und sorgen sich um Indochina



und Persien, also um weit entlegenes Elend, das sie, dank ihrer geistigen Hochstände, mühelos einsehen können.

- 23) "Rede zum 1. Mai 1968", passim ibid., pp. 167-180;

"Radikalismus in Deutschland", passim, op.cit.;

"Die angelesene Revolution", passim, op. cit..

- 24) e.g."Sieben Thesen zum Demokratischen Sozialismus", op. cit., p. 179;

Und weil nicht Marxsche Theorie, sondern die durch Lenin eingesetzte Parteidiktatur, zwangsläufig Stalin und dessen Methoden produziert hat, ist es falsch und irreführend, den Leninismus als folgerichtige Weiterentwicklung des Marxismus zu begreifen.

Daraus ergibt sich meine

1. These: Wer den demokratischen Sozialismus anstrebt, sollte nach den gemachten Erfahrungen die verflüchtende Klitterung Marxismus/Leninismus ablehnen und, der geschichtlichen Entwicklung entsprechend, vom Leninismus/Stalinismus sprechen.

- 25) e.g."Radikalismus in Deutschland", op.cit., pp. 193-4,

& "Die Ideologien haben versagt", Interview in

Stuttgarter Zeitung 18/2/69.

- 26) "Literatur und Revolution oder des Idyllikers schraubendes Steckpferd", in Grass-Dokumente, op.cit., p. 201.

- 27) Grass & Pavel Kohout: Briefe über die Grenze / Versuch eines Ost-West-Dialogs, Hamburg, 1968, p. 44:

Doch da es mir nicht darauf ankommen kann, Schuldkonto gegen Schuldkonto aufzurechnen, ziehe ich es vor, jeder Revolution das Recht auf Unrecht und den damit verbundenen Terror abzusprechen. Diese Entscheidung ist grundsätzlich; sie plädiert für die Evolution, auch wenn ich weiß, daß die evolutionäre Fortbewegungsart permanent kompromißbehindert ist ...

- 28) e.g. ibid., p. 45 & "Literatur und Revolution etc.",  
op.cit., p. 201.
- 29) "Radikalismus in Deutschland", op.cit., p. 195.
- 30) ibid., p. 193.
- 31) "Die angelegene Revolution", op.cit., p. 129.
- 32) e.g. Briefe etc., op.cit., p. 44 & "Literatur und Revolution", op.cit., p. 203.
- 33) "Über Ja und Nein", in Über das Selbstverst., op.cit.,  
pp. 198-9.
- 34) ibid., p. 199.
- 35) "Ich bin Sozialdemokrat, weil ich ohne Furcht leben  
will", in Der Bürger etc., op.cit., p. 114.
- 36) "Über die Toleranz - Ein Nachwort", ibid., p. 269.
- 37) "Was Erfurt außerdem bedeutet", ibid., p. 79.
- 38) "Günter Grass: Zwischen Kommunismus und Kapitalismus",  
in Berner Tagblatt 18/5/71.
- 39) Briefe, op.cit., p. 28.

- 40) "Der Wähler und seine Stimme", in Der Bürger, op.cit., pp. 86 & 87.
- 41) A series of treaties and agreements which put the FRG's relations with the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the GDR on a new footing.
- 42) "Die Prager Lektion", in Über das Selbstverst., op.cit., p.184.
- 43) "Der Wähler und seine Stimme", op.cit., p.85:  
Die notwendige Modernisierung der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands seit dem Godesberger Programm hat ein ideologisches Vakuum entstehen lassen. Einerseits soll vernünftig-pragmatisches Verhalten, zum Pragmatismus dogmatisiert, nun als Ersatzideologie dienen; andererseits ist die Neue Linke bereit, ihre Heilslehre auszulieihen. Doch weder der Rückgriff auf die Kirchenväter des Marxismus noch der Versuch, aus dem Strukturalismus einen stromlinienförmigen Fortschritts-glauben zu zimmern, sind geeignet, der Sozialdemokratie die fehlende Theorie zu ersetzen. So hart mein Urteil klingen mag; es besteht Gefahr, daß die SPD als Organisation die Auswirkungen ihrer Politik nicht genügend zur Kenntnis nimmt und hinter ihren eigenen Ansprüchen zurückfällt.
- 44) For a critique of these discussions see Wolf-Dieter Narr, Hermann Scheer & Dieter Spöri: SPD - Staatspartei oder Reformpartei? Munich, 1976, chap. 1.
- 45) "Ich bin Sozialdemokrat etc.", op.cit., pp.107 & 111.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

##### CONCEPTS AND LANGUAGE

##### Grass' conceptual framework

When Grass tried to persuade people to support the SPD or talked about why he was a Social Democrat himself, he generally emphasised the means by which political choices are made and acted upon more than their aims. Indeed, most of his political speaking and writing has been about general principles, not single topics: about the state of parliamentary democracy in Germany, about Social Democracy, Democratic Socialism, the political climate in the country.

Even when he chose a single issue to talk about, he invariably took a very wide and general approach to it. For instance, in a speech entitled "Die kommunizierende Mehrzahl"<sup>1)</sup> he discussed reunification of the two German states in the light of a couple of centuries of German and European history. And in "Was Erfurt außerdem bedeutet"<sup>2)</sup>, his May Day speech in 1970, he talked about the tentative diplomatic rapprochement between the FRG and the GDR under Brandt in the light of the history of the European and German Labour Movement. Between 1970 and 1972 he wrote a series of articles on issues of the day for the Süddeutsche Zeitung. Although these

certainly had topical subjects, they were rarely if ever about any particular policies or objectives.

Similarly, in the election campaigns he participated in he referred to current policies and problems in the course of his arguments, but his speeches were impassioned by a more general concern with what kind of politics, what kind of attitudes the SPD's policies and politicians stood for on the one hand, and the CDU/CSU's on the other. A quote from 1972 illustrates Grass' preference for moods and trends rather than giving details:

Um es knapp zu sagen: Im Spätherbst dieses Jahres wird es darum gehen, ob eine neue Bundesregierung unter Bundeskanzler Brandt die so mühsame wie notwendige Reformpolitik fortsetzen kann oder ob mit Strauß und Barzel an der Macht eine zweite Restauration eingeleitet wird; an den Folgen der ersten tragen wir noch.

Ich will es Ihnen und mir nicht leicht machen, es also nicht bei der bloßen Personalisierung Brandt oder Barzel belassen, (...).

Vielmehr meine ich, daß Brandt und Barzel jeweils auch Ausdruck ihrer Partei sind, also auch Ausdruck aller mit dieser Partei verbundenen Interessen. Das Verhalten der sozialdemokratischen Partei als der ältesten deutschen demokratischen Partei ist gekennzeichnet von über einem Jahrhundert Reformarbeit und von einem Fortschrittsglauben, der manchmal (...) in naive Fortschrittsgläubigkeit zu münden droht.

Die christdemokratische Partei weiß ihre Stärke im pragmatischen Beharrungsvermögen. Nur ist ihr dieser, an sich akzeptable, konservative Standpunkt nur Bewegungslosigkeit, ja, in vielen Bereichen zur reaktionären Tendenz des Rückschritts geschrumpft. Wenn die Sozialdemokraten auf der einen Seite zu viele und oft unleserliche Reformpläne vorlegen, so verarmt die christdemokratische Partei andererseits zu absoluter Programmlosigkeit.

(...)

Ein Sozialdemokrat ist jemand, der die Verhältnisse für veränderbar hält. Ein Sozialdemokrat ist jemand, dem Demokratie ohne soziale Gerechtigkeit bloße Formeldemokratie ist. Ein Sozialdemokrat ist jemand,

der den Sozialismus ohne demokratische Grundrechte ablehnt. Denn Demokratie und Sozialismus bedingen einander ...<sup>4)</sup>.

This is a good example of the way in which the How comes before the What when Grass talks politics, even in connection with elections. The same is true of his approach to an audience. In the first instance he spoke about the criteria which should be used to decide which way to vote. Then in the second instance he would argue that if they made these choices in the right way, with the right attitudes, in the right light, they would logically decide in favour of the Social Democrats every time! In his election speeches he was occupied with the right way to decide, with the right attitudes.

Using concepts from the liberal tradition: rationality, enlightenment, individual responsibility, he aimed to convince people that the SPD was the party which best fulfilled these standards. His criteria focus again and again on the individual's judgement. Reason is a faculty of each individual person. Its connotations as a concept are implicitly (and in some of his speeches this was explicit) rooted in the tradition of liberal thought since the European Enlightenment, whereby reason is the fount of the individual's conscious behaviour and politics the business of reasonable people. In the spirit of classical liberalism, Grass usually talked about reason as itself a force in politics, believing that each voter would respond

to rational arguments:

Am 19. November werden wir beweisen müssen, daß die Mentalität Strauß-Barzel in Deutschland keine Zukunft hat.

Übrigens bin ich überzeugt, daß die Vernunft siegen wird. Jenes christdemokratische Geschäft mit der Angst hatte nur Ladenhüter und kurzlebige Saisonschlager zu bieten.

Durchsetzen werden sich die Argumente. Zählen wird, was politische Wirklichkeit ist.<sup>5)</sup>

Grass used reason as the criterion for making choices between ideas and proposals, which in his view are immediately practically feasible. He defined it in a tautological fashion as the enemy of any kind of emotive approach: "Wahlen sind Appelle an die Vernunft. Es kann mir also nicht daran liegen, Sie mit meiner Rede in Begeisterung zu versetzen."<sup>6)</sup> or any kind of polemic: "Kühl gilt es abzuwägen. Nicht strahlendes Weiß und düsteres Schwarz stehen zur Wahl, sondern mehrere Grautöne. Kein Grund besteht also, von dieser oder jener Partei begeistert zu sein."<sup>7)</sup> He used the term enlightenment in its most literal sense as clear, comprehensible language and informative arguments:

Der Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund Hamburg möge einen Arbeitskreis beauftragen, aufklärendes und in der Öffentlichkeit wirkendes Material zu sammeln, damit es überall dort, wo es an Aufklärung fehlt und wo Springer vorherrscht, in Umlauf gebracht werden kann.<sup>8)</sup>

In ihrem bedenkenlosen Kampf um die Macht scheuen sich Politiker wie Strauß und Barzel nicht, Emotionen zu wecken, den rechteradikalen Mob zu mobilisieren (...). Linke Politik kann und darf nur eine aufklärende sein; sie setzt aufs Argument. (...) Wer die Sprache und die Methoden seines Gegners übernimmt, ist schon geschlagen.<sup>9)</sup>

As an election-campaigner Grass had to find a style which imputed a consensus between himself and his audience about the terms of reference he was using, in order to be able to reinforce that consensus, or tip it in the direction he wanted. For the aim of an election campaign is to create, redirect or recreate as wide a consensus as possible about the next four years of government. Grass invoked rationality, enlightenment, individual responsibility and practicability as principles he and his audience unquestionably shared. He strengthened this consensus by wagging a finger at those who remained outside it, i.e. at intellectuals who according to him would not commit themselves to practical politics. By ridiculing dissidents as idealists, he was in a position to argue that the existing political order was the home of all rational people:

Darum fort mit allem geistigen Hochmut und dünkelfhaftem Elitegeist! Ihr Utopisten und Sektierer in Eurem schönen, windstillen Gehäuse: Tretet vor die Tür! Stoß Euch Knie und Stirn wund an unserer Realität! Genie wohnt nicht mehr im holden Wahnsinn, sondern in unserer nüchternen Konsumgesellschaft. Die Heiligen sind Pragmatiker geworden. (...) hier, in der Bundesrepublik, gilt es, zu zahlen und den Mund aufzumachen, gilt es, tagtäglich neu zu beleben die teuer erkaufte, geliebte und penetrante, in Kerkern ersehnte und leichtsinnig aufs Spiel gesetzte, immerfort unzulängliche, heilig-nüchterne Demokratie. <sup>10)</sup>

Thus in 1965 he ended up equating the existing with the rational, on the grounds that only reformist ideas are rational. By this score both left-wing and right-wing radicalism was anything from foolish to dangerous.



Anything which in Grass' view smacked of an ideology was derided and rejected. On the basis of the Godesberg Programme the SPD's politics were the most realistic because they had rid themselves of any "restlichen ideologischen Ballast"<sup>11)</sup> left from the party's Marxist heritage.

Such was the rationalist framework of Grass' views in 1965. It remained the birthright of Democratic Socialism for him when he later defined his ideas further in the name of Revisionism. The concepts which he drew from the liberal tradition and from the Revisionists had a crucial thing in common in his hands, namely that he believed they were the only ones free of any ideology and as such the only ones relevant for today:

Die großen Themen sind verhandelt worden. Totale Weltanschauung blüht nur noch in wohltemperierten Seminaren (...). Erweitern wir unsere mühsam gewonnene bürgerliche Freiheit, bis sie auch ihren sozialen Ausdruck gefunden hat! Neue Ideologien sind nicht vonnöten.<sup>12)</sup>

Grass then took up some assumptions about ideology and science into his political vocabulary to underpin his own views. His companion between liberalism and Democratic Socialism was an idea of science which equated all philosophical and political ideologies with dogmatism and science with empirically established truths. Consequently, he never questioned his own attitudes for their own ideological characteristics. In the last chapter we saw how he propounded the virtues of Social Democracy in programmatic terms as those of reform against revolution. In epistemological language he argued that gradual reform had

a scientific foundation as a means of social change, whereas revolutionary ideas were ideological, that is to say in his words, they were dogmatic, irrational and totally impractical.

In the May Day speech he made in 1970 "marxistische Wissenschaftlichkeit" is identified with "praktischem Reformwillen" and "marxistischem Dogmatismus" with "revolutionärer Forderung"<sup>13)</sup>. Grass gave an account of what is known as the Revisionism debate in the SPD in the 1890s. According to him Marx's work had been partly unscientific because it had prevented the SPD from matching its theory, which it had largely from Marx and Engels, with its practice in the Wilhemian period, which concentrated on social and political reforms under the Empire. Led by Eduard Bernstein the Revisionists had tried to correct this dichotomy by making the theory as reformist as the goals the party practically pursued. The logic of Grass' argument is that programmes for social change are practical only if they aim to work through reforming the existing system, and that a political theory is only scientific if tried and tested in such a process. Thus science as he used the term had an empiricist complexion, whereby social-scientific data must be verifiable directly. Only a gradualist political theory could have scientific status, because it was restricted to immediate practice.

The premise behind this rather hazy use of the

terms ideology and science is that facts are not ideological and that an ideology has nothing to do with the facts. Grass consistently ignored or rejected any holistic analysis which probed the future in terms of fundamental structures, because he was only interested in what he believed to have been empirically established:

Wir werden lernen müssen, daß unter Umständen ein Schritt mehr Gerechtigkeit in sich neue Ungerechtigkeiten birgt, die dann wieder auszugleichen sein werden. Das sind Dinge, die einem evolutionären Prozeß auszeichnen, und da wird jeder bei sich entscheiden müssen, ob er sich an wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse, an einen nachweislich evolutionären Prozeß hält, oder ob er meint, daß Wünschen ihn dazu bringen kann, Sprungkraft zu beweisen. <sup>14</sup>

Grass believed that his own politics had an ethical rather than ideological basis. He assumed that it is possible to formulate social and political questions outside any ideological framework:

Ich bin kein Systematiker. Ich käme gar nicht auf die Idee, aus Erfahrungen, die ich für beständig der Korrektur bedürftig erachte, ein System gewinnen zu wollen, das mich nur dann hinterher einengt und hindert, neue Erfahrungen zu sammeln und mit neuer Erfahrung schon gewonnene infrage zu stellen. - Das ist ja kein System z.B. im politischen Bereich ein Parteiengreifen, ein Parteiengreifen für Sozialismus plus Demokratie, weil ich die demokratische Form des Zusammenlebens von Menschen nicht nur für die narrensicherste halte, sondern auch für die humanste (...). Das ist eine Entscheidung für eine Gesellschaftsform, nicht nur für ein System, denn die Sozialdemokratie ist in dem Moment überholt und erledigt, in dem sie zu einem System wird. <sup>15</sup>

These ethical priorities arise from his premise that truth is relative. He adheres to Revisionist principles because if the truth changes, these alone can be scientific.

Democratic Socialism had standards which are not only intellectually superior, because they are in his view the most rational, but equally importantly morally superior:

Von keinerlei Glauben geschlagen, also auch ohne Heilslehre auf der Zunge (...) handelte (ich) aus der Erkenntnis, daß es nicht nur eine Wahrheit und eine Wirklichkeit gibt, daß vielmehr mehrere, demnach relative Wahrheiten und Wirklichkeiten miteinander wettstreiten und sich tolerieren müssen. Solch liberale Einsicht schloß nicht aus, daß sich (...) die Einsicht festigte, es könne, mit Vorrang, der demokratische Sozialismus in der Lage sein, dem Menschen jenes Mehr an sozialer Gerechtigkeit und jene gesetzliche Garantie freier und chancengleicher Entwicklung erkämpfen, das ihm bislang von den vorherrschenden Systemen, von privatkapitalistischen westlicher Prägung und staatskapitalistischen kommunistischer Prägung, vorenthalten worden ist.<sup>16)</sup>

Grass' political ideas are thus sustained by his moral judgements. Ultimately, when he talks about ideologies, he means the social systems of Communism and Capitalism which he is against in equal measure on moral grounds. When he talked about the Revisionism debate he did not discuss the merits of the arguments theoretically, but took Bernstein's side because he held Bernstein to be the forerunner of a social-democratic alternative to Capitalism and Communism. Where he could, he eclectically adopted some currents of thought from within the Marxist tradition to find a new vocabulary for his own politics. This stiffened the precepts of liberal parliamentarianism he held into those of Democratic Socialism.

Anyway, in the agitational context it was sufficient to generalise in this way about reform, ideology, scientificity. This context encouraged him to personalise theoretical

problems so that, for instance, the political and theoretical status of Marxism became embodied in the persons of the main contenders, namely Bernstein and Kautsky.

After 1972 Grass saw the importance of having a more systematic hold on social-democratic aims. But he did not have anything like a theoretical system in mind. In 1965 he had viewed the tasks facing the government which he hoped would get into office as simple and isolatable, as the technicalities of an electoral programme. By 1972 he had a better idea of the complexity of such matters and called for more research into what should and could be done. In his discourse, theory does not mean the formulation of paradigms, but empirical research into the basis for and the connections between political and social aims; research which will put a charter for progress into operation. He made no mention of theoretical preparation as an analytical framework within which courses of action are conceived, and yet he urged the SPD to plan its policies more systematically. He thought that the government was stagnating in pragmatism and that reform was getting lost along with ideas.<sup>17)</sup> But he did not want to see new ideas in the form of a renewal of ideology in politics.

There was thus a dilemma to find something between pragmatism and ideology. Development aid and environmental protection became high priorities for him because he believed they could be substantially progressive whilst neutral to the ideology of the social systems in both the East and the West.<sup>18)</sup> He navigated between the Scylla and Charibdis of

pragmatism and dogmatism by effectively talking about ideologies in a more restrictive sense and by merging the question of their political and epistemological or theoretical status into the moral bankruptcy of the Capitalist and Communist powers:

Wir müssen begreifen lernen, daß die Ideologien versagt haben. An dem Brennpunkt Nigeria manifestiert sich dieser Ausverkauf zur Zeit am deutlichsten: beide Positionen, der westliche Kapitalismus und der östliche Kommunismus, kompromittieren sich gleichermaßen (...). Alle Ideologien, die zwangsläufig zu Systemen führen, müssen als gefährlich gelten - sowohl die sozialistische als auch die der 'Pragmatiker', der Technokraten und Fachidioten, die lediglich eine 'befriedete Gesellschaft' bauen würden.<sup>19)</sup>

This shows how the conceptual framework which Grass worked with was much weaker than the moral rationale of his political views. For he was indiscriminating in what he called an ideology and in what he made it mean, but he was always firm in his moral condemnation of power-politics pursued in the name of western democracy or of socialism. When he sought new and firmly based ideas about what Democratic Socialism means, his horror of ideology put him in a potentially difficult position which he avoided by turning the dilemma from a conceptual into a moral one. He distinguished between capitalist and communist ideologies on the one hand, and an ideologically innocent democratic socialist programme on the other, by ethically rejecting the former both as social systems and political powers and as bodies of ideas. This is how he defended the ground on which he believed Democratic Socialism stood and on which he urged it to grow and evolve. He defended its integrity by attacking the moral integrity of its principal opponents.

Patterns of rhetoric

Embedded in the language Grass uses for political affairs is a moral frame of reference from which he draws prescriptive criteria for formulating his demands and views. There is a moral fervour in his arguments which enables him to link his liberalism with his socialism. For the liberal element in Democratic Socialism as he understands it is what makes it morally superior to the state socialism of the Communist countries.

As a political intellectual Grass was a pronounced moralist. He was particularly mindful of his nation's moral responsibilities in the world and its duty to bear the burden of crimes perpetrated under the National Socialists. One of his very first individual interventions into political affairs was an open letter to Erhard demanding that he resign because of a trade agreement with Egypt which compromised West Germany's penitent relationship with Israel. Grass condemned Erhard for being a bad political leader because he had shown himself lacking in moral integrity and had failed to observe the nation's moral responsibilities in international affairs:

Wie taktlos, befangen und hilflos, aus Gründen bewiesener Unfähigkeit, muß ein Bundeskanzler sein, der die Ungeheuerlichkeit begeht, heute, da uns die heranrückende Verjährungsfrist ungesühnter Verbrechen Prüfstein genug ist, nochmals die Toten und Überlebenden der Konzentrationslager (...) zu beleidigen, ja, ihren Mördern und Peinigern Genugtuung zu verschaffen.<sup>20)</sup>

He also treated domestic politics as the testing ground of the nation's conscience. He saw parliamentary democracy as itself a moral order, whose standards politicians should meet or else be condemned. In the 1965 campaign he said that he wanted to see a kind of parliamentary politics which ensured that the elected representatives in the Bundestag would themselves be the conscience of society so that this responsibility should not be left to a caste of intellectual social critics. There should be no moral and critical division of labour between the liberal intelligentsia and the country's leaders:

Die weitverbreitete Unsitte, den Schriftsteller als "Gewissen der Nation" zu bezeichnen, hat allenfalls dazu geführt, das Gewissen verantwortlicher Männer, deren Forum der Bundestag sein sollte, zu entlasten und ihn, den Schriftsteller, wie ein Orakel-raunen- das Abstraktum zu behandeln, das mehr oder weniger geschätzt, außerhalb der Gesellschaft herumsteht. Diese Gasse gilt es zu verlassen. Ich werde es versuchen, als Bürger vom Standpunkt des schreibenden Bürgers aus zu sprechen ...<sup>28)</sup>

Grass' democratic ethic treats the moral weight of the nation as a whole and the individual as equal. He saw society as the sum of its individual members, its moral worth as their moral worth. This means that each individual has a direct responsibility for society. In his speeches in 1965 he sought to make everyone aware of their responsibility to be conscientious citizens and use their votes, in order to reinvigorate parliamentary democracy in West Germany:

Diese Wahlreise bricht bewußt mit der Tradition. Die direkte Beteiligung am Wahlkampf, ohne daß der Wahlredner Kandidat ist oder zumindest eine der großen Interessengruppen (...) vertritt, ist ein bewußter Versuch, den Wahlkampf zu differenzieren und neben



oder zwischen den Parteien auch den Wähler zu Wort kommen zu lassen.

Als Berliner, also als verheimerter Wähler, habe ich doppelten Anlaß, dieses Experiment zu wagen; zumal die fünfziger Jahre mit ihrem lähmenden Slogan "Keine Experimente" endgültig vorbei sind und sich unsere Demokratie, wenn sie nicht weiterhin plebiszitär als sogenannte Fernsehdemokratie verflücht werden soll, mit Hilfe der Wähler, also der Bürger, regenerieren muß.<sup>22)</sup>

These political ethics are linked to a bourgeois view of social and political behaviour which sees social and political affairs as determined by individuals and hardly, if at all, by social structure and institutions. The moral moving force in Grass' politics both derives from and in turn reinforces such an individualist understanding of politics and society. The individual's responsibility for society takes such precedence that by comparison social structures and institutions are scarcely criticised because Grass always emphasised only the one half of the dialectic between the individual and society. He was only concerned with the way individuals make up social institutions and in what individuals put, or could put, into them. This is why he always placed so much emphasis on the electoral process and committed himself so heavily to the task of persuading people to vote. During a Land election campaign in Nordrhein-Westfalen in 1970, he talked about how institutions could be changed if people wanted them to be, so that voting would be a way of contributing to changing them:

Wir haben es gelernt, entweder das Elternhaus, die Schule oder den Betrieb als Quelle so früh beginnender Verkrüppelung zu benennen und anzuklagen, obgleich wir wissen, daß die Familie, die Schule, der Betrieb, keine unerforschlich schicksal-

spielenden Instanzen sind, sondern Produkte der Erwachsenen und deshalb veränderbar. Es ist die kindliche Ohnmachtsbezeugung, die infantile Geste, mit der Erwachsene ständig Schuld und Verantwortung außerhalb ihres eigenen Bereichs vermuten und mystifizieren; die Gesellschaft ist schuld, die Verhältnisse sind schuld. <sup>23)</sup>

The heavy moral tones in Grass' political language also cast a shadow over the way he talked about historical matters. The way he tends to treat history as a whole has its roots in his understanding of the Nazi period. That experience persuaded him that history is repetitive and scarcely progressive. If there is any progress it is won from a struggle against the burdens history has imposed on the present. He repeatedly inveighed against the younger generation when they seemed to him close to repeating the mistakes of their predecessors. <sup>24)</sup>

Denn es kommt darauf an, den berechtigten Protest der Jugend (...) vor dem Einbruch des Irrationalismus zu bewahren, damit der politisch wirksam wird, damit nicht abermals eine Generation der apolitischen Resignation verfällt, nur weil sich ihre utopischen Ziele nicht verwirklichen lassen. <sup>25)</sup>

He thought that what he had experienced of the past fitted contemporary political phenomena as well, and implied that this cyclical sequence was peculiarly German. <sup>26)</sup>

Aus Kenntnis meiner eigenen Vergangenheit und der Auffälligkeit der Jugend in diesem Land für absolute und selbstzerstörerische Forderungen, bin ich dagegen, pauschal in jedem Jungwähler, der seine ziellose Mut in die NPD hineinketten will, einen Neonazi zu wittern. Ich gebe aber zu bedenken, daß seine geplante Entscheidung von den Herren Thadden bis Thiesen genauso mißbraucht werden wird, wie der Idealismus meiner Generation von den Herren Schirach und Axmann mißbraucht worden ist. <sup>27)</sup>

Grass derives some of his authority as orator from his view of the German nation's past. His experience of it makes him see it in moral terms and has endowed him, as far as he is concerned, with a responsibility to try and prevent anything of the sort happening again. As he explained Fascism in terms of recurrent dispositions in the German people, the only possible defence against it was the kind of moral alertness which he upheld himself:

Als Neunzehnjähriger begann ich zu ahnen, welche Schuld unser Volk wissend und unwissend angehäuft hatte, welche Last und Verantwortung meine und die folgende Generation zu tragen haben würden. (...) Ich weiß auch, wie anfällig dieser Staat immer noch ist, (...) hier im offenen Gespräch und, wenn Sie wollen, auch im Streitgespräch gilt es, dem Verbrechen von damals jede Chance einer Neuauflage zu nehmen.<sup>28</sup>

Wenn Joachim Steffen und mit ihm die SPD in Schleswig-Holstein der Meinung ist, Aufstieg und Fall der NPD lasse sich, wie dazumal der Aufstieg und Fall der NSDAP im Verhältnis zu steigenden und fallenden Schweinepreisen ablesen, mag er recht haben, (...), aber meines Vaters gebrannter Sohn ist vorichtig genug, es nicht allein aufs Preisgefälle ankommen zu lassen. Ich versuche, zum Neuwähler zu sprechen, denn erschreckenderweise ist es der NPD gelungen, jungen Menschen in diesem Land alte Hüte zu verkaufen. Und nur nebenbei war von Schweinepreisen und dem Milchpfennig die Rede.<sup>29</sup>

When the neo-fascist NPD began to make gains in 1966, he turned back to the crimes of the Third-Reich generation in order to argue that German youth in the sixties still had a responsibility to temper its behaviour today in the memory of the past.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the past was more of an issue for him than the present.

Grass always fought against any appeasement of the sins of Nazism. He talked about it in virtually exclusively

moral categories like guilt and responsibility rather than in politically and historically analytical terms. And as in the quotation above, in his political work he preferred to leave a social analysis of Fascism and neo-Fascism aside, in order to take up a preacher role. This moral fervour was a significant aspect of his persuasive technique.

In public speaking he used it to assess what the Christian Democrats had done and what the Social Democrats could be expected to do. For instance in 1965 he argued that the SPD would be a good government because it combined expertise with conscience:

... (es) ist an der Zeit, moralische Verantwortung in der Politik zur Pflicht zu machen. Unsere Gesundheitspolitik bedarf eines Arztes, unsere Bildungs- und Hochschulpolitik bedarf eines Pädagogen, unsere Städte bedürfen eines weitblickenden Baumeisters, und unsere Wiedervereinigungspolitik bedarf dringend der denn ja eines wirklichen Staatsmannes. Dieses ist mein gründlich geprüftes Votum: Eine sozialdemokratische Regierung wird diese Aufgaben lösen nach bestem Wissen und Gewissen. 311

Any power-politics which abused moral debts and standards provoked his wrath. It was this moralist stance which gave him the authoritative tone he adopted towards politicians in his oratory. This tone is epitomised in the title of one of his 1965 speeches "Ich klage an", a la Zola, a speech which is a polemic from beginning to end.

The normative complexion of Grass' language was another means by which he excluded radical political critique. His argument was that the first duty of political critics was to uphold the values of democracy. So he rejected the politics of the anti-Vietnam movement in Berlin and the Federal Republic, but praised American students' protest against their own government's policy in Vietnam, on the grounds that it rescued the moral prerogative of democracy in the United States by the very moral quality of the students' criticism:

Vor wenigen Wochen haben die Studentenvertretungen von über einhundert amerikanischen Universitäten Präsident Johnson unmißverständlich klargemacht, daß er und seine Regierung, ja alle Soldaten, die seinen Befehlen folgen, mehr und mehr in die Nähe jener Kriegsverbrecher geraten, die 1945 in Nürnberg zum Tode verurteilt wurden. Mit Bestimmtheit (...) haben sich amerikanische Studenten (...) zum Sprecher ihrer Demokratie gemacht.<sup>121</sup>

This mode of discourse did not take account of the economic motives of American intervention in foreign countries to protect business interests. This divided him from the New Left. Grass put himself into splendid intellectual isolation which could only lead to cynicism when his high moral standards were disappointed by the real course of international power-politics. When his moral and idealist mode of protest proved to be impotent and could do nothing about Biafra or Czechoslovakia for instance, Grass ended up with a very sour view of the world, a rather sneering resignation. Reflecting on international developments in 1973 and on Brandt's speech when the FRG joined the United Nations General Assembly, he expressed the inevitable impotence of his moralism. It was

impotent because it obscured the economic reasons for the repression and the opportunism he abhorred and gave rise to a mixture of analytical helplessness and sermonising like the following:

Internationale wirtschaftliche Machtgruppen, frei von demokratischer Kontrolle, rücksichtslos auf Gewinn bedacht, verstärken die arabische Erpressung durch eine westlich-kapitalistische: die erste war zu erwarten, die zweite stellt die Funktionsfähigkeit der parlamentarischen Demokratie infrage. Niemand rede mehr gläubig vom "freien Westen", wenn dessen Politik nachweislich von industriellen Großkonzernen bestimmt wird.

(...)

Die Okkupation der Tschechoslowakei durch die Warschauer-Pakt-Mächte, der faschistische Militärputsch in Griechenland und seine diesjährige Entsprechung in Chile haben uns gelehrt, wie wirkungslos Proteste sind, wie leichtsin bedauerndes Kopfnicken moralische Proteste lächerlich macht, wie ungefährdet sogenannte "politische Tatsachen" geschaffen werden.

(...)

Die zynische Frage ist erlaubt: Bis wieviel Grad winterlicher Zimmertemperatur, bis zu welcher Teuerungsrate und bis zu welcher Arbeitslosenzahl stehen wir noch, wenn auch schwankend, zu Israel und der wirksamen Garantie seiner Existenz? Wann werden wir nur noch haltlose Opfer der selbstgewollten Wachstumsapolitik sein: unfähig, überlieferte Verantwortung zu tragen, verschrieben nur noch dem politischen Aberglauben, das Hemd sei uns näher als der Rock? (...)

Während dieses ausrinnende Jahr seine politischen und moralischen Niederlagen datierte, saß ich (...) in New York auf der Besucherbank: (...) Vorne spricht Willy Brandt. Er spart den Namen Allende aus, er sagt nicht "Chile"; und doch wird deutlich, welches Verbrechen er meint und wieviel Mitschuld dem westlichen Kapitalismus zukommt. Eine gute verborgene Rede. (...) Und doch macht diese Rede, indem sie (in Untertönen verzweifelt) für Vernunft plädiert, den Bankrott der politischen Vernunft offenbar.

Ich befürchte, daß uns nicht mehr bewußt ist, inwiefern vernünftiges Taktieren (oder Taktieren, das uns als vernünftig gilt) schon absurd geworden ist und irrationale Folgen zeigt. Kissingers und LeDucThos mühsam ausgehandelter Waffenstillstand in Vietnam gilt als Sieg der Vernunft; doch alle beteiligten

Verhandlungspartner verlachten das "vernünftige Ergebnis": der Krieg geht weiter.<sup>31</sup>

Grass' helplessness here was the consequence of allowing his moral feelings to replace a more judicious view of political history. His response to the civil war in Biafra shows this distortion. His perspective led him to see quite disparate situations and conditions in models of moral burdens transferred from Europe to Africa:

Welches Lehrbuch der Staatskunde empfiehlt den Regierungen der afrikanischen Staaten, eine katastrophale Machtpolitik von europäischem Zuschnitt zu übernehmen? Wenn Völkermord und Massenvernichtung -wie in Biafra- so in Südsudan-Stufen zur Einigung des afrikanischen Kontinents sein sollen, wird Schuld der Kitt dieser Einheit sein?<sup>32</sup>

Such a transference of moral records from one continent to another entailed polemical comparisons, which may of course drive the point home rhetorically, but which take no account of respective political and social forces involved in either part of the comparison. By insisting that the Nazi past posed ethical demands that had to be adhered to in contemporary politics, he paid insufficient regard to changing conditions in international politics. With the outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli war in 1967 he drew an analogy between Nazism and Arab antagonism to the Jewish state and equated the Egyptian army with the concentration camps. This completely ignored the grounds for Arab hostility to Israel. Because he applied absolute categories of sin and guilt to the Middle East conflict, he transferred German guilt directly to the Arabs:

Die Endlösung, in Auschwitz und Treblinka begonnen, soll in Israel vollendet werden. Wer den deutschen Gaskammern entkommen konnte, wer meinte, in Israel seinen Frieden gefunden zu haben, dem drohen heute die Gaskampfmittel der Ägyptischen Armee. 35)

Grass also deliberately refused to differentiate between the super-powers in the degree of evil they were responsible for whenever he was enraged by the international or domestic acts of oppression they perpetrated. For instance, he equated the fates of Solzhenytsin and the people of Chile<sup>36)</sup>. As I have already indicated, the behaviour of the USA and the Soviet Union was the prime area where his moral passions absorbed all the arguments. As Social Democracy had a cleaner record than either American or Russian Imperialism, he could get away with sweeping claims of its superiority over Capitalism and Communism. He could criticise Western Capitalism and Soviet Communism because their failings were known, whilst Democratic Socialism had not yet been put to the test.

Moral sensibilities played such a big part in the way Grass talked about political affairs because he placed such emphasis on the individual's role in the political make-up, life and character of society. In turn, he built his political rhetoric around persons, because this was a way of translating those moral sensibilities into tangible forms.

However, this took on rhetorical proportions which contradicted his own standards of rationality and clarity. For his language tended very much to reduce social and historical



conditions to personalities. In doing so it bypassed the issues by subsuming all the aspects of a problem under the agents involved. Like his moral fervour, this stress on persons made Grass' arguments historically insensitive.

He could have done this for rhetorical convenience pure and simple. But there is more to it than that. It was convenient for him to personalise everything because he could not talk about history in any other way given his pessimistic outlook on it. He continually stressed that history had lessons for contemporary politics, particularly German politics, but they were invariably pessimistic ones:

Die Geschichte bietet uns keinen Trost. Harte Lektionen teilt sie aus. Zumeist liest sie sich absurd. Zwar schreitet sie fort, aber Fortschritt ist nicht ihr Ergebnis. Die Geschichte schließt nicht ab; wir befinden uns in und nicht außerhalb der Geschichte.<sup>37)</sup>

Given its absurdity<sup>38)</sup>, the examples set by a few model individuals are the only things of value which history bequeaths to us. When Grass used history as an authority in his arguments, it was mainly to praise or blame particular persons. Thus, as I have already mentioned, in the 1970 May Day speech he examined the history and traditions of the Labour Movement in terms of the leading figures who represented the two sides of the dispute with the Revisionists in the SPD. He claimed that Kautsky and Bernstein personally set the subsequent course of German Socialism's trials and tribulations:

Kautsky und Bernstein, die Väter des Erfurter Programms, sind auch die Väter des bis heute anhaltenden Konfliktes.<sup>39)</sup>

His attitude to Lenin is another instance where he perceived the socialist heritage through a 'Great Men' view of historical and theoretical conflict. He blamed Lenin for everything that happened to the Russian Revolution.<sup>40)</sup>

Not only did he simplify history down to personalities, he tended to simplify contemporary politics in the same way. Brandt personally bore a great deal of the weight of his arguments. He often extolled Willy Brandt's character to the younger generation. In a little homily in 1968, he even recommended Brandt's behaviour within his family as something practically edifying for everyone:

Meiner Meinung nach hat Willy Brandt in aller Öffentlichkeit die Zerreißprobe zwischen Vater und Sohn stellvertretend und beispielhaft für viele, ja, wie man vermuten kann, für Millionen Familien bestanden. Seine pädagogische Lektion steht auf der Gewinnseite meiner Bilanz.<sup>41)</sup>

The rhetorical value of these simplifications is obvious. Grass harnessed the associations which he ascribed to particular persons for his propaganda. This was particularly tempting given a coalition government. Too close a scrutiny of programme in 1969 or 1972 might have exposed the areas of disagreement between the SPD and FDP. So it was safer to talk about the union of the two parties by praising the compatibility of their respective leaders, and their combined superiority over the leaders of the opposition:

Die Friedenspolitik muß fortgesetzt werden, und zwar von Brandt und Scheel; denn wer wollte diese schwierige Aufgabe Strauß und Barzel, also Politikern überlassen, die sich im Bundestag, als es um die Zukunft der Nation ging, feige der Stimme enthielten.<sup>42)</sup>

However, this pattern of rhetoric can also be explained through the value Grass attributes to his autobiographical experience, from which he justifies his agitational position. Just as his outlook on political history is shaped around individual personalities, so in his oratory he makes capital out of his own biography. The occasion when he demanded Erhard's resignation was the first time he raised his public responsibilities as an ordinary citizen above those he had as a writer, and he used his own experience to underwrite these ordinary rights and obligations:

Ich antworte Ihnen als Bürger und Schriftsteller, der 1927 geboren wurde, ein mehrmals gebranntes Kind ist und Kinder hat, die er vor den Folgen Ihres Unvermögens schützen möchte.<sup>43)</sup>

Grass can do this because he bases his arguments on what he believes to be the exemplary qualities of his past<sup>44)</sup>, as an exile from Danzig, for instance, when speaking about Ostpolitik:

Ich stamme (...) aus Danzig, kann also, am Beispiel meiner Heimatstadt, genau demonstrieren, zu welch unwiderruflichen Verlusten deutsche Hybris geführt hat. Ich erhebe sogar den Anspruch, mit mehr Recht und genauerer Kenntnis vom Verlust meiner Heimat sprechen zu dürfen, als es der General de Gaulle mit nationalistischem bis tragikomischem Zungenschlag tut.<sup>45)</sup>

He evidently preferred to capitalise on what he has been acquainted with himself because he did not wish to claim any intellectual superiority over his audience. As a result, he tended to be patronising or abusive instead. Autobiographical references abound in the 1965 speeches more than

in any others. When he moved on to Revisionism, Bernstein appears to be a model which Grass acquired intellectually rather than personally. He chose Bernstein as an intellectual model which he thinks fits what he already has knowledge of and which gave him experience a terminology, reducing his need to make continual autobiographical references to explain his views.

When historical and political material is telescoped into prominent persons, the symptoms of these persons' responses to a given situation are the main criterion for selecting who to talk about. Their comparability is often more dramatically than analytically convincing.

Autobiographical references may have an oratorical rationale to justify Grass' role as a political speaker. On the other hand they affected his analysis of contemporary political conditions and his view of groups of people who did not belong to his generation. In dealing with them he looked for characteristic phenomena which tally with the knowledge he has acquired of the past and allow of comparison with himself or his generation. This means that he tends to isolate the comparable aspects of a situation from their historical and theoretical context. He then makes them bear the weight of his arguments. This is particularly true of the way he approached trends to the far-right and to the far-left in the second half of the sixties.<sup>46)</sup> He diagnosed their psychological symptoms and then equated far left with far right be-

cause he associated them both with the misused and misguided idealism of previous generations. He failed to qualify this with any kind of probing into the contemporary source and significance of their rebirth. Consequently, he erased the historical and ideological specificity of both neo-fascist and radical socialist movements in an eternal right-left equation which suited his view of Social Democracy.

Due to the heavily autobiographical character of his own political insights, Grass needed to search in the past for the key to other people's political behaviour. This also meant that he relegated intellectual influences to lesser, even minimal, relevance, and interpreted people's attitudes within a generational pattern which was familiar to him instead of taking political outlooks which differed from his own seriously on their own terms. He did not just do this with opponents either. He made the same sort of remarks about the internal debates within the SPD which arose as a response to the student movement:

... während der Zeit der Großen Koalition, die notwendigerweise die Zeit des Studentenprotestes gewesen ist, haben sich alle politischen Jugendverbände in der Bundesrepublik verändert, indem sie insgesamt und jeweils im Verhältnis zu den ihnen nahestehenden Parteien nach links rückten. Diese Akzentverschiebung wird die Politik in der Bundesrepublik entscheidend beeinflussen. Die Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands wird gut daran tun, diese von ihr ausgedaste Entwicklung rechtzeitig zu begreifen und in Politik umzusetzen.  
{...}  
Es wäre verhängnisvoll, wenn Generationsprobleme weltanschauliche Farbe annehmen wollten.<sup>41</sup>

Because he relies so much on the feelings he has himself about what he has known in the past, he reflects on history in general in a Machiavellian manner. In particular, the feelings he has that in the Third Reich he and his peers were wilfully manipulated from above encouraged a way of looking at history in which only strong personalities make their mark.<sup>48)</sup> This is carried to the extreme in his speech on the division of Germany, "die kommunizierende Mehrzahl". His declared intention here is to present a history lesson about the national question. Yet in the attempt to do so he reduces every political force mentioned to personages and their psychology. In this melodrama, opposed positions are charged with being no more than different sides of the same coin, one which is made less of political and more of psychological metal. By attributing malicious separatist designs to Adenauer and Ulbricht a period of radically different internal evolution in the GDR and the FRG respectively becomes the "Ära Ulbricht/Adenauer"<sup>49)</sup>. In so far as the figures whom Grass attacked served any wider political forces at all beyond their own self-interests alone, they represented aspects of the German national character which were permanent in his view, e.g. a "permanenter Hang zum kleinstaatlichen Separatismus und (...) permanentes Gefährde in nationalistische Hybris".<sup>50)</sup> So history has little more to teach than the nation's emotional predispositions "gemessen an unserer Veranlagung (...) belehrt durch geschichtliche Erkenntnis"<sup>51)</sup>. The powers and motives of the individual victims of Grass' rhetoric illustrate these common characteristics.

Even though this speech is an extreme case, Grass persisted in his outlook that certain single figures have the power and influence to delude masses of people, such as Rudi Dutschke did in the student movement according to him<sup>52)</sup>, for no better reason than that neuroses are at work in all politics he disagrees with. He compared Rudi Dutschke to Axel Springer on the grounds that both were demagogues of an equal order.<sup>53)</sup> Such a reduction of the issues of the day mystifies the kind of politics these men respectively stood for. Grass had worked up a conspiratorial explanation of political affairs and actions based on a picture of history from which all socially based conflicts are eliminated and replaced by the personal whims of single, rhetorically isolatable agents. Thus the stress on persons was one further way in which his language left little or no room for economic forces in political and social life.

Cepl-Kaufmann has pointed out that the individual models which Grass used to find a language for his politics and as stimuli to his own ideas, are acquired through one's personal contacts with people, and that having entered politics very much under the influence of Brandt, Grass has remained tied to the medium of personal contact.<sup>54)</sup> Being a writer who came to politics as an outsider and remaining so over the years because he did not commit himself to the collective obligations of SPD membership, encouraged his intellectual individualism. It meant that he always had to search for intellectually and morally authoritative individuals to help him find a language for politics, to

illustrate his terminology.

Finding ways of illustrating his terminology was an ever present need because he so rarely pinned his ideas and views down to concrete proposals and nearly always evaded the objective conditions of the problems he dealt with. This evasion was the correlative to his individualism. One of its results was that he read the context in which political developments take place right out of history. His remarks on Lenin are a case in point:

Man hat sich in den kommunistischen Ländern angewöhnt, mehr oder weniger offen alle Verbrechen des Kommunismus auf Stalin abzuschieben (...). Meine Meinung ist: all das, was wir heute erleben, ob es der Sturz Gomulkas ist, das Schießen auf Arbeiter in Polen, die Todesurteile in Leningrad, ist auf Lenin zurückzuführen. Ich halte Lenin für den genialsten Fehlkonstrukteur der modernen Geschichte. Und solange diese von Lenin gesetzte Fehlkonstruktion der zentralistisch geführten Parteielite und damit der Parteidiktatur, bei Entmachtung der Gewerkschaften, nicht beseitigt wird, 55) wird sich der Kommunismus nicht reformieren können.

Another result is that questions about economics are conspicuous by their absence throughout his speeches and articles, even where he is interested in particular domestic reforms such as in education or for the environment.

The relative economic buoyancy of the Federal Republic for most of the sixties is no doubt one thing which encouraged Grass' complacency. Apparently he assumed that implementing social reforms was only a question of raising tax-revenue from a seemingly inexhaustibly affluent taxable



population, who just required persuading that what hurt was good for them. Most of the remarks he made about persuading people to provide the resources for reforms were made in the optimistic period after 1969, when economic policy under the SPD had solved the 1967/68 recession for the time being, and when national resources to finance reform-programmes seemed abundant.

On the other hand, it is also clear that Grass' lack of interest in economic questions arises from a self-imposed division of labour which relegates economics almost entirely to experts and financial wizards. He restricts himself by always treating himself in his oratory as a layman, and not an intellectual, as one amongst the other laymen in the Sozialdemokratische Wählerinitiative (SWI). His account of economic measures was at best naive, at worst crude. He polemically blamed the 1967 recession entirely on CDU incompetence and weak personnel<sup>56)</sup> and attributed the renewed boom which could be felt in 1969 virtually exclusively to Karl Schiller's wisdom as Finance and Economic Minister.<sup>57)</sup>

This sort of propaganda helped no-one understand economic and financial policy for themselves. Grass seemed to trust blindly in Schiller as guardian of every-one's welfare and to expect other people to do the same. His ignorance in this field led him to make presumptuous statements. Consequently his political discourse was fundamentally idealist, because he evaded the social and economic background to the policies and ideas he advocated.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) In Über das Selbstverständliche/Politische Schriften, revised paperback edition, Munich, 1969, pp. 149-162.
- 2) In Der Bürger und seine Stimme/Reden Aufsätze Kommentare, Darmstadt & Neuwied, 1974, pp. 73-82.
- 3) A large proportion of these appear as section II of Der Bürger etc. ibid., pp. 189-252.
- 4) Manuscript of the unpublished speech which Grass used but varied in the federal election campaign in 1972, manuscript kindly provided by the Sekretariat der Sozialdemokratischen Wählerinitiative, Bonn.
- 5) ibid.
- 6) "Es steht zur Wahl", in Über das Selbstv. etc., op.cit., p. 13.
- 7) "Des Kaisers neue Kleider", ibid., p. 44.
- 8) "Der Arbeiter und seine Umwelt", in Heinz Ludwig Arnold & Franz Josef Görtz, (ed.): Günter Grass- Dokumente zur politischen Wirkung, Munich, 1971, p. 262.

- 9) "Linke Politik muß aufklärend wirken", Brauer Bürgerzeitung, 8/10/71.
- 10) "Des Kaisers neue Kleider", op.cit., p. 45.
- 11) "Ich klage an", in Über das Selbstv., op.cit., p. 59.
- 12) "Der Schriftsteller als Bürger/Eine Siebenjahresbilanz", Vorwärts, 1/3/73.
- 13) "Was Erfurt außerdem bedeutet", op.cit., pp. 75/6.
- 14) "Ich bin Sozialdemokrat, weil ich ohne Furcht leben will", in Der Bürger, op.cit., p. 113.
- 15) Interview with Gertrude Capl-Kaufmann in her book: Günter Grass / Eine Analyse des Gesamtwerkes unter dem Aspekt von Literatur und Politik, Kronberg/Ts., 1975, p. 304.
- 16) "Die Meinungsfreiheit des Künstlers in unserer Gesellschaft", in Der Bürger, op.cit., p. 165.
- 17) "Rede an die Sozialdemokratische Bundestagsfraktion", in Der Bürger, op.cit..
- 18) e.g. "Deutschland - zwei Staaten - eine Nation?" in Die Neue Gesellschaft, July/August 1970, p. 498;

- "Uhuru heißt Freiheit", Süddeutsche Zeitung, 20/3/71;  
"Rede von den begrenzten Möglichkeiten", in Der Bürger,  
op.cit., p. 58;  
"Rede an die Sozialdemokratische Bundestagsfraktion",  
ibid., p. 119.
- 19) "Die Ideologien haben versagt", Stuttgarter Zeitung,  
18/2/69.
- 20) In Über das Selbstv., op.cit. p. 9.
- 21) "Dich singe ich Demokratie", Allgemeine Zeitung  
Freiburg 13/7/65.
- 22) ibid.,
- 23) "Jungbürgerrede : Über Erwachsene und Verwachsene"  
in Martin-Gregor Dellin (ed.): PEN: Neue Texte deutscher  
Autoren, Tübingen, 1971, p. 247.
- 24) Grass reaffirmed this view of history in the Cepl-  
Kaufmann interview, op.cit., pp. 296/7.
- 25) "Rede zum 1. Mai 1968", in Über das Selbstv., op.cit.,  
p. 173.

- 26) Here there are direct affinities between the way Grass uses history in his political discourse and the way the German past is evoked in Hundejahre. As I said in Chapter Two, in that novel the cyclical sense of German history is the background to the moral persistence which we sense so strongly in Hundejahre. So it is in the way Grass talks about politics, too.
- 27) "Rede an einen jungen Wähler, der sich versucht fühlt, die NPD zu wählen", in Über das Selbstv., op.cit., p.90.
- 28) *ibid.*, p. 91.
- 29) "Rede von der Wut über den verlorenen Milchpfennig", in Über das Selbstv., op.cit., pp.140/1.
- 30) "Rede an einen jungen Wähler etc.", op.cit., pp.90-94.
- 31) "Ich klage an", op.cit., p.60.
- 32) "Die Nadelstichrede", *ibid.*, p. 124.
- 33) "Israel und Ich", in Der Bürger, op.cit., pp.174-7.
- 34) "Auschwitz und Treblinka in Afrika", Aufwärts, No. 10, 1968.
- 35) "Israel - unser Nachbar", Kölnischer Stadtanzeiger 7/6/67.

- 36) "Opportunismus gegenüber einer ihnen nahestehenden Partei", Frankfurter Rundschau 19/2/74.
- 37) "Was Erfurt außerdem bedeutet", op.cit., p. 82.
- 38) "Ich bin Sozialdemokrat etc.", op.cit., p. 110:  
Für mich ist die Geschichte zuallererst einmal ein absurder Vorgang, in den Menschen mehr oder weniger geschickt einige Perspektive hineinzubringen versuchen.
- 39) op.cit., p. 76.
- 40) "Ich bin Sozialdemokrat etc.", op.cit., p. 97.
- 41) "Was unterm Strich steht", in Grass-Dokumente etc., op.cit., p. 154.
- 42) Manuscript of election speech in 1972.
- 43) op.cit., p. 9.
- 44) Cepl-Kaufmann, op.cit., p. 16.
- 45) Günter Grass - Pavel Kohout: Briefe über die Grenze/  
Versuch eines Ost-West-Dialogs, Hamburg, 1968, p. 68.
- 46) viz. "Rede an einen jungen Wähler", op.cit.; "Rede von der Wut etc.", op.cit.; "Rede zum 1. Mai 1968", op.cit.; "Radikalismus in Deutschland", in Über das Selbstv.

op.cit., pp.186-196; "Die angelesene Revolution", in Grass-Dokumente etc. op.cit., pp.128-136; "Was unterm Strich steht", op.cit..

47) "Der Wähler und seine Stimme", in Der Bürger, op.cit., p. 84.

48) "Rede an einen jungen Wähler", op.cit..

49) op.cit., p. 153.

50) ibid., p. 154.

51) ibid., p. 160.

52) viz. "Eine Stimme von außen her", in Grass-Dokumente, op.cit., p. 106:

Wir wissen ganz genau, daß der SDS noch vor gar nicht allzu langer Zeit eine Gruppe von linken jungen Wissenschaftlern gewesen ist, die im Verborgenen gearbeitet haben. (...) Erst als es Rudi Dutschke gelang - seine Argumente Überzeugten doch in Frankfurt - die Methoden des SDS populärer zu machen, änderte sich der Stil dieser Hochschulgruppe.

53) "Eine Mahnung", Der Abend 8/2/68:

Den missionierenden Fanatismus des Axel Springer  
Übertönt fanatisch missionierend Rudi Dutschke.  
Ein springergerechtes Echo.

54) op.cit., p. 34.

55) "Ich bin Sozialdemokrat" op.cit., p. 97.

56) "Die runde Zahl zwanzig", in Grass-Dokumente, op.cit.,  
p. 176:

Als die Sozialdemokraten Regierungsverantwortung übernahmen, standen 700.000 Arbeitslose auf der Straße, für weitere 400.000 blieb nur Kurzarbeit übrig. (...) Das war das erbärmliche Ergebnis einer CDU-Politik, die sich mit der These vom Gesundenschrumpfen der Wirtschaft lächerlich gemacht hatte.

(...) Und gleichfalls nicht unverständlich ist es, wenn sich die CDU mit Wüchselruten und ähnlichen Suchgeräten auf den Weg macht: Es fehlt ihr ein Wirtschaftsfachmann, der sich neben Karl Schiller sehen lassen könnte. Die CDU ist verbraucht. Sie wagt es nicht, Ludwig Erhard oder gar den Krisenminister des Jahres 1966, Kurt Schmücker, dem Wähler anzubieten (...).

57) e.g. ibid., pp. 175/6.



PART III

FROM EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION TO VOTERS' INITIATIVE

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FROM BERLIN TO BONN

#### Literary intellectuals' search for political identity

In 1961 Martin Walser edited a collection of essays by writers and journalists in which they each argued the case for voting SPD in the federal election which was to take place that year. It is evident from many of the contributions that they were rather hesitant about what they were doing in supporting one of the established parties like this. This they had never done before as a group. The spirit and tone of the book shows that its contributors were highly aware of their status as intellectuals. In this capacity they saw themselves as the guardians of democratic ideas, in which they were entrusted to educate the general public. The following examples from the foreward and from one of the essays illustrate how these intellectuals sought recognition of their special guardianship of political sanity:

Die Schriftsteller, die hier ihre Stimme erheben, warnend und sehr skeptisch (...) sehen sich in der Tradition Frankreichs, das von Voltaire über Zola bis J.P. Sartre immer seine Männer der Feder auch als Gewissen wertete. So verstanden soll dieser kleine Band nicht mehr und nicht weniger sein als ein Versuch zur Gewissensbildung.

Nur in Deutschland gelten Intellektuelle noch immer als Außenseiter. (...) Deutsche Intellektuelle haben seit Jahrzehnten kommende Gefahren eher erkannt als viele professionelle Politiker. (...) Eine neue Regierung sollte die Intelligenz aktivieren.<sup>1)</sup>

When these intellectuals thought about their role in politics, they thought about influence, about influencing the public, influencing the politicians. They had taken a novel step with this book to associate themselves with an established party, but they were still thinking of themselves as people of a special political value. As Hans Werner Richter had said of his generation, the typical political stance of left-liberal intellectuals in the Federal Republic had been anti-party. They tended to think of themselves as a democratic elite, as Richter saw in retrospect when he wrote in 1964:

Die Abneigung (...) gegen jeden Zwang, gegen jede Organisation, gegen Parteien, Vereine und gegen dogmatische Weltanschauungen, ja gegen jede Form des normativen Kollektivs mit Generallinie, Fahne und Programm war unter dem Druck des Dritten Reiches und auf den Schlachtfeldern des Zweiten Weltkrieges zu einer unüberwindlichen Angst geworden. Sie, die Anhängen dieser Generation, (...) glaubten nicht an die demokratische Wirksamkeit von Massenorganisationen. Und anders als die praktischen Politiker wollten sie vorerst nicht die Massen zur Demokratie erziehen, sondern sich selbst, ihresgleichen, jene also, die fähig sind, mit dem Wort Einfluß zu gewinnen. Ihre Grundkonzeption war die einer demokratischen "Elitebildung" (...). Sie glaubten, demokratisches Denken ließe sich nur dann von oben nach unten vermitteln, nicht von unten nach oben und schon gar nicht mit einem neuen Untertanengefühl.<sup>2)</sup>

However, whilst they might seek influence, the reality was that such intellectuals generally only influenced political matters in an intangible way. Their ambitions were constantly on shaky ground. The result was that what was sometimes known as the 'heimatlose Linke' kept discussing itself.<sup>3)</sup> in a nagging search for a political identity which could not cease as long as it remained sublimely non-aligned.

When Grass campaigned for the SPD in 1965 his initiative was a radical one for the time because it broke away from the self-centred terms of this discussion. He was prepared to support one of the main political organisations. To be party-political to this degree was new for his generation of intellectuals. Social criticism and protest-appeals had been their most common forms of political expression. Open letters, individual appeals, protests and appeals endorsed by collect-ions of literary and academic personages were the typical forms in which critically concerned intellectuals sought to intervene in political issues in the early sixties.<sup>41</sup>

These forms had suited their feeling of their position within the polity as its conscience, as the later often maligned and derided 'Gewissen der Nation'. Such a view of themselves appeared to depend on a faith that whatever was wrong with West German democracy could be put right by reforms and by changes of attitude. The kind of critique which these intellectuals took to be their right in a liberal democracy was based on the assumption that what was criticised was open to reform. Enzensberger expressed this with regard to his work on the "Bewußtseins-Industrie", when he discussed why he had to use its apparatus in order to criticise it, in this case to have his essay on DER SPIEGEL published in the very same magazine:

Es gehört weder zu den Aufgaben, noch zu den Möglichkeiten der Kritik, ihre Gegenstände abzuschaffen. Wer ihr sutraut, sie werde Herrschaft liquidieren, Machtverhältnisse aus den Angeln heben, verschwendet seine Hoffnungen oder seine Besorgnisse. Kritik meint nicht gewaltsame Veränderung der Welt, sie deutet auf deren Alternative; sie ist nicht revolutionär, sondern revisionistisch gesonnen. Was sich von innen her nicht verändern läßt, an dem muß sie verliegen.<sup>1)</sup>

Enzensberger articulates here in abstract terms how intellectuals like himself saw themselves as social critics. The pluralist view of the Western democracies provided them with the raison-d'être of their role and of their customary distance from the political parties. It was a view which was dominant up to the mid-sixties and which saw the social constitution and political functioning of a parliamentary democracy in terms of the interaction of social and economic interest groups which established themselves and sought to bring their influence to bear on the administration, or within the administrative processes of the state. A liberal intelligentsia could be considered as one of these interest groups. As long as writers saw themselves as such an intelligentsia with a special critical function (and the book which Walser edited is an example of them doing so with a little party-political seasoning added) they could see a political role specifically suited to themselves, even if (or perhaps precisely because) this did not go unchallenged by their opponents on the right. As long as they believed that this kind of criticism was part of how a democracy works, their main struggle was to keep their special place open amidst the power-struggle. I take Enzensberger again as an example here, because he considered his position so carefully:

Hingegen muß eine Gesellschaft, die auf den Namen Demokratie Ansprüche macht, Kritik schon zur Befestigung dieser Ansprüche dulden. Sie räumt ihr einen Spielraum ein, dessen Grenzen nicht von der Kritik selbst, sondern von den Interessen der Herrschaft, also nach taktischen Gesichtspunkten bestimmt werden. Der Kritiker gibt seine eigene Position preis, wenn er diese Grenzen anerkennt; wenn er sie überschreitet, verliert er seine Produktionsmittel. Das ist sein alltägliches Dilemma.<sup>67</sup>

Enzensberger was talking about the press and the media here as the critical intellectual's 'Produktionsmittel'. Their involvement in the press as writers and critics can be said to have prompted many writers to question this social-critical position: Enzensberger's own investigation of Der Spiegel in 1957 and of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in 1962<sup>71</sup> are early and particularly determined examples of an intellectual questioning the standards and function of the West German press. Writers' use of the press as one of their literary as well as political media was one of the pivots of intensified political questioning on their part in the sixties. The standards of news-reporting and the concentration of ownership of a supposedly independent press were questions which were of direct relevance to literary intellectuals in their own spheres of work. These problems affected the view they had of themselves as writers and publicists who upheld democratic standards. The nature and role of the press was thus one of the challenges to such left-liberal (or to such left and to such liberal) intellectuals' image of themselves and of what their political commitment should be.

The habit of making isolated interventions occasioned by individual problems began to look more and more futile in the sixties. The sustained and mass protest of the student movement presented itself as a counter-example to the sporadic political most writers had pursued heretofore. The "literary opposition" became worried about whether it was really as oppositional as it had thought itself to be, as it had been led to believe it was especially by the regular hostility it met with from the right. The denunciation of literature was part of the same crisis of confidence about whether social and political criticism by means of the printed page had ever been at all relevant.<sup>8)</sup> Reinhard Baumgart formulated this scepticism offensively:

Das alles hätte auch vor drei oder vier Jahren oder so ähnlich gesagt werden können. Außerparlamentarische Opposition, das war bis dahin fast ausschließlich die Politik der Autoren: einiger Journalisten, Wissenschaftler, Belletristen. Jetzt ist damit vor allem die Politik der Studenten gemeint. Nichts ist durch diesen Positionswechsel fragwürdiger geworden als der politische Auftrag der Literatur und vor allem: seine Wirksamkeit. So politisch nämlich ihre Intentionen auch 20 Jahre lang gewesen sein mögen, sie hat nichts erreicht, was im Bewußtsein der Nation so folgenreich zu Buch schlug wie gleich die ersten Monate studentischer Aktionen.<sup>9)</sup>

For West German intellectuals the sixties was a period of growing disillusionment with the pluralist view of their society and with their own critical role as they had conceived it. It seemed clear that with very few exceptions this had brought them no enduring influence. The turmoil of the mid-sixties, which saw the emergence of the student movement, threw up issues which questioned the democratic and

pluralist claims of the state. In the rest of this chapter I shall examine Grass' position within this process. I shall aim to describe his responses as peculiar to himself, but rooted in his place within a couple of generations of literary intellectuals who were seeking a political identity for themselves.

I shall discuss Grass' political biography as an intellectual in the sixties in four stages as follows:

- approaching political issues as moral dilemmas, from 1961 to 1966
- turning this round, to see national moral offences as democracy's political problems, 1966 and 1967
- reacting against mass protest and polarised politics in 1967 and 1968
- thereafter looking for a place in parliamentary, not extra-parliamentary politics.

I believe that considering Grass separately from the SPD in the first instance will show how and why he became so involved with the Social Democrats.



'Gewissen der Nation'

When the GDR unilaterally closed the border between itself and the Federal Republic on the 13th of August 1961 Grass and Wolf-Dietrich Schnurre, who both lived in Berlin, wrote an open letter to the members of the East German Writers' Union. Grass also wrote one personally to its chairwoman Anna Seghers<sup>10)</sup>. Both letters appealed to writers living in the GDR to take a clear public stand against their government's forcible restriction of its citizens. Grass begged Anna Seghers not now to fall short of the respect in which she was held for her anti-fascist work during the Third Reich. He felt she had a responsibility to live up to this reputation for the sake of the people he believed she had inspired:

Es darf nicht sein, das Sie, die Sie bis heute vielen Menschen der Begriff aller Auflehnung gegen die Gewalt sind, dem Irrationalismus eines Gottfried Benn verfallen und die Gewalttätigkeit einer Diktatur verkennen ...

Grass and Schnurre insisted on the moral responsibilities of both GDR writers and themselves in the West and on their duty by virtue of their profession to pursue these responsibilities vigorously and openly. Thereby they expressed their own view of the political role writers should fulfil :

Wer den Beruf des Schriftstellers wählt, muß zu Wort kommen, und sei es nur durch ein lautes Verkünden, er werde am Sprechengehindert. (...) Wenn westdeutsche Schriftsteller sich die Aufgabe stellen, gegen das Verbleiben eines Hans Globke in Amt und Würden zu schreiben; wenn westdeutsche

Schriftsteller das geplante Notstandsgesetz des Innenministers Gerhard Schröder ein undemokratisches Gesetz nennen; (...) dann haben Sie genauso die Pflicht, das Unrecht vom 13. August beim Namen zu nennen. (...)  
(...) Wer schweigt, wird schuldig.

These letters were the first occasion where Grass personally took on the role of social and political conscience. Evidently he felt bound to this role as a writer, whether its corrective intent was purposeful or not. Grass and Schnurre's letters sought no further vindication for the demands they made. Their intervention and its effects typify the dangers intellectuals like themselves could run into as long as their political moves lacked clear and consistent direction. Because they sought no instrumental satisfaction for their protest (or at least not primarily), they laid themselves open to the criticism from the right that they had done the West a disservice, either by their criticism of domestic public affairs or by default for not attacking the East directly enough. Precisely this ensued after these letters.<sup>11)</sup> A number of opponents of the country's liberal intellectuals seized the occasion to insist that the latter should stop interfering in politics at home and instead do their own anti-communist government an ideological service by themselves condemning the GDR regime. Such whip-lashing from the right-wing was just the sort of thing which sharpened intellectuals' faith that they were vitally necessary as a critical force.

The Spiegel Affair of 1962 is illuminating here<sup>12)</sup>.

Franz Josef Strauß, who was Minister of Defence at the time, had the offices of Der Spiegel raided by the police and its publisher and one of its editors arrested overnight on suspicion of having betrayed state secrets in an article they had published on the government's defence policy. Many organisations and public bodies expressed their disapproval of this, condemning the haste with which Strauß and the police had taken action during the nighttime, reminiscent as this was of Nazi methods.

The main objection raised in public was to the methods Strauß had used in this affair. By contrast, the Gruppe 47 declared their objection to the apparent cause itself, namely the attempt to silence criticism of Strauß' ministry and to stifle investigations into its plans for armament. These writers saw it as precisely their own right and duty to criticise and investigate matters of public concern in the manner of Der Spiegel. The magazine was one of them in this sense. Hence the manifesto they published in solidarity with its staff expressed their determination to defend against any government encroachment the role which they took to be entrusted to them to be constantly morally alert on behalf of the general public:

Die Unterzeichneten drücken Herrn Rudolf Augstein ihre Achtung aus und sind mit ihm solidarisch. In einer Zeit, die den Krieg als Mittel der Politik unbrauchbar gemacht hat, halten sie die Unterrichtung der Öffentlichkeit über sogenannte militärische Geheimdienst für eine sittliche Pflicht, die sie jederzeit erfüllen würden. (3)

It is significant that they defended this role as "eine sittliche Pflicht". Public statements of such a kind by intellectuals were best expressed in moral terms precisely because they could not claim political authority for themselves within a pluralist understanding of democracy, for that authority was delegated to the government and the political parties. The one avenue which was open to them was to question the government's moral authority.

This is not to say that ethical terms of reference are quite separate from political ones. On the contrary, ethical vocabulary was a way of formulating political demands. For Grass himself, moral legitimacy and political legitimacy were one and the same thing, as I have shown in the previous chapter. The first occasion on which he was bold enough to challenge an aspect of the government's affairs directly was in 1965 when he called for Erhard's resignation.<sup>14)</sup> Erhard was the figure who offended left-liberal intellectuals' view of themselves. When he abused their approach to politics, his own political legitimacy came into question. Not only did he herald the end of the pluralist view of democracy himself with his propositions about a 'formierte Gesellschaft', he also challenged the place intellectuals thought they legitimately held within a democracy when he rudely chastised their interference in political affairs, calling them:

... Banausen und Nichtakönnner, die Über Dinge reden,  
von denen sie einfach nichts verstehen (...) Ich  
wende mich (...) gegen die Versuche intellektueller

Snobs, den Wohlstand in der Bundesrepublik lächerlich zu machen ...15)

Grass took issue with the Chancellor over the relationship he had arrived at with President Nasser of Egypt, which Grass saw as an offence to the Israelis. He felt that Erhard's political deals finally demonstrated his moral bankruptcy. Such a Chancellor was not fit for the country which was beholden to Israel to recompense for Nazi crimes against the Jews.

He thus made a political challenge phrased in entirely ethical terms. In these very same months Erhard's political authority within his government and within his party was crumbling in the political crisis which removed him from his leadership of the CDU and from the Chancellorship. The resolution to this crisis of confidence in the government, and in particular in its ability to manage the economy, was the coalition between the SPD and the CDU/CSU under Kurt Georg Kiesinger which was arrived at in late 1966.

Thus constituted, the Grand Coalition made a mockery of the pluralist faith in government as balance. Given the small size of the FDP fraction in parliament which then became the only counterweight to the government, the limits of parliamentary democracy became clear now that there was no effective control over such a united governing bloc. This coalition revealed a concentration of power, far from a dispersal of power, which constitutional democracy

was powerless to prevent.

The political legitimacy of the government and of the established parties was seen to be less than secure. A reasonable confidence in the potential of West German democracy had been necessary to intellectuals' confidence in themselves as the mentors of that democracy. Grass' challenge to Erhard had thus turned out to be the last possible protest against the government which could confine itself to judging first and foremost with moral standards. In future dissent would have to seek further avenues and more conspicuously political terms of reference.

'Gewissen der Partei'?

The Grand Coalition forced Grass to make a directly political as well as a moral response. His dilemma was how to handle the political consequences, which he foresaw, of the SPD's compromise with the CDU as well as the moral implications of its decision to accept an ex-Nazi Chancellor.

He wrote two open letters to Willy Brandt, one to Kiesinger and an article in DIE ZEIT dealing with Brandt's reply.<sup>161</sup> The letters to Brandt were the appeals of someone who was helpless and powerless to affect the SPD leadership's decision. The one to Kiesinger once again raised ethical objections to entrusting political leadership to a man who

had been a Nazi. The article in DIE ZEIT tells us most about his problems in accepting this coalition which offended his sensibilities as a politically conscientious intellectual.

In the first place he had to recognise that he had no power. It was now plain to see that power was concentrated in the hands of a few and that he was excluded from their number as a layman. Grass' letters show that he was aware that he could have no pretensions to any real influence. Nevertheless he attempted to fight back. It was at least a small success to elicit some kind of response from those who did have power. That Brandt bothered to reply to Grass was a welcome gesture of reconciliation, comfort to hurt pride.

Brandt's letter prompted Grass to write back again in an endeavour to keep discussion open, in the hope that conscientious dissent like his own from outside the political parties should not now suddenly find itself devalued. In his letter to Grass, Brandt rejected criticism of the party from outside its ranks. This implied that in cases of conflict between critical opinion and the party, the standards which intellectuals had previously applied were not relevant or legitimate.

Grass took issue with this monopoly of conscience which Brandt claimed for the political party because its decisions affected the whole public. In this debate, Grass was trying to rescue something of the old position;

however he had been forced to think this out in explicitly political rather than moral categories. He staunchly re-asserted the vital role of criticism which was independent of the established parties, but he formulated it in a series of political questions. Furthermore, he spoke on behalf of the public as a whole, as a member of the general public rather than as someone in a special position as a writer:

Die politischen Mächte in unserem Teilstaat haben sich umgeben. (...)

Wir, die wir den regierenden wie oppositionellen Parteien mit unserer Stimme zeitbeschränkte Vollmachten geben, sind in der Lage, zwischen den Wahlen mahnend bis empört zu reagieren. Es wurde telefoniert, es wurden Telegramme aufgesetzt, die Post bekam zu tun. (...) Ich habe drei Briefe geschrieben und bis heute eine Antwort bekommen.

Willy Brandt (...) antwortete postwendend.

(...) Ein Satz dieses Briefes - "Das Gewissen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei schlägt nicht außerhalb dieser Partei" - erregt meinen heftigen Widerspruch. (...) Nein, Willy Brandt, so festgefügt die Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands sein mag, so sehr diese Partei sich dem herrischen Zugriff eines Herbert Wehner gefügt hat, nicht Sie allein können bestimmen, was soziale Demokratie bedeutet, sein kann und sein sollte.

(...) Der Staat sind wir. (...)

Wir werden prüfen, wie Kurt Georg Kiesinger und Herbert Wehner verantworten, was sie uns zumuten. (...) Wir werden prüfen, ob es Willy Brandt gelingt, seine Deutschlandpolitik (...) durchzusetzen. (...) Wenn diese Große Koalition nur tätig sein wird, sobald es gilt, Notstandsgesetze zu verabschieden, dann möge sie zerbrechen, bevor die Bundesrepublik an ihr zerbricht.

Unter den fragwürdigsten Umständen: Die SPD regiert. Schon die Regierungserklärung wird erweisen, ob das Gewissen der SPD auch auf der Regierungsbank schlägt.<sup>17)</sup>

It was obvious that if a writer was to become a real political voice, then he had to try and reach a wider audience than he had had before as an intellectual. Making speeches was a means of gaining more direct access to an



audience, even if not necessarily to a larger one. This was an avenue which Grass pursued especially energetically in the first period after the Grand Coalition was formed.

Political and social tensions accelerated after 1966. The instability they caused facilitated Grass' career as a political speaker. He wanted to stem the tide of disaffection towards the right and the left of the established parliamentary parties. In his efforts to find alternatives to this polarisation, he left the position of intellectual as conscience behind and more or less turned himself into a politician for a short period.

Initially he went along with the student opposition in West Berlin and shared some of their concerns. However as a would-be mediator between the extra-parliamentary movement and the political parties, he soon dropped common cause with the former, in somewhat bad grace. Vietnam, the Emergency Powers Laws and the Springer Press were contentions which illustrate how the boundary of opposition for Grass was to disclaim his disapproval in each case, whilst the student opposition hurtled towards direct action.

#### Defender of the State

The rise of the neo-Nazi NPD at this time and the acceleration of opposition to the Vietnam War and the Emerg-

ancy Laws into the student protests of 1967 to 1969 created a tense political climate in West Germany and West Berlin. The first sign of both these developments accompanied the political crisis during which Erhard's government was forced into dissolution. In November 1966 the NPD gained nearly 8% of the poll in the Land-election in Hessen and was able to enter a Land-parliament for the first time. The first important Vietnam demonstration took place in the centre of Berlin on December 10th. In the Land-elections of the following year the NPD continued to make gains and finally reached the peak of its success in Baden-Württemberg in April 1968 with nearly 10% of the votes.

These strains on the left and the right were the beginnings of the strife which was felt over the next few years. By the end of the sixties all the major capitalist countries had seen vigorous and sometimes violent social, political and industrial conflicts. In other countries these were disputes which had been slumbering and which now re-erupted on a large scale. In the Federal Republic they emerged from the dark after nearly a decade of virtually complete civic quiescence.

A more active and lively political climate was stimulated after the recession of 1966/67 by the state administration's need to manage the economy and the social infrastructure much more directly than had been the case before in West Germany. Under Erhard's policies, market-

philosophy had been to the fore and the government had appeared not to be an active agent in the economy but rather an overseer. Once state intervention and structural planning became necessary, the government and the administration could be seen to be active agents of the conditions in which people lived and worked. This led to social and industrial conflicts which began to be felt under Brandt's government after 1969. Meanwhile, the change of state philosophy and government action had ideological effects which were felt by students and intellectuals in particular. For they were strata on the one hand whose independence was threatened by the extension of the government's politico-administrative arm, and who on the other hand had been educated to take the values of freedom seriously and who now saw them betrayed over the international and domestic issues which fuelled the extra-parliamentary opposition.

The revolts of 1966-1969 amounted to a fight against the old dogmas of the 'Free West', whose validity was put into question by the action of the Western government's themselves, the American government in Vietnam, the Grand Coalition at home in the Federal Republic. Grass entered into this strife and recognised the need for a new ideological spirit which would be sufficiently progressive to replace the conservative anti-communist consensus of the CDU era. His reactions are symptomatic of the political climate of the late sixties and early seventies.

But in the course of these clashes and dissensions, his original sympathy for the major protest-issues of the day exhausted itself. It is well known that the war in Vietnam was a catalyst of the extra-parliamentary movement, and it was the first case where Grass rapidly faded from the ranks of the opposition.

In 1965 he had signed an international statement, published in the New York Times, which criticised American intervention in Vietnam. This, however, was about the only time he took a definite oppositional stand. In late November 1965 other intellectuals in West Germany protested against the American role in Vietnam and their own government's unswerving loyalty to US military policy.<sup>18)</sup> Grass did not join this and thereafter it became clear that he was not interested in protesting over Vietnam at home. Instead he selectively supported the SPD's position on the war.

In November 1966 he published an article in the Süddeutsche Zeitung in which he sought further publicity for Brandt's support of one of the Pope's calls for peace in South-East Asia.<sup>19)</sup> The major part of this article simply reprints an interview Brandt gave to the Catholic News-agency. Grass' main purpose was to propagate Brandt's position on the war, because it had apparently been ignored by the press. He was trying to rescue a humanist concern over the war from oblivion, so that the issue should not be confined to the extra-parliamentary battles. He backed up particular

people within the SPD leadership, lest they lose their liberal identity in a radicalized climate now that the SPD was part of the government. Such is the gist of his article "Vietnam geht auch uns an" in DIE ZEIT 19/1/68. Earlier in January the SPD leadership had issued a declaration calling for a cessation of American bombing of North Vietnam. Again Grass repeated the SPD's position in his own article and demanded that the coalition government and the Bundestag as a whole should follow the SPD's example and break their silence on the war, a silence which was tantamount to supporting American action.

It seems that on the whole he was more concerned with attitudes to the Vietnam War at home than with the rights and wrongs of the struggle in South-East-Asia. The issue between the Americans and the Vietnamese had become a domestic political problem for the West Germans. The polarisation the war caused on the home front was what concerned Grass in his capacity as a public figure. He was prominent amongst those who organized a rally at the beginning of March 1968, which was supported by three civil-rights groups (Humanistische Union, Liga für Menschenrechte and the Arbeitskreis Kirche und Gesellschaft). This rally bore the title "Appell an die Vernunft" and it aimed to take a stand against any further escalation of the confrontation in Berlin. On this occasion Grass made a point of not taking sides about which forces should be victorious in Vietnam. The reason he gave for not being partisan, was that too

little was known about the Vietcong for people in the West to know whether to support them or not.<sup>20)</sup>

So Grass took issue from the point of view of his own society's future rather than of the Vietnamese, and here he and the extra-parliamentary opposition parted company radically. In contrast to Grass, the students were disposed to precisely the sort of emotional identification with the Vietnamese people which he backed away from. Their slogan "Berlin ist unser Vietnam" expresses how they were inspired by just such an identification.

The death of Benno Ohnesorg, a student who was shot by a policeman during a demonstration on the 2nd June 1967, was a turning-point for the extra-parliamentary opposition. It was such a shock that it spread opposition to the authorities beyond the sphere of influence of the SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund) in West Berlin. Following Ohnesorg's death in June 1967, a congress was held in Hannover which took the extra-parliamentary opposition in Berlin into the Federal Republic for the first time. The purpose of this gathering of the left was to generalise from the police brutality against demonstrators in Berlin to a radical analysis of the authoritarianism of West German society as a whole.

This congress marked the first visible impact of the students' militancy on the left of the academic community. A number of professors attended including such an eminent

critical thinker as Jürgen Habermas and a socialist and academic of such high standing as Wolfgang Abendroth. It was one of the opening sessions of the New Left in West Germany.

Grass was not one to participate in circles as radical as this, despite a degree of common cause with them during this very early phase of the rebirth of the left in West Germany. He supported the rights of demonstrators against the police and the city authorities in Berlin, but he did not extend his solidarity to the SDS. The most serious incident in Berlin after Ohnesorge's death occurred in February 1968. A congress had been organised which concluded with a demonstration against the Berlin authorities. In response the trade-union leadership in the city organised a counter-march, which stoked up hostility towards the students who came under physical attack. A group of 128 figures from the intelligentsia considered that the city authorities had colluded in this violence. They criticised the authorities' law-and-order attitude and expressed their support for the rights of oppositional demonstrators.<sup>21)</sup> Grass was amongst them, and this was only one of the occasions when he spoke out for the right of public assembly and for tolerance of dissent.

However he would have preferred to see this dissent transferred to parliamentary ground and its militancy diffused because of the polarisation it had led to. He never did join the direct opposition to the Vietnam war because

he favoured seeking influence over the government through the political parties, especially the SPD,<sup>22)</sup> and he wanted to have nothing to do with the kind of militancy against the state which was emerging in the student movement. Grass' preference for chastising the Bundestag, the government, the SPD, was not very convincing at this time given that the Federal Government was bound to the United States in NATO and there was little chance of modifying its attitude. Consequently, at a time when there was no effective avenue of criticism to be seen anywhere apart from the student movement, Grass appeared to have moved to the right when he would not join common cause with the New Left.

Alongside Vietnam, the other controversy to dominate this decade was proposed legislation to change the Basic Law in order to grant the government extraordinary powers in times of emergency (Notstandsgesetze). Pressure against such a proposal to give the state the potential power to restrict democratic rights had been building up ever since a first bill of such a kind had been on the parliamentary agenda for the legislative period 1961 - 1965. The Federal Congress of the German Trade Union Federation (DGB) declared its opposition to this bill in October 1962.<sup>23)</sup> The DGB confirmed its rejection of the legislation in the following March. There were academics, writers, clergy and teachers who supported the DGB'S position and also opposed the idea of Emergency Powers Laws. At the end of 1964 Grass' name was amongst 200 people from many intellectual professions



who subscribed to an appeal against the bill made to Bundestag members by the Humanistische Union.

In the main it was trade-union pressure which persuaded the SPD fraction not to vote in favour of that first bill, although the party did not reject such legislation in principle. Revised proposals remained on the parliamentary agenda under the next two governments. The stumbling block for the opposition was whether the trade-unions and the student and intellectual wing of the movement against this legislation could be brought together to fight a united campaign. They failed to achieve this unity. The DGB cooperated in a congress held in May 1965 which was entitled "Demokratie im Notstand", but withdrew its support by the time a second one was organised in October 1966 which Hans Magnus Enzensberger led. The failure to maintain a united movement against the Emergency Powers Bill meant that a modified version of it was eventually passed under the Grand Coalition in May 1968.

Grass also distrusted the proposals all along. Nevertheless he remained sceptical of the attempts which were made to organise an extra-parliamentary campaign against them. His statements implied that all efforts should be directed at the parliamentary process, even when under the Grand Coalition this, or this alone, would have little if any effect. He had no alternative to offer between

protest and a discredited parliament:

Mein Nein selbst zu dem demokratischsten Notstandsgesetz läßt sich nicht juristisch begründen. Die Erfahrung zeigt: Uns allen, den Befürwortern wie den Gegnern der Notstandsgesetze, fehlt die demokratische Reife, um mit einem solchen Gesetz umgehen zu können.

Nach den Ereignissen der letzten Monate wissen wir, wie hilflos und widersprüchlich Behörden und Demonstranten z.B. das Demonstrationsrecht auslegen, wie hektisch die Polizei in den Einsatz geschickt und, aufgrund ungenauer Weisungen, um ihr Ansehen gebracht wird.

Außerungen des Bundeskanzlers und des Bundesinnenministers lassen nicht hoffen, daß die zur Zeit verantwortlich regierenden Politiker größere Demonstrationen oder eine eventuell um sich greifende Streikbewegung von einem wirklichen Notstand unterscheiden können. Wir sind gebrannte Kinder.

(...) Isoliert, mißgelaunt und das eigene Unbehagen mit Forschung überdeckend, arbeitet der Bundestag nur noch unter der Devise: Das muß endlich vom Tisch, (...).

Auch wenn viele Bundestagsabgeordnete die neue Gesetzesvorlage mit schlechten Vorahnungen lesen und mit Fragezeichen versehen werden, am Ende könnte der unheilvolle Fraktionszwang wieder einmal beweisen, wie demokratisch unreif unsere Gesellschaft bis in den Bundestag hinein immer noch ist.<sup>24)</sup>

Grass did not join the campaign against these laws.

In this period it became ever clearer that he defended the parliamentary process per se and for this reason disengaged himself from public conflicts over the content of such legislation. Moreover he disengaged himself at a time when parliament was clearly of no avail as an instrument of opposition to the government's plans. This made it seem that all he was interested in was getting protest off the streets, because his attitude to the issues themselves was ambiguous. The only thing he made quite clear was that as a means of opposition he favoured pressurising the parliamentary parties

to take account of public criticism. His final word on the Emergency Laws was to take them as a lesson in how the established parties should have treated the opposition to the legislation, and how the opposition should behave for its part:

Und wie sieht es aus, wenn in einer demokratischen Gesellschaft ein Konflikt seit Jahren da ist, verdrängt wird, sich neu zu Wort meldet, verharmlost, dann teilweise ausgetragen, am Ende überstürzt gelöst wird, um einen neuen Konflikt zu produzieren?

Ich spreche von den Notstandsgesetzen. Wer die erste Vorlage des damaligen Innenministers Schröder mit der zuletzt verabschiedeten Gesetzesvorlage vergleicht, der wird bemerken, wie dank der Kompromißbereitschaft der Parteien, dank der öffentlichen Kritik und dank des Protestes gegen die Notstandsgesetze, ein anfangs annähernd polizeistaatliches Konzept mehr und mehr liberalisiert worden ist. Mehr und mehr heißt für die einen zuviel, für die anderen zuwenig.

(...) Hätte die Minderheit, weil überstimmt, die Kompromißlösung nicht akzeptieren und den Kampf gegen die Notstandsgesetze mit anderen Mitteln, zum Beispiel mit denen der Gewalt fortsetzen sollen?

Die überstimmten Bundestagsabgeordneten, auch die Gewerkschaften und mit ihnen viele, die in der Öffentlichkeit protestiert hatten, fügten sich dem Mehrheitsbeschluss, weil sie wissen und wußten, daß in einer Demokratie Konflikte nur durch den Kompromiß zu lösen sind. Ist damit gesagt, daß das Votum der Mehrheit richtig war? Auch falsche oder unzureichende Lösungen können Konflikte beenden, bis die falschen oder unzureichenden Lösungen einen neuen Konflikt schaffen, der den alten neu aufwirft.<sup>25)</sup>

The newspaper empire owned by Axel Springer and the methods of his papers was another area of controversy where Grass showed how his priorities now diverged from the extra-parliamentary left. He made an attack on the Springer press in September 1967, occasioned by reports in three Springer papers on the 9th of that month, which had alleged that the writer Arnold Zweig had compared the GDR, where he lived, to Fascism.

This allegation had been taken from a false report. It took a fortnight for the papers concerned to half-heartedly retract it. Angered by this abuse of Zweig's reputation and the irresponsibility of the Springer papers, Grass found an avenue for condemning Springer journalists by introducing the television programme "Panorama" for the 25th of that month, which investigated the Zweig affair.

He made two demands: that the German Press Council, the Bundestag and the Constitutional Court should put a stop to "die zunehmende Schädigung der parlamentarischen Demokratie durch die Zeitungen des Springerkonzerns", and that the newspaper-reading public should boycott all Springer-controlled publications. This second demand was immediately feasible, but extremely improbable. The first part of his protest would only be taken seriously if a sufficiently vigorous campaign got underway to exert pressure on parliament and the courts to do something about the power of this political and financial block within the press. Apart from that, Grass simply apologised to Zweig "stellvertretend für viele".<sup>26)</sup> He was evidently spoiling to spar with the Springer press, but did not himself take an active role in a movement against the giants within the newspaper industry. He used militant language but stopped short of any kind of militant action.

Nevertheless, this intervention initiated a more prolonged campaign against the Springer press and its influence than any other separate issue Grass ever helped

provoke. This campaign threatened to become more radical than he was prepared to support.

Numerous newspapers took sides over the affair. In DIE ZEIT Dieter E. Zimmer wrote several articles following up the "Panorama" programme's exposure of the dubious background to the original report.<sup>27)</sup> A number of Springer journalists began libel proceedings against Grass for accusing them of fabricating reports worthy of fascists. Grass declared that he would be able to gather evidence to fight and win this case, but it was later withdrawn before it got to court. The head of the Deutscher Journalistenverband complained that Grass had insulted the whole profession, but then some of the members of that association dissented from that view.<sup>28)</sup> The toing and froing within the profession alone became voluminous enough to fill a book which documented the affair using Grass' statement as a starting-point.<sup>29)</sup> As is well known, this was only one of numerous collections of documentary and analytical material against the Springer empire which have continued to appear ever since, because Springer has remained a festering wound for the left, especially amongst the intelligentsia. Grass' was one of the first shots fired in a long battle.

The original reports about Zweig to which Grass had taken exception were the catalyst of a much wider wave of concern amongst journalists. Springer's companies had a majority control of the press in West Berlin and a large

holding in the press in the rest of the Federal Republic. This added up to little short of a monopoly, flaunting the commercial realities which lie behind the freedom and independence of the press in a liberal democracy. This concentration of ownership scandalised many liberals as well as left-wingers because the Springer papers had such influence to spread repressive attitudes, in particular violent hostility to the students. Furthermore, the reports seemed to have malevolently tampered with Zweig's reputation as a writer who had been persecuted in the Third Reich. The case cast a slur over the profession's reputation and self-image. Mutual recrimination polarised the right-wing from the liberal wing of the press.

Other sections of the intelligentsia were also hardening their resolve to do something about Springer's power. At the time when the affair over Zweig blew up, the Gruppe 47 were holding a conference, and they decided to boycott every publication Springer controlled and to encourage their publishers to break off their connection with his organisation. At the same time the SDS wanted the writers to take up their demand that Springer's holdings in the newspaper industry should be expropriated. After some demonstrators burned copies of BILD outside the group's meeting, Grass threatened to withdraw his signature from the boycott resolution if the students were invited in to discuss the Springer problem, as had been proposed. Erich Fried, who witnessed this quarrel, complained that Grass

was so determined not to take any action beyond boycott that he would not support a public tribunal on Springer which was proposed.<sup>30)</sup> He had said he would bring evidence to court on the fascism of Springer's papers, but he would not produce it for such a tribunal. The result was that he appeared to have betrayed the campaign which he had willy-nilly been midwife to. The reason for this desertion was that he did not want to be associated with this extra-parliamentary opposition any longer.

#### Profile of a moderate

Grass' disagreements with the extra-parliamentary left reconciled him to the SPD and to its collaboration in the coalition government. His problem then was what to do about the vacuum he found himself in, as he was neither part of the extra-parliamentary opposition nor a member of an established political party. For a short period he had been counted amongst the opposition to the Grand Coalition. But after he had crossed swords with the student left, he developed a self-consciously middle-of-the-road stance. Four major speeches he made in 1968 were concerned with his view of himself as a moderate: 'Rede zum 1. Mai 1968', 'Die angelesene Revolution', 'Über das Ja und Nein' and 'Radikalismus in Deutschland'.<sup>31)</sup> Given that this same year was the high-point of revolutionary optimism for the New Left, it was unmistakably clear that Grass now stood on quite different ground.

Indeed to the left it inevitably looked like he stood on the other side of the barricades. It is true that he seemed to be almost taunting the student movement and making rather a parade of his moderation. However, it is only fair to say that he was also trying to make a constructive intervention between the student left and the SPD, between the generations. He had a fighting conception of where the median lay: not just somewhere in the middle between the right and the left by default, or by spurning all contact with the left. That would mean that it was too weak to define itself and could be identified only through the hostility it met with from the left and the right. Grass thought that the ideas and values of reformists should be actively championed and developed.

It could be said that from this point the whole of his political evolution was informed by such a search for ways of developing the ideas and of strengthening the commitment of reformists. This is why he got so closely <sup>involved</sup> with the SPD that he was a close friend of the politicians by the end of the sixties. In his speeches in 1968 he talked about how important it was that liberals and social democrats should make their criticism of the radical left positive as well as negative, by ensuring gradualist change themselves:

Der Protest der Jugend hat die Unsicherheit unserer unzulänglich etablierten Demokratie offenbar gemacht. Dieser Erfolg ist zweideutig. Entweder veranlaßt er längst überfällige Reformen (...) oder es passiert, wie bisher, nichts; (...).



Nicht rechts von sich , sondern dort, wo die Jugend hilflos und sich selbst überlassen protestiert, sollten die Sozialdemokraten ihre Verbündeten suchen. <sup>32)</sup>

He also tried to practise what he preached by making contact with various youth groups. His speech against the NPD in November 1966 was a beginning to this. In its published form it was entitled 'Rede an einen jungen Wähler, der sich versucht fühlt, die NPD zu wählen' <sup>33)</sup> and in it he had tried to reason with a potential young NPD supporter from the point of view of someone who had experienced the Nazi regime, the NPD's progenitors.

Over the next few years Grass maintained this contact with youth groups particularly during the campaigns for the Land-elections between the federal elections in 1969 and 1972. <sup>34)</sup> This approach brought him into an unfamiliar area between the critical attitude to politicians which intellectuals usually upheld, and the established position of a politician. His stance was that of a mentor, and he took this up as an adult who had the right to speak from experience. Taking his own biography as his brief in public engagements shows that he wanted to get away from the idea that as an intellectual or a writer he had some special birthright to political influence.

A number of experiences had taught him the lesson that the role of an intellectual in politics qua intellectual was a no man's land which it was not worth tarrying in if he wanted to achieve something practical.

Since his campaign speeches in 1965, when he had spoken of renouncing Germany's claim to the territories east of the Oder-Neisse, Grass had been counted amongst those with a realistic attitude to the Federal Republic's problem with her east-European neighbours. So a couple of years later he was to be found making a speech to the Bonn Press Club in May 1967, in which he intended to substantiate his views on how relations with the GDR should be resolved after the Cold War. He argued against reunification of the two German states on the grounds that a united Germany had always been a disaster for the world.<sup>35)</sup> He proposed a federal association instead.

At the time reunification was still the government's formal objective, being enshrined in the Basic Law. But the coalition agreement between the CDU and the SPD did not attach a lot of weight to it and instead stressed possible practical improvements between the two states. This policy was closely associated with Brandt, who had worked this way as Mayor of West Berlin. These issues were still extremely emotive ones in West Germany, but Grass' suggestions were of no relevance to public opinion. It was much safer to tacitly ignore reunification than to throw it overboard, and those in power were doing the former. Kiesinger was the first Chancellor to admit that the country would not be reunited in anything like the near future.<sup>36)</sup> Grass' ideas were still-born in the light of the government's policy. No single individual could pepper the debate

any longer, because the work of establishing new bases for relations with the Communist states, including the GDR, was being done by the diplomats.

Grass' active support for Israel brought him into a similarly ineffectual position. Initially he struck a popular chord, but he lost the public's interest when the dispute in the Middle-East became so serious that it threatened international stability. Grass had declared his fervent support for Israel when war first broke out in the Middle-East in 1967. At that time he was very much in tune with the wave of support for Israel in West Germany.<sup>37)</sup> The general enthusiasm for the Israeli cause smacked of surrogate repentance of the Third Reich. Grass' ambitions were deeper than that. He wanted to see the German nation genuinely atone for its atrocities against the Jews. Earlier in that year he had made an officially sponsored visit to Israel and had presented himself as an envoy to the Jewish people from a penitent German nation.<sup>38)</sup> He had appointed himself to this role and could not sustain it for long. For an individual person's endeavours paled beside the involvement of governments in this ever more complex conflict. As Israel remained close to his heart,<sup>39)</sup> he received a little public recognition when he was included in a large party which accompanied Brandt on an official visit to Israel in June 1973.

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia<sup>40)</sup>, the dictatorship in Greece<sup>41)</sup>, dissidents in the Soviet Union<sup>42)</sup> and in other East European countries<sup>43)</sup> were further conflicts which he felt very strongly about. Time and again he let his views and feelings be known, but as he could do little more, his frustration only grew all the more. A means of trying to rectify this permanent powerlessness was to get involved in projects in the developing world.<sup>44)</sup> But again, after some initial publicity that such a writer was getting something practical done, success in these projects was scarcely any more tangible than it had been in any of his initiatives at home apart from his electoral work.

These were all stages along Grass' route away from the general and ideal non-party politics of the intellectuals of his generation, towards the sort of para-party forum which emerged in the Voters' Initiative and which I shall discuss in its own right in the next two chapters. After 1968 Grass increasingly concentrated on the SPD at home and on those things he could take a practical part in. His disillusion with moral appeals and protests from figures within the intelligentsia who otherwise did little or nothing in politics, was particularly marked in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Then he felt that protest had proved to be so impotent that for the layman the only card left to be played was to turn the politicians' monopoly of power to advantage, by delegating one's moral and political responsibilities to the leaders one had elected into office.

In the case of the Biafran civil war he proposed that it would be best to channel all public concern through Brandt:

Kein Protest hat den Vietnam-Krieg beenden können. Kein Protest vermochte die Sowjetunion und ihre Verbündeten zu hindern, die Tache hoslowakei mit Panzern zu überrollen. Die Geschichte weltweiter Gewaltanwendung ist gleichzeitig die Geschichte ohnmächtiger Proteste gegen die Gewalt (...) sprechen wir zuallererst eine Adresse an, die uns verantwortlich ist, also die Bundesregierung, besonders den Bundesaußenminister Willy Brandt, der durch seine Rede in Genf bewiesen hat, daß ihm die Politiker der Dritten Welt zuhören; sein Aufruf zum Gewaltverzicht fand ihren Beifall.<sup>45)</sup>

Grass had moved from the typical intellectual position earlier in the decade which had been akin to the critic in the gallery, to a seat in the front row. From there he could either go on stage himself, which he was to do in his campaigns for the SPD, or he could applaud his favourite politicians at work in the government:

Nicht nur Leistungen, auch Teilleistungen, selbst einen dreimal verwässerten Leber-Plan, nenne ich vernünftig und deshalb wert, verbessert zu werden. Die zähe und vernunftsbestimmte Arbeit eines Karl Schillers nötigt mir Respekt ab. Ich freue mich über die Kleinstserfolge in Sachen Demokratie.<sup>46)</sup>

At this stage his applause sounded rather sycophantic. By discarding protest-politics he had fallen into the role of an ideologue for the SPD ministers. On the other hand, he had also dropped any pretensions to a role which had been specific to intellectuals, for one which theoretically any other lay person could join him in.

What is more, a good number of people did join Grass

in the Voters' Initiatives. For this reason his experiences in the dissensions of the sixties illustrate some of the after-effects of that strife. By the time his sympathy with the major protest issues of the decade was exhausted, he had acquired a relationship with the parliamentary parties which was a major ingredient of the Voters' Initiatives. They in turn can be seen as one of the alternatives which people from the middle classes and the intelligentsia experimented with once the unpolitical conservatism, which had dominated for so long, became unstable in the mid-sixties. In the next two chapters I shall try to show how Grass' political career was of course individual, but at the same time symptomatic of the period, because it matched many aspects of the SPD's own growth and progress.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Martin Walser (ed.): Die Alternative oder Brauchen wir eine neue Regierung, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1961, 'zu diesem Buch' & pp. 27/8 resp..
- 2) Hans Werner Richter (ed.): Almanach der Gruppe 47, 1947-1962, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1962, p. 10.
- 3) Horst Krüger (ed.): Was ist heute links?, Munich, 1963.
- 4) See Reinhard Lettau (ed.): Die Gruppe 47 / Bericht Kritik Polemik, Neuwied & Berlin, 1967, pp. 446-464.
- 5) 'Die Sprache des Spiegel', in Einzelheiten I / Bewußtseins-industrie, Frankfurt a.M., 8th edition, 1973, p. 102.
- 6) *ibid.*, pp. 101/2.
- 7) 'Die Sprache des Spiegel', *op. cit.*, pp. 74-105, & 'Journalismus als Eiertanz. Beschreibung einer allgemeinen Zeitung für Deutschland', *ibid.*, pp. 18-73.
- 8) e.g. H.M. Enzensberger: 'Notstand', & H. Böll: 'Notstandsnotizen', in Tintenfisch, no. 2, 1969, pp. 19/20 & 21-24, resp..

- 9) 'Sechs Thesen über Literatur und Politik', in Tinten-  
fisch', no. 3, 1970, pp. 33/34.
- 10) Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Franz Josef Görtz: Günter Grass/  
Dokumente zur politischen Wirkung, Munich, 1971, pp. 6/7  
& 12/13 resp..
- 11) See Gerhard Schoenbrunner: 'Von der Verantwortung des  
Schriftstellers', in Lettau op. cit., pp. 471-478.
- 12) Information here from Jürgen Seifert (ed.): Die Spiegel-  
Affäre, Vol. 2, Die Reaktion der Öffentlichkeit, Olten  
& Freiburg im Breisgau, 1966.
- 13) 'Manifest von 49 Schriftstellern und Künstlern vom  
28. Oktober 1962', ibid., p. 383.
- 14) In Über das Selbstverständliche/Poetische Schriften,  
revised paperback edition, Munich, 1969, p. 9.
- 15) 'Rede vor der 11. Bundestagung der Sozialausschüsse der  
Christlich-demokratischen Arbeiterschaft', Cologne,  
as cited by E. Wiehn in Intellektuelle in Politik und  
Gesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1971, pp. 23/4.
- 16) 'Offener Briefwechsel mit Willy Brandt', 'Offener Brief  
an Kurt Georg Kiesinger' & 'Das Gewissen der SPD', in  
Über das Selbstverst. etc., op.cit., pp.95-98, 99/100  
& 101-103 resp..



- 17) 'Das Gewissen der SPD', op.cit..
- 18) Lettau op.cit., pp. 459/60.
- 19) 'Willy Brandt und die Friedenszyklika', in Süddeutsche Zeitung 11/11/66.
- 20) 'Der Biedersinn gibt wieder den Ton an', in Dokumente etc., op.cit., pp. 96-100.
- 21) 'Appell an den Berliner Senat', in DIE ZEIT 8/3/68.
- 22) 'Eine Stimme von außen her', in Dokumente, op.cit., pp. 105-108.
- 23) Information from Hans-Heinz Holz & Paul Neuhöffer: Griff nach der Diktatur? / Texte, Kommentare, Stellungnahmen zur Notstandsgesetzgebung, Cologne, 1965, pp. 154-162.
- 24) 'Wir haben nicht die demokratische Reife', in Dokumente, op.cit., p. 115.
- 25) 'Konflikte', in Über das Selbstverständliche, op.cit., pp. 207/8.
- 26) 'Entschuldigung', ibid., pp. 163/4.

- 27) 22/9/67 & 6/10/67.
- 28) For a survey of the affair in the press see Dokumente, Anhang 4, op.cit., pp. 331-351.
- 29) Der Fall Axel C. Springer am Beispiel Arnold Zweig/Eine Rede, ihr Anlaß und die Folgen, Voltaire Flugschrift 15, Berlin, 1967.
- 30) 'Grass oder Gruppe?' in konkret, Nov. 1967, pp. 54/55.
- 31) 'Rede zum 1. Mai 1968', 'Radikalismus in Deutschland', 'Über das Ja und Nein' in Über das Selbstverständliche, op.cit., pp. 167-180, 186-196 & 197-203 resp.; 'Die angelesene Revolution' in Dokumente, op.cit., pp. 128-136.
- 32) 'Rede zum 1. Mai 1968', op.cit., pp. 167-169.
- 33) In Über das Selbstverständliche, op.cit., pp. 90-94.
- 34) 'Jungbürgerrede: Über Erwachsene und Verwachsene'/Rede zur Landtagswahl Nordrhein-Westfalen, June 1970, in Martin-Gregor Dellin(ed.), PEN: Neue Texte deutscher Autoren, Tübingen, 1971, pp. 245-255; & Rede zur Bremer Bürgererschaftswahl, Oktober 1971, extracts published in 'Linke Politik muß aufklärend wirken', Bremer Bürgerzeitung 8/10/71.

- 35) 'Rede von der kommunizierenden Mehrzahl', in Über das Selbstverständliche, op.cit., pp.149-162.
- 36) Cited by Peter Bender in: Zehn Gründe für die Anerkennung der DDR, Frankfurt a.M., 1968, p. 133.
- 37) 'Grass: "Vorbehaltlose Hilfe für Israel"', General-Anzeiger Bonn 7/6/67; 'Israel - unser Nachbar', Kölner Stadtanzeiger 7/6/67.
- 38) 'Rede von der Gewöhnung', in Über das Selbstverständliche, op.cit., pp. 127-139.
- 39) viz. 'Kein Deutscher kommt als einzelne Person hierher', PUBLIK 19/11/71; 'Wo sich das Wasser scheidet', in Der Bürger und seine Stimme/Reden, Aufsätze, Kommentare, Darmstadt & Neuwied, 1974, pp. 234-236; 'Böll, Grass und Lenz treten für Israel ein', Kölner Stadtanzeiger 21/12/73.
- 40) 'Die Prager Lektion', in Über das Selbstverständliche, op.cit., pp.181-185.
- 41) 'Rede gegen die Gewöhnung', in Der Bürger etc., op.cit., pp.135-142; 'Grass appelliert an die Abgeordneten', Frankfurter Rundschau 13/5/72; 'Griechenland-Diskussion - erster Anlauf zu einem "großen Gespräch"?' , ibid. 1/3/73.

- 42) "Auch Leisetreter hinterläßt Spuren", Badische Zeitung 8/9/73; "Die Grass-Sinjawskij-Kontroverse", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 14/10/74.
- 43) "Offener Brief" an den Staatspräsidenten und Ersten Parteisekretär Antonin Novotny, DIE ZEIT 8/9/67.
- 44) "In das Forum für Entwicklungshilfe berufen", General-Anzeiger Bonn 18/8/70; "Forum für Entwicklungshilfe am Ende", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 5/12/73; "Neustadt in Afrika - ein Projekt von Günter Grass", Frankfurter Rundschau 13/1/71; "Uhuru heißt Freiheit", Süddeutsche Zeitung 20/3/71; "Africa's Grass Roots", The Guardian 2/4/71.
- 45) "Völkermord vor aller Augen", DIE ZEIT 11/10/68.
- 46) "Über Ja und Nein", op.cit., p. 199.

## CHAPTER SIX

SPD AND 'ES-PE-DE'

### Intellectuals and the SPD

The collection of essays edited by Walser in 1961, Die Alternative oder Brauchen wir eine neue Regierung,<sup>1)</sup> made its appearance as the result of an agreement between the SPD and a number of intellectuals for the latter to show their support for this party. The book sold well, but what is such a book in an election campaign?

It represented the kind of support which was welcome to the SPD in its efforts to shift away from the working-class emphasis it had always had in the past. The SPD faced a Right wing which had stayed in government for over a decade and which had been able to exploit the SPD's historical place in the Socialist movement by associating it with the Communism of Eastern Europe. The SPD's opponents had benefited from this in election after election. Representing a cultural elite, well-known writers and intellectuals could add a little tone and colour to the new image the SPD was seeking for itself in order to break the hold of anti-communist demagoguery. It wanted to be seen as a party of all classes, a progressive 'Volkspartei'.

This reorientation had begun as early as 1954. Then the Party Conference had changed the wording of the 1952 Programme for Action to declare: "Die Sozialdemokratie ist aus einer Partei der Arbeiterklasse, als die sie erstand, zur Partei des Volkes geworden." This formulation grew into an entirely new programme which was adopted at Godesberg in 1959. At the beginning of the sixties it remained to be seen whether it would bring the SPD any more success in the elections.

In 1961 the task was to break through the absolute majority the CDU/CSU had gained in 1957. This entailed reaching wider sections of the electorate, for the party's traditional working-class base was not of itself sufficient to bring it to power. The CDU government could still draw apparently endless political credit from the recovery of the economy which it had steered since the foundation of the Federal Republic. In response the SPD had come to accept market economy principles in its own programme and policies. By the end of the fifties there was full employment and real incomes had increased, and whilst this favourable situation masked the exponentially unequal distribution of wealth between employers and employees<sup>2)</sup> class issues lost their attraction for most of the SPD. The market-economy was no longer fundamentally questioned. Social-democratic policy was for the government to have power to control distortion of genuine competition.<sup>3)</sup>

With this basis the SPD's campaign in 1961 did not

put forward any major alternatives to the government's economic policies. Instead it stressed the objectives which both major parties held in common: increasing prosperity, uniting the nation and so on. It called for a spirit of co-operation in national politics. The party's candidate to become the next Chancellor was Brandt and when he presented the programme of the government he hoped to lead if elected, he spoke more about what kind of political spirit was desirable than about what actual policies were necessary. His outlook criticised trends towards an authoritarian state under the Christian Democrats in a way which took democracy very seriously, but which also made politics sound rather like a family affair:

Unser Volk braucht die Aussöhnung mit sich selbst. Dazu ist ein neuer Stil in unserer inneren Ordnung erforderlich. Die Verkettzerung Andersdenkender, die Hexenjagd auf politisch Mißliebige und Gesinnungsschnüffelei müssen endlich aufhören! Wir unterscheiden nicht wie gewisse Herrschaften zwischen Wahrheit, reiner Wahrheit und lauterer Wahrheit, sondern zwischen Wahrhaftigkeit, Lüge und infamer Lüge.

Die neue Bundesregierung wird dafür sorgen, daß ein neuer Geist durch unsere Lande geht, ein Geist der Achtung vor dem Nächsten und der Aussöhnung der Generationen. Wir Deutsche sind trotz allem eine Familie, Glieder einer Schicksalsgemeinschaft. Wir brauchen einen Staat, den jeder Bürger als seine wirkliche Heimstätte betrachten kann. Die Verwirklichung dieses neuen Stils in der Politik muß oben beginnen. Die Freiheit des Staatsbürgers ist wichtiger als die Bequemlichkeit der Regierenden.<sup>4)</sup>

The tenor of politics was to be about integrating all sections of society and conflict between the political parties was to be avoided. From 1961 this was to involve new

styles and methods of fighting elections, to find ways and means of improving the SPD's performance. Its policies were tailored to meet the broadest interests which had been identified in the electorate:

Nach Godesberg konzentrierte sich die SPD auf die Werbung neuer Anhänger. Moderne Informations- und Kommunikationsmedien wie Umfrageforschung und Fernsehen wurden in die politische Arbeit einbezogen. Dieser Trend zeichnete sich bereits auf dem Parteitag 1960 in Hannover ab, der ausschließlich Wahlkampfaktionen im Hinblick auf die 1961er Wahlen erfüllte. (...) Im Rahmen dieser Strategie kam es darauf an, in der Öffentlichkeit das Image einer Oppositionspartei abzubauen: Die Partei präsentierte sich als Teil des deutschen Volkes. So entstanden Parolen wie "Wir sind eine Familie". Auch eine Personalisierung der Politik war Teil dieser Strategie: Mit den anderen Parteien setzte man sich weniger inhaltlich als mit der Aufrechnung demoskopisch ermittelter Eigenschaftsprofile der jeweiligen Parteiführer oder Spitzenkandidaten auseinander.<sup>5)</sup>

The Godesberg Programme laid the foundations for this trend. Its analysis of West German society and the guidelines it set for reforms were so vague,<sup>6)</sup> that the SPD's overall objectives could be made to match features of Public Opinion which opinion-research agencies had categorised. Consequently, the SPD's propaganda aimed to sway the climate of an election in its favour, without challenging the means by which the Christian Democrats managed to dominate that climate, nor substantially challenging their policies.

At the beginning of the decade the post-Godesberg leadership faced the task of changing the language, style and method of the way the SPD presented itself. The Godesberg Programme had already rid it of Marxist remnants in its political theory. Brandt had been chosen as candidate for



Chancellor in order to embody the new strategy as a new person at the head of the party. Obviously, whether writers demonstrated their allegiance to the SPD could hardly make the tiniest difference to extending its electoral support. But Brandt evidently believed that those of the intellectual community who were sympathetic to the left could back him up with new terms of reference for a reform-party beyond the Marxism which had been formally abandoned. The intellectual, rationalist values and standards the writers and intellectuals stood for could help provide the SPD with a political language which was neither sectional nor partisan. In his programme for the election Brandt had spoken of integrating intellectuals into a society which every German was responsible for:

Dies meinen wir, wenn wir davon sprechen, daß unser Volk mit sich selbst versöhnt werden muß. (...) Aus der Vergangenheit sollten wir die Erfahrung mitnehmen, daß niemand abseits stehen darf, daß vor allem auch die gemäßigten Schichten sich nicht aussperren lassen dürfen, daß die Besten unseres Volkes, wo immer sie im einzelnen stehen, mitwirken müssen. Kein guter Deutscher kann seine Verantwortung für das, was heute ist und morgen sein wird, leugnen."

When he was campaigning he stayed as unprogrammatic as he could, in a bid towards undecided voters. His main appeal was for a kind of leadership for the country which was both equitable and cooperative based not least on intellectual values: "Das Geld darf nicht mehr über den Geist herrschen. (...) Ich werde dafür sorgen, daß sich die richtige Rangordnung der Werte durchsetzen wird."<sup>8)</sup>

The introduction to Walser's book placed it precisely in the critical but responsible, socially oriented but non-sectional, intellectual tradition which Brandt's political style drew on in 1961:

Die Schriftsteller, die hier ihre Stimme erheben, warnend, mahnend und sehr skeptisch (...) sehen sich in der Tradition Frankreichs, das von Voltaire über Zola bis Jean-Paul Sartre immer seine Männer der Feder auch als Gewissen der Nation wertete. So verstanden soll dieser kleine Band nicht mehr und nicht weniger sein als ein Versuch zur Gewissensbildung.

Most of the contributors attacked the conservatism which dominated the Federal Republic: clerical power,<sup>9)</sup> authoritarianism.<sup>10)</sup> Axel Eggebrecht, Hans Werner Richter and Walser all actually criticised the SPD for accommodating to a government which had restored the kind of authoritarian ideology which liberal intellectuals such as themselves were sensitive to.<sup>11)</sup> All the writers but Grass granted the FDP only a negative advantage over the other major parties as the sole alternative to the continuance of the Christian Democrat regime:

Inzwischen weiß jeder: es gibt keine Opposition mehr. Anno 57, Erich Ollenhauer und seine SPD, das war die beste Opposition. Es war wie in einer Demokratie.<sup>12)</sup>

But this was essentially a rationalist critique, from the liberal to the radical-democratic, which was compatible with Brandt's language and which said nothing about socialism or Marxism:

Das Problem der Bundesrepublik heißt also nicht Kommunismus von außen oder Kapitalismus im Innern, es führt den guten alten Namen Klerikalismus. <sup>13)</sup> Wir leben in voraufklärerischen Verhältnissen.

Günter Grass' contribution to this book was something of an exception. As the foreword indicated, most of the writers here were at least tacitly working with the traditional liberal-rationalist view of a public of enlightened men to whom each writer addressed his critique. By contrast Grass' essay was emotional. It would have been sentimental if it had not been steeped in his irony as well. He had no criticisms to make of the SPD. He identified himself with it personally and emotionally, "die Tante SPD, mein schlechtes Gewissen, mein Ärgernis, meine schwach begründete Hoffnung SPD". <sup>14)</sup> He addressed himself to people whom he assumed already voted for the Social Democrats, or needed only a little tongue-in-cheek encouragement to do so. And he then endorsed their choice with a little paternal approval. So he did not share his colleagues' more intellectual approach and their fondness for the model bourgeois public. He was talking to a quite different political public, a wider public, a more petit-bourgeois public, one which would not be reached through a book alone.

The same point can be made about the second book by literary intellectuals supporting the SPD which was produced for 1965: Plädoyer für eine neue Regierung oder Keine Alternative. <sup>15)</sup> In fact its contributors were nearly all different from those who had produced the book in 1961,

and this time they had abandoned their reservations about the SPD and now wholeheartedly supported its leading politicians. They adapted their essays to its non-programmatic approach by concentrating entirely on portraits of individual personalities, not on politics or issues at all. They were now offering a direct, if limited, service to the SPD; just as they did in the 'Wahlkontor Deutscher Schriftsteller' which was organised in Berlin, where a handful of writers were put to work to polish the style of speeches to be made by leading Social Democrats in the campaign, the content of which was determined by the party-managers. For his contribution to the book Grass stuck to a literary format with a one-act play. Its protagonist was a politician who remained anonymous and who was clearly meant to be Brandt. The anonymity keeps Brandt away from any direct publicity. The literary form Grass chose here indirectly makes a political point. It emphasises that a publication such as this book, which would reach a numerically and socially limited audience, was an anachronism. If intellectuals were going to stick like this to a medium that was familiar to them, then in the end result there would be no practical difference between the literary presentation Grass used in the book and the more immediately accessible prose essays which all the other contributors provided.

In 1961 Grass had attended Brandt's campaign. For the next federal election he launched one of his own. He thus pioneered ways and means in which an intellectual could

help the SPD's efforts to broaden its social base. His approach was much more effective than either of the books could have hoped to have been. It was an innovation which he hoped would rouse the curiosity of people who previously had shown little or no interest in the SPD.<sup>16)</sup> That is to say, middle-class people who were drawn by Grass' literary reputation to come and hear what he had to say. He talked about the SPD in a general fashion as a democratic party for all people. This was the kind of image the SPD needed amongst middle and upper strata. An outsider like Grass could be useful if he could help the party get over the barrier from being seen as a Klassenpartei to being accepted as a Volkspartei:

Im Verlauf mehrerer Gespräche mit dem damaligen Regierenden Bürgermeister von Berlin wird deutlich, daß die SPD zwar Stammwähler, aber kein beachtetes Vorfeld hat. (Zwar nennt sie sich seit dem Godesberger Programm von 1959 'Volkspartei', doch benimmt sie sich konservativ verharret wie eine introvertierte Klassenpartei).<sup>17)</sup>

However, Grass' political activity in the sixties gained a place in West German party-politics which no other intellectual achieved to the same degree, because he made a contribution which was not just limited to servicing the SPD's image. Whilst such a service was what some people in the party were looking for above all, Grass' own aims were to try and democratise conventional politics. He wanted to democratise the way elections were conducted by seeing the electorate play a more active and vocal role in campaigns. He said that he spoke for the voters.<sup>18)</sup> This

could partly have been to give himself credibility, lest the public see him as nothing but a literary curio. But that is hardly the whole story. The hallmark of Grass' ideas was their link to Brandt's. His view of a popular participatory spirit in elections corresponded to Brandt's avowed intention to ensure that the government which was elected in 1969 would effect a range of administrative, legislative and social reforms in a democratic spirit, as he declared when he became Chancellor:

Wir wollen mehr Demokratie wagen. Wir werden unsere Arbeitsweise öffnen und dem kritischen Bedürfnis nach Information Genüge tun. Wir werden darauf hinwirken, daß nicht nur durch Anhörungen im Bundestag, sondern auch durch ständige Fühlungnahme mit den repräsentativen Gruppen unseres Volkes und durch eine umfassende Unterrichtung über die Regierungspolitik jeder Bürger die Möglichkeit erhält, an der Reform von Staat und Gesellschaft mitzuwirken. (...)  
Meine Damen und Herren, in unserer Bundesrepublik stehen wir vor der Notwendigkeit umfassender Reformen. (...)  
(...) Diese Regierung redet niemandem nach dem Mund. (...) Sie setzt konkrete Ziele. Diese Ziele sind nur zu erreichen, wenn sich manches im Verhältnis des Bürgers zu seinem Staat und seiner Regierung ändert. Die Regierung kann in der Demokratie nur erfolgreich wirken, wenn sie getragen wird vom demokratischen Engagement der Bürger. Wir haben so wenig Bedarf an blinder Zustimmung, wie unser Volk Bedarf hat an gespreizter Würde und hoheitsvoller Distanz. 19)

Grass' innovation in 1965 was to grow over the following two legislative periods into a success, because he brought his support to the Social Democrats at a time when the SPD needed to diversify its social base and its political image, and when at the same time the political spirit it represented was requisite as a force for bringing about reforms which had become necessary after nearly two decades of economic boom. Grass pioneered work which played

a part in just such an "Aktivierung eines neuen Bürgergeistes",<sup>20)</sup> as Brandt called it.

1965: Testing his audience

I now want to describe more closely just how Grass built up his electoral work.

In the campaign which he conducted in 1965, his presentation of the SPD may not have been exactly what many Social Democrats had in mind themselves, but it was certainly something different.

In a total of just over fifty rallies Grass spoke to some 80,000 people in this campaign.<sup>21)</sup> He was backed up by the Sozialistischer Hochschulbund and the Liberaler Studentenbund Deutschlands (SHB & LSD). This gave him organizational autonomy from the party and its campaign managers. One or two other intellectuals were prepared to support him, notably Hans Werner Richter, Reinhard Baumgart and the composer Hans Werner Henze. The campaign was well planned and generated a great deal of publicity,<sup>22)</sup> publicity which the team stimulated through press conferences. This was obviously desirable to test how big a response Grass' novelty-value, "Das Erstaunen, daß ein Literat von seinem Parnas heruntersteigt und sich in die Niederungen der Politik begibt"<sup>23)</sup>, could produce. From this point of view, the more clichés the project was met with the better!

Grass had no financier and so he charged an entrance fee to his meeting. This budgetary problem also had a calculated effect on the image he projected. It served to stress organisational autonomy from the established political bodies and to make the otherwise probably suspect picture of a writer who might just be after publicity for himself look respectable, by putting some of the proceeds into libraries for the soldiers of the West German Army!

Grass assured himself of an audience by taking the first part of his campaign through fourteen university towns from Hamburg to Munich, where his own reputation and his student backers could be sure to pull some weight. In the event the halls were full to overflowing, drawing audiences easily as large as those who turned out for professional politicians.<sup>24)</sup> The publicity generated from this round of meetings carried him through his second round of visits to places away from the universities, where he continued to get very large audiences.

Grass' speeches could be seen as both a help and a hindrance from the SPD's point of view. Two of them in particular, entitled "Loblied auf Willy" and "Des Kaisers neue Kleider"<sup>25)</sup>, helped compensate for one or two weak points within the SPD's own publicity for Willy Brandt. Brandt's personal and political background and his failure to match Erhard's charisma still detracted from his image. The main impression Grass' speeches left was the very high esteem



in which he held Brandt and the very low one in which he held Erhard.

However, one of the more specific points he made was to criticise the refugee organisations' nostalgia for the territories which had been lost since the war.<sup>26)</sup> When he said that Germany had lost these through her own fault, he clashed with the SPD Refugee Council in Bavaria.<sup>27)</sup> There was some further dissension about whether it was tolerable to have Grass associate himself with the SPD and then make remarks which diverged from the party's own position as of that time.<sup>28)</sup> The whole subject which Grass had touched upon was one which the SPD had planned to play down in this election because it was likely to give its opponents the advantage.

From Grass' point of view, such a discrepancy between what he said and what the party wanted him to say actually suited the purpose of his campaign. He aimed to set up a "Dialog zwischen der Partei, auch zwischen den Wählern der SPD, die nicht zur Partei gehören, und mir".<sup>29)</sup> If there was a taboo about an uncomfortable problem like this one, then he wanted to undermine it:

Nehmen Sie das Thema Wiedervereinigung. Im Wahlkampf wurde es ja leider von den Parteien ausgeklammert, aber besonders für die jungen Menschen ist es ja ein wichtiges Thema. Deswegen habe ich es in den Vordergrund gestellt (...). Ich halte mich bewusst an Dinge, die sonst im Wahlkampf kaum vorkommen.<sup>30)</sup>

Consequently the objections which were made to what he said confirmed his intentions and contributed to his autonomy

from the SPD's propaganda. This was desirable to gratify the ambivalent attitude which the people he aimed to address had towards the SPD, "Neuwähler, Unentschlossene, Bildungsbürger, die selten in Wahlversammlungen gehen".<sup>31)</sup>

Altogether, there was no evidence that he had any substantial political differences with the SPD. The general aim of his experiment was to arouse the interest of sections of the electorate who were usually politically inactive and to dispose them favourably towards the Social Democrats. This really precluded any marked political independence. His enterprise substituted organisational autonomy and innovation for political criticism. The only occasion when Grass advocated a policy which differed completely from the SPD's was in the speech he made on reunification in Bonn in 1967. Significantly, this speech had nothing to do with any election campaign.

Given its eagerness to diversify its appeal, the SPD could be expected to tolerate a freelance campaign like this one, even if it did not like everything Grass said. In the 1961 campaign one of the tactics which the SPD tried in order to escape from its own past had been deliberately to ignore that past. Brandt's campaign was designed to keep him as aloof as possible from the supposedly inhibiting connotations of the SPD's traditions. He always referred to himself as the Lord Mayor of Berlin or as 'my party's candidate' to be Chancellor and avoided using the party's title.<sup>32)</sup> Four years later Grass inscribed his banner not SPD but 'Es-Pe-De',

echoing a touch of Brandt's tactical aloofness in the previous election.

The value of Grass' work to the SPD at this stage could not have been detected in the poll. Nevertheless it was useful as a vivid example of how the SPD was on friendlier terms with the intelligentsia than was the CDU. In an analysis of the Social-democrat campaign in 1965, Günter Struve goes so far as to say that the support of figures in cultural life was solicited for strategic reasons, in an effort to add definition to Brandt's image, which compared poorly at the time with Adenauer's and Erhard's popularity. Inviting access to the SPD leader from people involved in cultural affairs was meant to emphasise Brandt's own cultural and intellectual interests and to suggest that in contrast to Erhard's conservatism, Brandt was a younger, go-ahead, culturally attuned person<sup>33</sup>.

Erhard had certainly spoilt his chances on that score. It was in July 1966 in the midst of the election campaign that he made his ill-judged remarks about the political incompetence of some of the country's writers and intellectuals - notably Rolf Hochhuth and Grass. This abuse from Erhard emphasised the SPD's comparative attractiveness to much of a cultural intelligentsia which was offended by the philistine attitudes the incumbent Chancellor had displayed.

It was hardly the case that the SPD stood to gain

any votes from the sympathy which a number of intellectuals were prepared to show for it in the campaigns of 1961 and 1965. The point was that as a spin-off their support could help fashion the SPD's new apparel after Godesberg by associating it with different social groups and new terms of reference.

By 1969, there was less use in Social-democrat politics for intellectuals as a distinct group. For by then, many of them had become rather too politically radical to have as a group any social or intellectual resonance which would be useful to the SPD as it was heading for government. This is why Grass in particular came to the fore, for he had already begun to seek a wider political public. This led him to a kind of electoral work in which intellectuals as such played only a token role, one of stimulating an audience amongst a wider spectrum of the professional middle-classes. Thereby he and the people who joined him could find a place in West German politics both because the SPD was immersed in a lengthy process of recasting its appeal to further social groups, and because broad support for a new spirit of reform was necessary in the post-Economic Miracle period. It was because this combination of conditions did not last forever, that, as the next chapter will show, such a place in politics could not be kept open forever.

It was a place which was much more closely identified with the SPD party organisation than had been the case before 1969. Although there were differences in the way Grass and his associates prepared for the elections in 1965 and

1969, their close cooperation with the party in 1969 came as no shock. For the signs were already there in 1965 that the autonomy Grass proclaimed was effectively more of an organizational than a really political independence. And that kind of marginal independence was sufficiently compatible with the SPD's own view of its interests for the party executive to approve financial backing for Grass' new project in 1969, the 'Sozialdemokratische Wählerinitiative'.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Reinbok bei Hamburg, 1961.
- 2) Jörg Huffachmid et al.: "Die Widersprüche des westdeutschen Kapitalismus und die Wirtschaftspolitik der SPD", in Kursbuch XXI, September 1970, p. 48 & 49.
- 3) As in the "Aktionsprogramm von 1952, mit den Erweiterungen vom Berliner Parteitag 1954", section 'Planung und Wettbewerb', in Ossip K. Flechtheim (ed.): Dokumente zur parteipolitischen Entwicklung in Deutschland seit 1945, Vol. 3: Programmatik der deutschen Parteien, Part 2, Berlin, 1963, pp. 103/4.
- 4) "Unser Regierungsprogramm", Referat auf dem Außerordentlichen SPD-Kongreß in Berlin 28/4/61, ibid., p. 268.
- 5) Jürgen Dittberner: "Die Parteitage von CDU und SPD", in Dittberner & Ebbighausen (ed.): Parteiensysteme in der Legitimationskrise, Opladen, 1973, p. 98.
- 6) Wolf Dieter Narr: CDU-SPD / Programm und Praxis seit 1945, Stuttgart, 1966, pp.211-213: "Das Programm der Grundsätze: ein ethischer Appell"; thereof p. 212:  

Das Kennzeichen des Godesberger Programms ist so ein hohes, aber weitgehend abstraktes demokratisches Ethos, das für die Praxis der Verbindlichkeit entbehrt, sie vielmehr völlig freiläßt. Damit ist schon vom Anspruch her die Programm-Praxis-Beziehung gründlich fallengelassen worden.

- 7) "Unser Regierungsprogramm", op.cit., pp. 270/1.
- 8) Quoted by Hans Ulrich Kempaki in "Mit Charme und Standarte auf Stimmenfang", Süddeutsche Zeitung 15/9/61.
- 9) op.cit., p. 16.
- 10) ibid., p. 27.
- 11) ibid., pp. 33, 115 & 125 resp..
- 12) ibid., p. 125.
- 13) ibid., p. 16.
- 14) ibid., p. 76.
- 15) Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1965.
- 16) Spiegel interview with Grass: "Ich will auch der SPD einiges zumuten", in Arnold & Görtz (ed.): Günter Grass - Dokumente zur politischen Wirkung, Munich, 1971, p. 46.
- 17) SWI-Tagung 16-17/12/72, manuscript kindly provided by the Sekretariat der Sozialdemokratischen Wählerinitiative, Bonn.
- 18) "Dich singe ich Demokratie", Allgemeine Zeitung Freiburg 13/7/65.

- 19) Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt: "Regierungserklärung am 28. Oktober 1969 im Deutschen Bundestag", in Susanne Miller: Die SPD vor und nach Godesberg, Bonn-Rad Godesberg, 1974, pp. 139/40 & 151.
- 20) *ibid.*.
- 21) "Grass spendet für Cont ragan-Kinder", Neue Ruhr Zeitung 15/9/65.
- 22) According to Grass the first part of his campaign was covered by 125 press reports, quoted in "Grass trommelt weiter für die 'Es-Pe-De'", Süddeutsche Zeitung 24/7/65.
- 23) Jürgen Engert: "Lästiger Wahlhelfer", in Grass-Dokumente etc., *op.cit.*, p. 25.
- 24) "Zischoman, Zischoplex, Zischophil", *ibid.*, p. 43.
- 25) In Über das Selbstverständliche / Politische Schriften, revised paperback edition, Munich, 1969, pp. 21-31 & pp. 42-57 resp..
- 26) e.g. in "Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland", *ibid.*, pp. 34/5.
- 27) "Im Widerspruch zur Politik der SPD", in Grass-Dokumente, *op.cit.*, p. 35.



28) "Grass trommelt weiter für die 'Ee-Pe-De'", op.cit..

29) "Ich will auch der SPD einiges zumuten", op.cit., p. 46.

30) *ibid.*, p. 48.

31) *ibid.*, p. 46.

32) "Held nach Maß", in Der Spiegel 6/9/61, p. 41.

33) Kampf um die Mehrheit / Die Wahlkampagne der SPD 1965,  
Cologne, 1971, p. 67.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### PARTY POLITICS FOR THE MIDDLE-CLASSES

#### The making of the 'Sozialdemokratische Wählerinitiative'

In 1965 Grass had already set himself the task of helping to prevent elections falling further into the grip of the major political parties to the exclusion of the electorate themselves. He wished to be taken seriously as an example of how people could break the political parties' monopoly, break it by simply joining in themselves. On the other hand, he could hardly pretend that he had done so himself entirely unaided. As the scale of his enterprise was already ambitious in 1965, he had needed backers and had received the support of friends of his amongst the SPD leadership such as Brandt and Karl Schiller. Even so he remained an isolated novelty. Apart from the grandiloquence of his speeches he had little to rely on to make people act themselves. And then the Grand Coalition had dashed hopes that the SPD's electorate had any control over the decisions the SPD took. As long as he remained as much of an outsider as he had been in 1965, he had no hope of affecting either the SPD or its electorate. Organisation was required for popular participation to grow. Whilst still staying on the edge, Grass aligned his work more closely with the SPD's.

This position became a contradiction. In 1965 his unusualness had been his political capital. A voters' organisation needed a wider appeal than that alone. It would also have to assert itself more vis-à-vis the SPD if it was really going to be a popular movement. These two conditions gave rise to mutual constraints. However much the 'Sozialdemokratische Wählerinitiative' (SWI) had opinions of its own and wished to represent views from outside the party organisation, its own genesis in the federal election campaign in 1969 virtually precluded this. Its primary raison-d'être in 1969 was to help get an SPD-FDP coalition into government and consequently it had to base most of its arguments for this on the respectable aspects of the social-democratic record within the Grand Coalition. This constrained its scope for expressing independent opinions. The problem was magnified because the two conditions of the SWI's strategy could only be reconciled, in so far as they could be reconciled at all, through the person of Grass himself. Mobilising the first voters' organisation of this kind required a massive personal commitment from him. This meant that in the efforts the SWI made to assert itself as a serious autonomous organisation, Grass personally overshadowed all the local groups which the SWI had gathered together. In turn, the effect of this was that contacts between the SWI and the SPD -supposedly between the non-member voters and the whole party- were very largely restricted to contacts with individual members of the SPD leadership.

The idea of a Voters' Initiative came from three

intellectuals' experience of assisting in the SPD's campaign for the Schleswig-Holstein Land election in April 1967.<sup>1)</sup> These three were Grass, Prof. Hartmut Jäckel and Siegfried Lenz, with the assistance of the SHB. This was at a time when the SPD was beginning to have trouble with its student association, whose executive had issued a declaration condemning the Grand Coalition in January 1967 and had decided to support the Extra-parliamentary Opposition given the party leadership's role in government. The party immediately sanctioned this resolution by withdrawing its financial support.<sup>2)</sup>

In Schleswig-Holstein Grass, Jäckel and Lenz held their meetings in support of Jochen Steffen, who was regional chairman and on the left of the SPD. So the part they played on this occasion was associated with groups on the Social-democrat left and hence with groups critical of the Grand Coalition.

This could no longer be said by the time the Voters' Initiative was organised in 1969. The SWI's appearance in the election campaign that year was prepared by a small group of intellectuals - academics and journalists rather than literary figures - whom Grass drew together in Berlin from December 1967. Erdemann Linde, who was chairman of the SHB at the time, was amongst this group, but the others (for example Professors Arnulf Baring and Hartmut Jäckel, and Günter Gaus) were certainly not left-wingers.

It was Grass who liaised with the party-leadership.<sup>3)</sup>

Their approval was actively solicited (unlike in 1965) which meant that the SWI campaign was to be closely associated with the SPD's. It was agreed that the SWI was to create a lot of little imitations of Grass' activity in 1965 with the help of people who had some public name.<sup>4)</sup> The credentials of formal independence, upon which such stress had been laid four years before, were no longer required, for the SWI's speakers were going to base their public brief on their personal professional stature and present themselves to voters as extra-party but not non-party mediators between the voters' and the party organisation. It did not matter whether the speakers were themselves SPD-members or not, and some of them were, so long as they had not made their reputations primarily in connection with the SPD, and not in politics so much as in their profession.

The emphasis on professional status meant that this was a middle-class affair. Those intellectuals who were associated with the SWI found their place within this middle-class scheme. It was consequently desirable for them not all to be writers.<sup>5)</sup> As members of the intelligentsia they represented high social strata. On the other hand the organisation did not want to remain an elite affair; it wanted to be seen to have diversified out of the literary intelligentsia into a wider cross-section of professions. A whole host of contributors joined well-known writers to pen the articles published in the two copies of an election magazine called dafür, which the SWI produced for mass circulation. It aimed

to extend its catchment beyond the sphere in which literary intellectuals could expect any resonance.

It became clear that professional people and academics, rather than the student groups who had been behind Grass in the last election, firmly and respectably made up the backbone of this enterprise, when the SWI's existence was formally announced in Bonn in March before the election campaign began. Furthermore, its unequivocal association with the SPD was illustrated by Professor Kurt Sontheimer's speech on behalf of the SWI at the SPD election conference in mid-April. The 1969 election took place in the wake of the strife of the previous three years over the Vietnam War, the Grand Coalition, the Emergency Powers Laws etc.. Consequently at such a point in time the Voters' Initiative, in its bid for respectability and its distance from the now radicalised student groups, inevitably appeared in the centre of the main political parties. Grass' speeches<sup>6)</sup> which continued to constitute the largest part of the organisation's output,<sup>7)</sup> were politically unpolemical<sup>8)</sup> and praised the SPD's policies in the coalition government, apart from the fact that Grass' criticism of Chancellor Kiesinger was as scathing as ever.

Grass' own activity was part and parcel of the SWI as it was emerging in local groups. This successfully turned a shadow into a reality, for these local groups hardly existed prior to his own interventions.

It was he who rallied contacts wherever he went on his campaign, so that by the end of the itinerary in late September there were over 3,000 people behind him as active participants covering 100 constituencies.<sup>9)</sup> They made a little local impact primarily through sponsoring advertisements to vote SPD in their local newspapers. In addition one and a half million copies of the two editions of dafür were produced for distribution.

The material produced and the personnel directed by the SWI central organisation were politically assimilable into the SPD's general strategy. The arguments in the dafür magazines, for instance, did not stray beyond the bounds of moderate reforms. They could all be clustered around a motto like 'we need a change', which made little demand on making choices between policies or programmes put forward by the parties. There was scarcely a hint of radicalism. Rather the opposite in fact. Some space was devoted to discussions which showed that the SPD solidly supported existing society and its economy and that likewise solid citizens like respectable industrialists supported the SPD and the sort of modifications it proposed.<sup>10)</sup>

The middle-of-the-road political tenor plus the professional middle-class bias of the SWI enabled it to build up an audience amongst social groups previously outside the SPD's own electoral catchment. In particular, apart from the unusual proportion of professional and upper-middle-

class people whom Grass' meetings attracted, they also drew in more women than was usual in party-political activities.<sup>11)</sup> This continued to be the pattern of SWI activists over the next few years, and it was this social ambience which the party's own management welcomed as the SWI's distinctive contribution to the SPD-cause. By 1972 the SWI as a whole had certainly extended its influence outside the cluster of elite people it started off with. But the SPD's official report on the campaign said that the SWI meetings which were led by eminent personalities were more important to the party than the activities of the humbler ranks, because the former attracted an audience the SPD's own rallies would have left largely untouched.<sup>12)</sup> This report honoured the SWI's contribution to the widening of the SPD's appeal, but was hesitant to attribute any identifiable electoral gains to its work.

Brandt, as I have said, was always a supporter of the SWI. In March 1973, it held a conference following the peak of its success, in the 1972 election campaign, which Brandt attended. He acknowledged the SWI's part in politicising the professional middle classes. He said that it had broken through prejudices "des deutschen Bildungsbürgertums - sollte man sagen: des Bildungsspießertums? - daß zwischen Geist und Politik eine Kluft sein müsse"<sup>13)</sup>. He warned that the SPD would not cede any other role to the SWI than this, that its "Rolle nicht die einer Ersatzpartei sein kann",<sup>14)</sup> a warning reiterated by two other men in the leadership, the party manager Holger Börner and the deputy chairman Helmut



Schmidt.<sup>15)</sup> But the credit which Brandt gave the SWI for having mobilised a particular social group did not render it indispensable to the SPD. For this trend scarcely depended on the SWI's existence. It was part of a general drift in support amongst middle-class strata towards the SPD, which can be shown in both party membership and in voting patterns.<sup>16)</sup> This in turn kept pace with the proportional growth in white-collar and public-service employees within the whole social-structure. As Joachim Rahke shows<sup>17)</sup>, the SPD kept pace with these developments in terms of the correspondence between the social structure of the SPD's electorate and the social structure of the population in employment as a whole, and increasingly outpaced these trends in terms of the social structure of the SPD membership. Thus despite Brandt's tribute, the SWI could not establish any firm and permanent influence on the SPD's electoral fortunes, let alone on its internal and governmental politics.

#### Rise and Fall

Having embodied the SWI front-line in 1969 Grass and some other literary figures played just a supporting part in local SWI activities during the Land elections from 1970 to 1972. Local Voters' Initiatives were active to a greater or lesser extent in the campaigns in Nordrhein-Westfalen and Bavaria in 1970, Schleswig-Holstein, Rheinland-Pfalz, Berlin and Bremen in 1971, and Baden-Württemberg in 1972. By

the 1972 election campaign Grass' publicity value to the organisation was matched by Böll's, who had decided to join

the SWI actively and who became one of its major public spokesmen, being, for example, its representative at the SPD conference that year.<sup>18)</sup>

"Bürger für Brandt" was the SWI's motto for this short and fierce campaign, which had been called into being a year prematurely to resolve the Brandt government's parliamentary difficulties. These had come to a head over the ratification of the detente treaties which Brandt's ministers had negotiated with a number of Eastern European states and with the Soviet Union. The SWI slogan suited the rising political fervour which had been ignited by the government's difficulties with its policy for detente in Europe and which was concentrated around Brandt's personal reputation. The momentum of the election campaign derived from these contentions. It mustered hosts of people.<sup>19)</sup> The SWI's central figures were joined by much more popular characters than the writers and intellectuals of previous years - actors, singers, footballers and other media-personalities. Even though Grass' own commitment was very substantial - 129 meetings in 8 weeks which rivalled Brandt himself - it only made up a quarter of all SWI local and national activities, and all the stars together made up less than a third. Thus grass-roots participation in the Voters' Initiative had significantly increased compared to 1969.

Centrally organised promotions were concentrated in between 70 and 80 constituencies where the CDU/CSU had an absolute majority or where the SPD stood a chance of winning

a direct mandate for the first time. The reason for working in the first of these groups was to encourage the local SPD and draw some bigger crowds where it was fighting an uphill battle against animosity or apathy. In this respect

the SWI was a psychological support group for the SPD. However locally there was a short-lived flowering of political self-activity in support of Brandt and his government. When Grass and Böll closed the SWI campaign in mid-November in Berlin, there were according to them 338 local groups active in 174 constituencies, a growth during the campaign itself of over 100.<sup>20)</sup> The rapidity of this growth indicates how specific it was to this particular election over these highly-charged issues. By the time the SWI held its first general conference in March 1973, the number of groups surviving had shrunk to 133.<sup>21)</sup>

The SWI was not able to establish a permanent local base because it could not overcome reservations held by the SPD about the existence of a group outside the party organisation. Assistance in establishing a social-democratic presence amongst the professional middle-classes was welcome, but that was all.

The SWI helped the SPD in a particular way. As Kaltefleiter has summarised them, the tactical objectives of a political party in an election campaign can be schematically described as: a) to secure its own supporters, b) to hold doubters against the propaganda of the opposition, c) to gain doubters from the opposition.<sup>22)</sup> Banal as they may sound,

these three objectives require different kinds of agitation, taking up issues differently according to the varying emphases appropriate to these categories. A political party, however, has difficulty in differentiating much amongst its audience, difficulty in focussing on specific groups due to the very mass-consumption of the mass-media it is predominantly dependent on. Conventional canvassing directed at particular groups of potential voters is of course a means of reaching special interests, but very small in scale. From this point of view, activity like the SWI's is an extra to options open to the party organisation. The SWI self-consciously sought an extra-party reputation for itself, professional but not sectional, and made a direct appeal to the non-aligned or hesitant voter. Its success here was likely to be intangible. Such a blanket-approach to the "floating-voters" makes it difficult to know whose recipe it was that worked and why, or how big a part entirely extraneous factors played. Thus the credit which the SWI might claim amongst floating voters was rather insecure, but it was a plus within the tactical planning of SPD propaganda.

In all the elections which have been held since 1972, including the federal election in 1976, SWI work has been on a smaller scale. Some of its originators, including Grass, still made appearances in the SPD publicity campaigns, but no one made any journeys of anything like the scale of those with which Grass had pushed the SWI ahead.<sup>23)</sup> The lack of any kinds of publicity of those proportions was one of the

reasons why the SWI's impact in 1976 was nothing compared to before. It had not been able to find a permanent role nor to maintain its size because many of the people it had brought into political activity had actually joined the SPD since 1972.<sup>24)</sup> They had departed from the model of a voters' initiative, whose basis had been that its supporters should not be party-members. This implies that people found this model frustrating. Their frustration should be seen in the light of the economic and political difficulties which became apparent almost as soon as the fanfares for the SPD's victory in 1972 had faded.

#### Between moderation and ambition

At the time the SWI emerged left-wing groups were very active, and I have already suggested that because the SWI was more interested in mediation than in any militancy of its own, it distinguished itself sharply from the left and consequently found itself in the centre. With a social and intellectual composition which marked it off from the left, the SWI's own political development stalled where it had started. This meant that its political character could be absorbed into the mainstream of SPD politics at a time when the SPD was consolidating its position in government.

The momentum it had shown in 1972 as a force which might have set a really popular movement afoot, could not be sustained thereafter. This was because it had been launched from amongst professional elites. Such a social starting-point meant that it could only fuse itself into something akin to a popular mass movement when one arose from the outside. That had occurred in 1972 because a combination of issues produced tremors which shook virtually the length and breadth of the West German public and whose force became gathered around the fortunes of the Brandt government.

That government's detente-policies abroad caused considerable tensions at home, because they symbolised a final farewell to the Cold War and at least to the most virulent forms of anti-Communism, whose usefulness to conservative ideology made them unsuitable for Social Democracy in its endeavours to achieve political authority. For it was asking to be given this authority precisely because changes were necessary. The push for change at the beginning of the seventies engendered ideological contentions which reached the point of threatening the existence of the SPD government. Whilst the opposition could raise the emotional fervour over the agreements which had been made with some of the Communist states, its ideological offensive threatened a government which working-class people in particular identified as their government and which for wide strata of the population was identified with social reforms.

For Brandt's government had come to power with proposals for a flood of reforms to improve living conditions: such as, equal opportunity promised through educational reform, environmental, traffic and transport planning, tax-reforms, redistributive profit-sharing and co-determination for workers in industry.<sup>25)</sup> Thus when Brandt's position was directly challenged by the Opposition over a vote of No Confidence in the Bundestag there were spontaneous political strikes and protest marches involving over 100,000 workers in his support. In the election campaign which ensued later that year after all, the trade unions swung behind the SPD.

These social reforms had been heralded when the Brandt government first came to power in 1969 but they began to find themselves in trouble in the seventies. The Voters' Initiative failed to find convincing ways of responding to these troubles, cramped its own political identity because it could not exercise any tangible influence over policy and consequently lost its chance of sustaining the interest of most of the people it had attracted. All this happened partly as a result of two genetic conditions of its own and partly because of economic crisis in its society.

The fact that it was bound to a kind of image-servicing which was largely restricted to elections kept its overall political character in the centre. This became a serious inhibition on its credibility given the onset of structural crisis in the economy from 1973/4, and with this

the crisis of the government's programme of social reforms as finance of that programme faltered. Wolfgang Nitsch has calculated that provision of public services in the Federal Republic has in fact been shrinking, not growing, since 1971, as has public investment in the public sphere with the exception of road construction and the educational system.<sup>26)</sup>

Consequently, it was not the Voters' Initiatives which grew in response to state policies and to their effects on living conditions, but the Bürgerinitiativen.<sup>27)</sup> These are local and national campaigns which have emerged in the seventies to fight over specific issues which generally directly affect the people who form these groups. This happened precisely because the effects of crisis in the economy and in state policy were felt too close to home, to everyday living conditions, to be confined to either national or regional election times. In 1972 the political tremors felt amongst the public coincided with the government's parliamentary difficulties and caused an election. Thereafter the cycle of the electoral process was no longer in step with the general public's moods, which had benefited the SWI in 1972 and to which it had also helped give expression. The SPD-FDP coalition felt safer and could do without the activism of voters. The CDU-CSU bid a similar fight in the next federal election in 1976, but its polemic 'Freiheit statt Sozialismus' proved to be only a parody of the issues which had been at stake in 1972, and the Voters' Initiatives were but a pale shadow of their previous selves.



It must not be forgotten that conducting publicity-campaigns for the Social Democrats was by far the biggest field of SWI activity at any time. However, it is difficult to imagine how it could have launched any credible publicity-campaigns alongside the SPD's own ones, if it had not also had political reasons for existing outside the party. In his campaigns Grass' aim was to persuade people to take an active part in elections to further their own political interests. If this involvement was to grow, there needed to be some link in activity between one election and the next. Grass' original idea of the purpose of his work grew into proposals to introduce the public into party politics altogether. This meant trying to bring some influence to bear on the SPD's decision-making.<sup>28)</sup> The trouble here was that there was no formal way the Voters' Initiatives could pursue this aim as a whole group. They had to have recourse to those individuals who had influence to persuade some levels of the SPD to give the SWI audience. At first this was Grass, and later he was joined by some of the other top personalities in the organisation like Böll.

The first time Grass spoke to the SPD on behalf of the SWI as a new interest group was at the SPD Conference in May 1970, which was his own first opportunity to speak in the plenary session.<sup>29)</sup> But outsiders do not have much of a role assigned to them at party conferences except perhaps to add some extra publicity value for the media. A first sign that the SWI's representatives would inevitably pass over the rank-

and-file was when Grass arranged with Herbert Wehner to address the parliamentary party nearly a year later in March 1971. The main purpose of his address was to remind the SPD of the continued existence of its self-proclaimed partners in the Voters' Initiative, speaking "im Auftrag der Sozialdemokratischen Wählerinitiative und aus der Sicht des Wählers".<sup>30)</sup>

It is difficult to credit Grass as a representative ordinary voter. This discrepancy between the claims to be representative of ordinary people made by the SWI's leading figures and their elite stature in reality, distorted the SWI's attempt to gain a political identity of its own. It was three years before it gained access to the parliamentary party for the second time, and then again it had to do so through Grass himself, who was accompanied this time by Böll, and Thaddäus Troll. All three were caught in the double-bind of having to speak for the ordinary voters, whilst actually owing this opportunity to speak officially to the SPD Fraction at all to their own far from ordinary public stature:

(Böll) - Versuchen wir zunächst, uns von dem dummen Klischee zu befreien, wir, Intellektuelle und Schriftsteller, wären die Moralisten oder das Gewissen der Nation. Wir sind nichts weiter als in diesem Land arbeitende und Steuer zahlende Staatsbürger.

(Troll) - Weg mit dem verbindlichen WIR und keine Rede von IM NAMEN VON. Ich mag hier nicht für andere, ich mag auch nicht als Schriftsteller sprechen, lediglich als ein Bürger, dem der demokratische Sozialismus als bestmögliche Form gesellschaftlichen Zusammenlebens erscheint.<sup>31)</sup>

It was a paradox for such intellectuals to say they were just ordinary voters. For their function in the Voters'

Initiative depended on their preeminence, and in turn the Voters' Initiative factually depended on them.

This paradox bedevilled the political character the SWI was seeking for itself and threw it back into its instrumental function of organising publicity-campaigns. The political rationale it sought in popular democracy at every level of party politics ended up as a very secondary consideration. When Grass spoke for the SWI in 1971, he took up political issues: education, environmental policy and schemes for increasing workers' share of national wealth. But he went on to stress more firmly the SWI's worries about the dissension between the wings of the SPD and within the cabinet at the time, which he felt threatened the SPD's public image, that image being the main focus of the SWI's work.

Looking in from the outside, the party's internal confrontations appeared to be a menace. Grass appealed for moderation. Such a call for appeasement led him to seek moral and political authority at the party's centre:

Einzig Politiker wie Brandt und Wehner sind offenbar in der Lage, im Streit um die Schrittfolge die verzweifelte Komik einer notwendigerweise vom Widerspruch lebenden Partei zu erkennen: die Waite ihrer Toleranz und Intelligenz lässt Spannungen zu, denen die linken und rechten Ausschließlichkeitsfanatiker nicht gewachsen sind.<sup>32)</sup>

As an outsider, speaking on behalf of an organisation outside the party, he was obliged to approach inner-party politics through the dominant figures:

... nur dank der Integrationskraft eines Willy Brandt war und ist es möglich, die im mißverstandenen Sinn einer Fortschrittspartei auseinanderstrebenden Kräfte der SPD zu binden und an einem gemeinsamen Ziel (...) zu interessieren.<sup>33)</sup>

However fair and reasonable a view this is of the loyalty Brandt inspired within his party, emphasising personalities like this side-steps the ideological conflicts were were really at issue. It is an emphasis which arises because outsiders like Grass and the SWI were preoccupied with how the party appeared to the electorate. For a party's image in the eyes of the public can be kept together by its leaders if they are popular, and by the beginning of the seventies Brandt certainly was popular. Under Grass' guidance, the SWI deliberately kept itself clear of the SPD's internal dissensions. In its efforts to extend the SPD's appeal, it did not want to be tarred with the brush of these conflicts.<sup>34)</sup> As a result, the critical intentions which were supposed to be part and parcel of the whole concept of a Voters' Initiative became pretty bland. To have fulfilled these intentions more substantially, the SWI could not have remained so aloof from the SPD's troubles. This weakness rendered the three appellants to the SPD Fraction in 1974 practically and conceptually at a loss about what kind of politics they wanted to see:

(Grass) - Ratlos macht mich die Einsicht, daß es wenig Sinn hat, Kritik, die sich in Einzelheiten verzettelt, und Ihnen ohnehin bis zum Überdruß bekannt ist, zu wiederholen. (...) Ratlos macht mich die Erfahrung, daß zur Zeit Worte wenig vermögen: zwar sprechen viele gleichzeitig, doch wer hört noch zu?

(Troll) - Der Wähler möchte nicht als Alternative für eine konfuse Opposition eine diffuse Regierungspartei haben. Er hat ein Recht darauf, auf Fragen wie Steuererhöhung oder -ermäßigung, Postgebühren, Energieeinsparung, Tarifverhandlungen, Maßnahmen gegen die Inflation und Tempolimit eine klare, verständliche Antwort der Bundesregierung zu bekommen.

In his address in 1971 Grass had mooted an idea about how to open up party politics which the SWI took up as an organisation. It proposed that the SPD's proceedings to select its parliamentary candidates should be open to the public. This demand never came to anything. It was not very credible because the SWI lacked the means to approach the party as a whole in a democratic way as long as it was bound to the upper echelons. Working from the outside, it turned to the SPD's professional, established politicians rather than to its rank and file. When it sought some political communication, the professional politicians were the only avenue open. The SWI's central planning of campaigns and the support it received from the SPD was always mediated through contacts with people in the party's upper ranks. Brandt had already given his support in 1965. Wehner and the campaign-managers did so in 1969. The support of the party leadership was essential to this brand of extra-party but not non-party campaigning, if it was to be credible and respectable. For the SWI wanted people to see it as something different from the political parties, but also to recognise its clear message of support for the SPD. Grass' freelance venture in 1965 was too ambiguous to meet both these ends. He had remained little more than a cultural attraction and as such

could pull no weight with the SPD for his own ideas. The SWI used the SPD leadership to gain the stature as a serious factor in party politics which Grass had lacked on his own. The drawback to this was its consequent dependence on the good grace of the leadership. The SWI had to be wary of not overstepping the threshold of interference in its affairs which the party would tolerate. If it did get too ambitious, it was rebuked, as I mentioned in the first section of this chapter.

Given this dependence on the support of people in the SPD leadership, one simple reason for the SWI's relative demise after 1972 was that the party's leaders changed round when Helmut Schmidt took over the Chancellorship from Brandt in May 1974. But the problem also went deeper than that. The transition from "the peace and reform chancellor Brandt to the law and order chancellor Schmidt"<sup>35]</sup> was itself a sign of the change in the character of the government. Given the economic recession and the political stalemate within the SPD-FDP coalition over reform-legislation, the Socialdemocrat leadership now had to take in hand "a phase of somewhat intensified demarcation regarding relations with the GDR and a concentration on internal security, stability and income policies, involving the abandonment of nearly all the announced reform programme".<sup>36]</sup> The credit the government had had under Brandt for being a really progressive alternative to the conservative bloc, was reduced. With this reduction in the government's political credit, the popularity of the Voters' Initiative ebbed as well. The SWI had seen itself

as an alternative mode of political behaviour for people who supported a Social Democracy which promised alternatives. Its own credibility as an alternative depended on the government's. When that faltered, the SWI found itself doing so too in the absence of further alternatives.

In 1974 Grass, Böll and Troll were lost for what to say to the SPD Fraction. Their recourse was to talk about what alternative kind of society social-democratic politicians should offer in intellectual more than practical terms. As Grass put it:

Deshalb bitten wir Sie, sich deutlich -und wenn es irgend geht- sich öffentlich eindeutig zu machen. Der demokratische Sozialismus darf nicht weiterhin aus der Klamottenkammer der Kommunisten und aus dem Fundus unserer Konservativen wechselseitig zum Schreckgespenst aufgeputzt werden; vielmehr sollte es Ihr offensives Bedürfnis sein, den demokratischen Sozialismus den Bürgern faßbar zu machen: als Alternative zu den zwei konservativen bis reaktionären Ordnungen, zum kommunistischen Staatskapitalismus - zum westlichen Kapitalismus der Privatkartelle ... So könnte den Bürgern als Arbeitnehmern die Mitbestimmung in ihrer Doppelfunktion begreifbar werden. Gerade in Zeiten der Entspannungspolitik, die ja den friedlichen Wettstreit der Gesellschaftssysteme möglich machen soll, ist die Mitbestimmung besonders geeignet, den ideologischen Nebel zu spalten und das geknickte Selbstbewußtsein der Sozialdemokraten wieder aufzurichten; umgeben von kapitalistischer und kommunistischer Reaktion gibt es Gründe genug, selbstbewußt und entschieden zu sein.<sup>37)</sup>

But the SPD government had failed to show that its policies really did amount to social and political alternatives. The rather inflated fashion in which Grass talked about social-democracy as the alternative to Capitalism and Communism on a global scale was a sign that it had failed to come up with the goods at home.

The style and character of SWI publicity

To recapitulate thus far, my main point is that the Voters' Initiative suffered from a split personality because it tried to combine its instrumental campaigning function with certain political aspirations to make the SPD change itself. This duality was its doom. Each of the two aspects of the organisation had its own problems and limitations, and they each amplified the artificiality of the other.

The dichotomies at the heart of the idea of such a Voters' Initiative were the dichotomies of the age. The SWI's crisis was the crisis of the party with which it associated itself. The SPD's disappointing record from a socialist point of view was in turn contingent upon the crisis in the domestic economy and the international trade-recession. The change of Chancellor signalled a stalemate in the reform programme the SPD had promised. It had increasing difficulty getting its reform legislation through the nets of first its FDP coalition partners and then the Christian Democrat opposition. For instance, four major pieces of potentially progressive legislation caused long drawn-out struggles in cabinet, in parliament and in the Constitutional Court: the extension of parity co-determination to all large firms (which is still being disputed in the Constitutional Court), more liberal laws on abortion and divorce and an improvement of the legal rights of married women, and reform of the tax-system.



In my view the SWI's credit as an alternative mode of political participation depended on the open climate of the first four years of the Social-Liberal government, and on the latter being seen to be a progressive force. When the latter faltered, widespread commitment to this kind of activity did not make sense, because such voters' organisations were obviously quite unable to affect the government's decisions. "People's Politics" moved from the Wählerinitiativen into the Bürgerinitiativen, leaving the SWI with its original tactical concern with the SPD's image. This concern itself further inhibited its political claims on the party. Representations to the SPD that the voters be allowed to play a part in the party's decisions could achieve little as long as the Voters' Initiative was unable to present itself to the party in a democratic way. The problems of going through the leadership became clear when a political challenge to the leadership arose from within the SPD. The critical role which was supposed to be part of the whole idea of voters' initiatives paled by comparison with that vigorous internal criticism.

Nevertheless some questions still remain to be aired. Did the SWI at least succeed in widening the scope of electoral agitation as it intended? And if so, how?

It was a question of weighing quantity against quality. The voters' initiatives broadened the spectrum of styles and methods of campaigning, but this did not really raise the standards of propaganda. They brought some drama back to

elections and to some extent put campaigns back into the hands of the people away from the party-machines. But in content, this propaganda was largely tied to patterns set by the party's publicity.

In the first place, the SWI did find alternatives to two related trends which had increasingly dominated campaigns for twenty years or more and which were designed to influence the atmosphere surrounding an election. Opinion-polling was a growth industry and was used by the political parties to tailor policy to prognoses of their respective electoral chances.<sup>38)</sup> To give an example of this - for the federal election in 1961 opinion-research conducted for the SPD established that people believed in the 'economic miracle' of post-war recovery, but saw that the benefits of affluence were unjustly distributed.<sup>39)</sup> This popular feeling was consequently translated into one of the SPD's main slogans "Wohlstand ist für alle da", and into promises of more equitable policies if it got into power, without substantial changes in the general course of economic policy. In the scramble for votes, this conflation of political ends with electoral expediency made the SPD accommodate more and more to trends in the style and content of propaganda set by the conservative parties, because throughout the fifties the CDU/CSU had so successfully dominated the will of the public.<sup>40)</sup> Issues were tailored with a mind to the prognoses which had been made from the polls, and the next step was to put the guidelines thus produced for a campaign

into the hands of commercial advertising agencies. It became the practice of all three major parties to commission agencies to design propaganda. This swallowed larger and larger sums of campaign funds in 1969 and 1972. (41)

By contrast, the members of the Voters' Initiative produced materials from their own skills and ideas. Those SPD policies and politicians they promoted were the ones they were individually or professionally interested in and not an amalgam of common - denominators. The two editions of dafür in 1969 covered a range of issues from women's rights, and workers' rights in industry to the Bundeswehr. The only tactical slanting which is apparent here is simply that they offered something for everybody, and no doubt some care was taken about what would and what would not meet the general interest. (42)

In this respect SWI activities went against those trends which threatened to make the electorate ever more passive by flooding them with pre-packaged propaganda. The most noticeable achievement of the Voters' Initiatives was to help revive direct, conventional forms of campaigning: rallies large and small, spectacular and modest.

One of the most tangible aspects of a major party's image is the stature and personality of its leader. This had been particularly true in the Federal Republic under the CDU. The appeal of Adenauer and Erhard had been exploited in every election, an appeal deriving not least from the very

fact that they were the successive incumbent Chancellors. This pattern gave rise to particularly emotive propaganda which contrived to subsume the political positions at issue in an election under the personalities of party leaders. The SPD did not fail to compete with the CDU/CSU at this from 1961 on. At either end of the decade, for instance, Brandt was made the centre of the SPD's printed propaganda material in 1961<sup>43)</sup> and again in 1972. In the latter year one of its advertisements epitomised in slogan-form the lengths to which this personalisation of politics could be taken:

Es gibt  
zwei gute Gründe  
SPD zu wählen:  
Willy Brandt  
und Franz Josef Strauß.

As the SPD's own report on its campaign put it: "Die Werbung im Wahlkampf mußte im Erscheinungsbild Sicherheit und Vertrauen ausstrahlen. Das wurde vor allem durch die Person Willy Brandts gesichert."<sup>44)</sup> Between being leader of the opposition and the Chancellor, Brandt's image was retailored from the youthful, energetic character projected in his campaign in 1961<sup>45)</sup> to the father-figure (modelled on the paternal charisma of Adenauer and Erhard) of 1972 in such a poster-caption as "Kanzler des Vertrauens". The value of subsuming political concerns under personalities was evident in 1972, when the image built up for Brandt could straddle the ideological tension of the period and of this campaign

in particular. As another caption expressed it, he combined continuity and change: "Willy Brandt: Wer morgen sicher leben will, muß heute für Reformen kämpfen."<sup>46)</sup>

In every general election which the SWI participated in under Grass' guidance, their publicity material was based on the same personality-principle the SPD used. In 1965 there had been Grass' own panegyrics to 'Willy'. In 1969 the SWI based its support on individuals who were identified by their profession. In 1972 the same principles were harnessed for a personality cult whose cry was 'Bürger für Brandt'. Thus from this point of view, the SWI's work extended the personalisation which the parties used themselves. The people in the voters' organisation really only extended the scope of the SPD's own methods, and did not find a qualitative alternative to its patronage of the electorate.

The SPD executive approved the plans drawn up by Grass' group for 1969 because it needed and welcomed all the extra support it could get. For the same election the party-managers followed the example the CDU had set in 1965 to employ a commercial advertising agency to design its materials. Once the much better funded CDU had set the pace with such contracts, the SPD had to run twice as fast to keep up. In 1972 the campaign was devised to get people to express support for Brandt with stickers and badges etc., as the only way the SPD could compete with the amount of advertising which the CDU/CSU could afford.<sup>47)</sup> Here was where the SWI was able to broaden the SPD's own efforts. Nationally and locally

it was an umbrella organisation in whose name individuals and groups sponsored their own advertisements in the press for the Social Democrats. This sort of thing, and the extra publicity which all their activities generated, helped redress the imbalance between the SPD and its opponents.

In 1972 enough people took some kind of part in the campaign for the party of their choice, in voters' initiatives for the other parties as well as for the SPD, for Grass to be able to say: "Die Bürger traten aus ihrer Anonymität und stellten sich vor: mit Namen, Beruf, Interesse."<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, this is not the same as people making their own political demands on the parties. In the voters' initiatives the political will of the participants, however much more vocal they made it, remained essentially dependent on the ways the parties defined and presented issues in elections.

The way election campaigns were conducted and directed by the political parties drew less and less attention to substantial issues and gave emotional catalysts - personalities, slogans, gags of all kinds - an ever greater part in a kind of propaganda that looked more and more like a commercial publicity-campaign. In other words, content was lost for style. Nevertheless, the 1972 election in the Federal Republic became a by-word for a really enthusiastic and popular campaign. And it was felt to be one of the most political elections fought for over a decade. An unusual degree of active interest amongst the electorate was evident, even though the number of people

involved in voters' initiatives was still limited in relation to the electorate as a whole. The contrast between the general trend and the exceptional picture of that particular campaign must be seen in the light of the whole process of political change which had been going on since the mid-sixties.

As an electoral machine, the SPD always had to meet the CDU/CSU on its own ground. It was dealing with abusive and inflammatory propaganda from its opponents: the prejudices used to defame Brandt's character in 1961, the cold-war slogan which the CDU/CSU found in 1976. The SPD replied in kind: isolating Franz Josef Strauß as its target in 1972. This was a depoliticising factor, but one which was caught up in a period which saw an increase in political activity and awareness amongst the West German public.

As the party of government since the mid-sixties, the SPD had to steer through modifications of the state's role in the economy and concomitantly in the social infrastructure. In a society where market ideology had been propagated so hard in the fifties and early sixties, the state's assumption of an interventionist role in the economy needed some justifying, the attitudes which had been encouraged now had to be reformed. For the more the administrative and political authorities take charge of effecting changes in living conditions through economic and social policy, and the more they are seen to do so, the more it becomes clear that increasingly large areas of

social life are determined by these authorities, whilst nevertheless they remain beyond direct popular control. This contradiction creates what Claus Offe calls "a structural problem of legitimation".<sup>49)</sup> It means that compared with market ideology which purported that the state hardly interfered at all, "democratic legitimation" of the now much more ostensibly powerful hand of the political authorities has to be re-established on a new basis.

To do this, the party of government ideally has a political movement behind it. Because of its traditions in over a century of the labour movement, the ideas it has stood for and the strength of its organisation, the SPD was much better equipped with a whole political movement behind it than the conservatives or the liberals. The opening up of political debate associated with Brandt's leadership of the SPD and his call for 'more democracy' helped fashion a new political consensus that brought the SPD to power. In the late sixties what the SPD stood for as a political movement had to be linked to what it needed as a party aiming for government. Bruno Friedrich makes this point in a paper published in 1969 as part of the political debates which were gathering pace within the SPD. He talked about opening up political debate with the public because he thought that to persuade the electorate to think of voting SPD after years of allegiance to Christian Democracy it was necessary to raise the general level of political awareness, to make the public think again. He used the same sorts of terms of reference as the SWI did for itself, but envisaged the impetus coming from



within the party membership, rather than from outside it:

Nicht Aktivität als bloße Beschäftigungstherapie der Mitgliederpartei, sondern die Fähigkeit, neue Dialog-, Gesprächs- und Diskussionsformen zu entwickeln, ist im Wahlkampf ausschlaggebend.<sup>50)</sup>

He quoted to this end a resolution which had been passed at the SPD conference in 1966, which shows that the SWI's ideas were not raised unilaterally, but came from the party itself in its struggle for power:

Massenmedien und Verbände (...) sind für die Meinungs- und Willensbildung zwar eine Ergänzung, doch kein Ersatz für das direkte Gespräch einer Partei mit dem Bürger, (...). Die Führungschance der Sozialdemokratie hängt entscheidend ab von der Politisierung der Sachfragen in der Öffentlichkeit, das heißt davon, wie viele Menschen politisch mitdenken. (...) Träger des ständigen Gesprächs mit der Gesellschaft muß die Mitgliederpartei werden. (...) Wenn sich die Parteiorganisation als Träger und Initiator des demokratischen Dialogs in der Gesellschaft erkennt und danach handelt, wird es ihr möglich sein, die Gesellschaft in der Bundesrepublik im Sinne des Godesberger Grundsatzprogramms zu politisieren.<sup>51)</sup>

Thus if we think of the SPD in the decade from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies in terms of its three different guises, so to speak - electoral machine, both potential and actual party of government, and political movement - we can see how it carried within itself both a depoliticising and a politicising momentum. In its first capacity, the SPD geared itself tactically to meet the CDU/CSU on their ground. Styles and forms of party propaganda were evolved which tended to empty issues of their political content and replace that with stimuli which would raise the emotional temperature of the campaign. In its last capacity, the SPD in a way did the opposite. A general move for 'more democracy' became identified

with its path to power and with the changes in government policy, planning and ideology which it initiated. Far from taking substance away from the SPD's policies, the emphasis on participation actually raised the level of interest in politics.

As a political party which succeeded in getting into power with its Janus-like character, the SPD could look in both political and unpolitical directions and still move forward, up to the time of the economic crisis in 1974, which then became the drag-chain on its legislative progress. But for the SWI on the other hand the disparity between these dual trends which it played a part in grew into a dilemma, on whose horns it ultimately found itself stuck. For whilst in character it diversified, in content the Voters' Initiative did not succeed in qualitatively wresting control of electoral propaganda from the party's campaign-management. This meant that it could not integrate its instrumental function as publicity-creator with its political aspirations, and instead each of the two aspects of its work increasingly exposed and amplified the difficulties of the other.

The years 1969 to 1972 in particular brought out the SPD's multi-functional character for the era as a whole. The way it mustered support in a style that was in so many ways outwardly a-political, but which actually had a very political basis to it was shown in the 1972 election. It is this combination which explains both the exceptional breadth of

active interest shown then, and the ambiguity of the ways in which this interest was expressed. That is how the voters' initiatives reached such a peak of popularity which was as heady as it proved to be passing.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) "Grass und Lenz warben für die SPD", Frankfurter Rundschau 15/4/67.
- 2) Rolf Seeliger: Die Außerparlamentarische Opposition. Munich, 1968, p. 170.
- 3) Gaus, Grass and Sontheimer's "Summary of the "Sozialdemokratische Wählerinitiative" group's meeting on the 28th & 29th Sept. 1968 in Berlin", manuscript provided by the SWI Sekretariat Bonn.
- 4) *ibid.*.
- 5) Report of the preparations being made by the SWI group: "'Es-Pa-De' - Danziger Allerlei", Der Spiegel, 31/3/69.
- 6) "Die runde Zahl zwanzig", in Arnold & Görtz (ed.): Günter Grass - Dokumente zur politischen Wirkung, Munich, 1971, pp. 172-183; "Rede von den begrenzten Möglichkeiten". in Der Bürger und seine Stimme / Reden, Aufsätze, Kommentare, Darmstadt & Neuwied, 1974, pp. 53-66; "Über das alte Eisen" & "Rede über die Parteien", unpublished manuscripts from the SWI Sekretariat.

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- 4) *ibid.*.
- 5) Report of the preparations being made by the SWI group: "'Es-Pe-De' - Danziger Allerlei", Der Spiegel, 31/3/69.
- 6) "Die runde Zahl zwanzig", in Arnold & Görtz(ed.): Günter Grass - Dokumente zur politischen Wirkung, Munich, 1971, pp. 172-183; "Rede von den begrenzten Möglichkeiten", in Der Bürger und seine Stimme / Reden, Aufsätze, Kommentare, Darmstadt & Neuwied, 1974, pp. 53-66; "Über das alte Eisen" & "Rede über die Parteien", unpublished manuscripts from the SWI Sekretariat.

- 7) Grass held 190 major rallies himself, whilst Thaddäus Troll was miles behind as the second runner with only 25, and other speakers even fewer. Figures for 1969 from the SWI Sekretariat.
- 8) "Literat im Wahlkampf", Der Spiegel, 11/8/69.
- 9) Figures for 1969 from SWI Sekretariat.
- 10) The political tenor is right-of-centre, for example, in an interview with Philip Rosenthal, member of the presidium of the West German employers' association (BDI) "Vermögen für den Arbeiter" in dafür, no. 1, 1969, pp. 43-45; and in an article dealing with the SPD's loyalty to the state "1918 - 1945 - 1969 die SPD schützt den Staat", in dafür, no. 2, 1969, p. 56.
- 11) INFAS investigations of his audiences in Gladbeck and Bocholt cited in "Literat im Wahlkampf", op.cit., p.100.
- 12) Holger Börner (ed.) Bundestagswahlkampf 1972/Ein Bericht der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, Bonn, 1973, pp. 46 & 47.
- 13) "Günter Grass wirft der SPD 'ideologisches Schattenboxen' vor", Frankfurter Rundschau, 26/3/73.

- 14) "Der Vater macht einen Schritt zurück", Süddeutsche Zeitung 26/3/73.
- 15) *ibid.*, a "Demokratie ist eine Lebensform", Frankfurter Rundschau 21/11/72.
- 16) For party-membership, Kaltefleiter's breakdown of annual new SPD membership from 1956 to 1972 shows:
- a) an increase of 50 in the share of the intake amongst Selbständige/Freie und geistige Berufe between 1966 and 1971, compared with a growth in their share of only 1.4% between 1956 and 1966,
  - b) a steady growth over the whole period of the share of the intake amongst Beamte und Angestellte - +7.8% from 1956 - 1966, + 8.8% from 1966-1971.
- in: Warner Kaltefleiter: Zwischen Konsens und Krise. Cologne, 1973, p. 25, Table 10a.
- For voting patterns, H.D. Klingemann and P.U. Pappi show that in the 1969 elections the SPD benefited for the first time from the decline in support for the CDU/CSU amongst Angestellte, in "The 1969 Bundestag election in the Federal Republic of Germany", Comparative Politics, July 1970, pp. 534 Table 3 and 535.
- 17) According to his calculations, Angestellte und Beamte made up 37% of the SPD's total vote in 1969 from people in employment, whilst they made up 38.4% of the population in employment as a whole, and 43.5% of all SPD members in employment in 1968 and 49.4% by 1973.

in: Innerparteiliche Opposition/Die Linke in der Berliner SPD, Hamburg 1974, p. 26.

- 18) The speech he made there is "Gegengewalt gegen die Gewaltigen", in Die Neue Gesellschaft, no. 11, November 1972, pp. 884/5.
- 19) See "Die aufwendigste Wahlschlacht in der Bundesrepublik geht zu Ende", Süddeutsche Zeitung 18/11/72.
- 20) Claims made by the SWI culled from "Gutes Zeugnis für den Bürger", Der Abend 14/11/72 & "Der Sieg der 20-Mark-Spender", Vorwärts 23/11/72.
- 21) "Der Vater macht einen Schritt zurück", op.cit..
- 22) Kaltefleiter 1973, op.cit., pp. 110-111.
- 23) "Dabeisein ist out", Der Spiegel 6/9/76, & "Den Falschmünzern des Wortes auf der Spur", Vorwärts 16/9/76.
- 24) "'Es-Pe-De' - Wählerinitiativen ohne die Olympier", F.A.Z. 2/5/75.
- 25) Brandt promised that his government would undertake measures to bring about the following:  
".. eine gezielte Vermögenspolitik (...) das immer noch bestehende Bildungsgefälle zwischen Stadt und Land abzu-



bauen (...) die Finanzreform vollenden (...) Verwaltungsreform und Reform des Öffentlichen Dienstes (...) die (...) begonnenen Reformen unseres Rechts fortführen (...) Reform des Eherechts (...) Strafrechtsreform (...) Reform des Strafvollzugs (...) Bildung und Ausbildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung stehen an der Spitze der Reformen (...) Reform des Bodenrechts (...) Bundesraumordnungsprogramm (...) Reform des Betriebsverfassungsgesetzes und des Personalvertretungsgesetzes (...) Schutz vor Luft- und Wasserverunreinigung und vor Lärmbelästigung (...) Einführung eines Bildungsurlaubs (...) Reformen der Jugendgesetzgebung und des Bundesjugendplans."

Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt: "Regierungs Erklärung am 28. Oktober 1969 im Deutschen Bundestag", in: Susanne Miller: Die SPD vor und nach Godesberg, Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1974, pp. 142-148, passim.

- 26) Wolfgang Nitsch: "The Brandt Affair and the SPD: Depersonalizing History", in new german critique, no. 3., 1974, p. 99.
- 27) This is the general term used in West Germany for community-action campaigns, that is campaigns using extra-parliamentary means and strategies, whose objectives are mostly formulated in radical democratic terms on issues like - abortion, rents, schools, local transport and planning, health services etc..

- 28) "Kein Gewissen der Nation", Interview with Grass in  
Christ und Welt 19/9/69:

Die SPD hat sich (...) zu Recht als eine Volkspartei zu erkennen gegeben, und das heißt, daß sie den Begriff Sozialdemokrat weiter fassen muß, als es ihre Mitgliedschaft tut. Für mich stellt sich deshalb die Aufgabe, die Öffnung der SPD dem Wähler gegenüber nach Möglichkeit zu forcieren. Wir haben das im Wahlkampf versucht. Jetzt kommt es darauf an (...), daß der einzelne Bürger bei seiner Wählerinitiative auch während der Legislaturperiode bleibt und seinen Bundestagsabgeordneten kritisch zur Rede stellt. Dabei muß sich die SPD bis in ihre Gremien hinein mit den Argumenten des Wählers auseinandersetzen. Das ist ein langer Reformweg, aber die SPD ist aus ihrer klassischen Rolle als Oppositionspartei herausgewachsen.

- 29) The speech he made is "Der Wähler und seine Stimme", in  
Der Bürger etc., op.cit., pp. 83-88.
- 30) "Rede an die Sozialdemokratische Bundestagsfraktion",  
in: Grass-Dokumente, op.cit., p. 250.
- 31) Manuscripts from the SWI Sekretariat, also printed in the  
Frankfurter Rundschau 14/3/74.
- 32) "In der Mauser", in Der Bürger, op.cit., p. 213.
- 33) Paper given by Grass to an SWI conference on 16th & 17th  
December 1972, manuscript from SWI Sekretariat.
- 34) ibid..
- 35) Nitsch, op.cit., p. 96.

- 36) *ibid.*, p. 98.
- 37) "Rede vor der Fraktion der SPD", in Der Bürger, *op.cit.*, pp. 184-185.
- 38) "Held nach Maß", Der Spiegel 6/9/61 deals with the public-relations innovations introduced in Brandt's first campaign for the Chancellorship; use of opinion-polls also discussed by E.K. Scheuch & R.Wildenmann: "Der Wahlkampf 1961 im Rückblick", in Scheuch & Wildenmann (ed.): Zur Soziologie der Wahl, Cologne/Opladen, 1965, pp. 54-5.
- 39) "Held nach Maß", *op.cit.*, pp. 36/7; Peter H. Merkl: "Comparative Study and Campaign Management/The Brandt Campaign in Western Germany", in The Western Political Quarterly, Dec. 1962, p. 685.
- 40) On this convergence see Wolf-Dieter Narr: CDU-SPD / Programm und Praxis seit 1945, Stuttgart, 1966.
- 41) "Es ist zum Heulen:Wahlwerbung '69 in der letzten Phase", DIE ZEIT 5/9/69; "Für Waschmittel, Käse und Parteien", F.A.Z. 13/9/69.
- 42) Other topics covered include in no. 1: education, economic policy, the Developing World, sport; in no. 2: education, agricultural policy, transport and road construction.

- 43) Bernhard Vogel & Peter Hauungs: Wahlkampf und Wählertradition, Cologne/Opladen, 1965, pp. 328 & 333.
- 44) Börner 1973, op.cit., p. 12.
- 45) "Held nach Maß", op.cit..
- 46) Posters reproduced in Börner 1973, op.cit..
- 47) *ibid.*, p. 12.
- 48) "Der Schriftsteller als Bürger", Vorwärts 1/3/73.
- 49) In "Demokratische Legitimation der Planung", in Strukturprobleme des kapitalistischen Staates, Frankfurt, 1975, p. 125.
- 50) "Wahlkampf und Parteiorganisation", in Wehner, Friedrich & Nau: Parteiorganisation, Bonn, 1969, p. 44.
- 51) cited *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

## C O N C L U S I O N

### Social position, political attitudes, literary work

Publishing and marketing books, including creative literature, has grown into a large-scale business within the modern capitalist economy. Professional writers are functionally speaking adjuncts to an industrial process. Only a relatively privileged minority can work with full creative independence. Literary work is becoming ever less a private affair and most professional writers work for the media and the press as well to make a living. This means that they are in an ever more dependent position. Broadcasting and film-corporations, the publishing and newspaper industries are on the one hand simply the institutions which create and distribute the arts, on the other they exist as a branch of the economy. Smaller publishers, independent journals and newspapers are being taken over piece by piece by a few large corporations (Springer, Bertelsmann). That being so, it is clear to see that more and more people in the literary profession work literally for an industry.

These economic trends became apparent to West German writers in the sixties and stimulated a change in their political attitudes. Writers suffered a crisis of political identity hand in hand with a crisis of their social identity as a profession. The practical outcome of this was their entering a trade union in the early seventies. The Gruppe 47

generation had had a sense of themselves as guardians and tutors of the new democracy in Germany. By the mid-sixties they were accused of having grown too fat and self-satisfied on their literary success. The social function and utility of literature was debated again with renewed vigour. Writers questioned their own position as creative artists because literature had been brought face to face with social and political concepts through the economic realities of its own production and distribution.

Throughout this thesis I have aimed to set the position and development of Günter Grass in the context of the common experiences of intellectuals and writers in the sixties and seventies. As a member of the literary profession Grass was alert to the economic pressures on writers as a whole, but was himself relatively free of constraints on his work and threats to his security. I interpret this combination of circumstances as helping to sustain the basic liberal-democratic values which inspired his political commitment. The individualist view he had of himself as a social and political being was not directly threatened because he was by far one of the most successful amongst West German writers. There were no obvious restrictions on the professional and political choices he could make. Rather than thinking about political commitment in terms of his own social and economic interests, Grass could afford to see it as a moral choice to work for the values which he held dear.

As individuals we all tend to articulate our

attitudes this way because we think of ourselves as subjects not objects. Grass' peculiarity is that he maintained an unqualified sense of himself as a subject who was sovereign in his choices.

Naturally enough, how he saw himself as a political activist also reflects his understanding of political affairs. For him, people make society political, rather than social conditions making people political and forming their interests. He always talked about political matters and attitudes as the affair of individual subjects rather than as part of social life where people are themselves determined by social processes as well as being active determining agents of their own environment. This one-sided attention to the subject distinguishes his political attitudes. By contrast, colleagues of his like Walser and Böll developed a sense of writers as objects of an economic dynamic which was transforming their position as creative subjects.

Grass' moral approach to politics meant that political ideas came to literature from the outside for him. This changed the character of his fictional writing. The more overtly self-conscious about his political ideas Grass became in the course of his career in political affairs, the more his own attitudes intrude into his novels and the less they are mediated by being transformed into fiction. His values increasingly crystallize like a foreign or external element from outside, not from within the world depicted. No doubt this was a deliberate change. Grass' political career is reflected in his evolution as a writer of fiction, in that

his novels show us less and less of the ideological texture of the society and the period they are set in, and tell us more and more about the author's own ideas. Eventually this becomes quite explicit in the last two major books he has published, Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke and Der Butt.<sup>1)</sup>

In the latter, his latest novel, Grass has brought a social view of history back into his writing. Der Butt contains lengthy accounts of what social and economic conditions were like, about the lives of classes and groups from one period to the next. At the same time, the book pokes fun at a diachronic treatment of its general subject, which is the social and personal relations between the sexes as experienced by the male narrator. Taking liberties with sequential time, he is reincarnated through every epoch and through all classes and communities, appearing altogether in just about every possible social position.

It is now quite clear that this author can see little or no progress in history. The narrator harks back to a primeval matriarchy. Ostensibly the novel pays tribute to progress through the improvements in nutrition and cuisine which each of the successive heroines introduced in their time. However, this has done little or nothing to improve the state of relations between men and women, or their ability to satisfy each other emotionally and sexually. The male who is the real protagonist of the novel and who casts his shadow over the stories of the ostensible heroines remains sexually and socially eternally nostalgic.



Equally the political feeling in the narration is one of looking back over one's shoulder. We gain only a weak sense of where society is moving to; it has not quite turned its face to the past, but it cannot set its sights for the future either. This disposition is certainly characteristic of Grass himself. The political feeling of the novel can now justly be identified with the author's own sensibility. It would seem that Grass' political experiences have made him more aware of his own Weltanschauung, to the point where he now self-consciously assimilates his own philosophy into his imaginative ideas and makes himself his own subject.

#### Moral and political philosophy

The second part of this thesis examines Grass' political thinking in the mid- and late sixties. This was a period of change of gear of government in West Germany. The middle of the decade was the watershed of the epoch of post-war reconstruction. There was a halt in the rapid economic growth which had taken place under the favourable conditions for expansion after 1948. This was the occasion for the emphasis of the 'social-market-economy' to be recast from the market- to the social-, that is to say, for the political hand of the state to reach further into the economy. The recession in 1966 and 1967 made manifest that the economy needed to be taken in charge by a more consciously interventionist state. The government began to answer this need when the SPD entered the Grand Coalition.

Fresh ideological justification for state intervention on the scale which followed was called for, so that people should believe the government was acting in their interests. For anti-socialist, neo-laissez-faire doctrines had been robust for nearly two decades and had been honoured by the economic recovery and expansion of the fifties and early sixties. The will for social reforms had to be revived.

This was the political problem of the second half of the decade. The student movement certainly played a part in ushering in the period of reform which followed under Brandt's government. It revived a will for reform even in its extremism, which caused social democrats and liberals to reply: revolution no, but reform yes. Coming to terms with the far left stimulated ideas for reforms, the will for reforms, strategies for reform. This was evident within the SPD with the resurrection of a socialist fraction in the party such as the Jungsozialisten incorporated after 1969.

Grass did not start out in any kind of socialist movement, and his ideas were shaped by the influence and conflicts of the times more than he fashioned them of any theoretical keenness of his own. His political thinking evolved between different sets of ideas about what reforms could or should mean. The radical student movement and the left of the SPD were the negative and positive poles respectively of the spectrum within which he struggled for his own ideas.

His basic values always comprised a faith in the

institutions of parliamentary democracy combined with a faith in the SPD to live up to the latter. When both these credos were shaken over the political crisis of the mid-sixties, he remained convinced that the one could never be restored without the other, for they jointly and mutually formed his premises.

For this match to be remade again after 1966, it had to be remade at a higher level. Grass' conception of democracy was necessarily deepened as a result of the crisis he had seen it in. Under the influence of policies for social and industrial democracy which the SPD and the trade union movement had worked out, he recognised that democracy had to mean more than constitutional political democracy. From the conflicts and debates of these years he incorporated new ideas into his ideology. However, his views did not move beyond the positions raised by groups he supported : the trade unions, the Jungsozialisten. He had no theoretical originality in his politics, although he did show a good deal of practical originality when it came to election campaigns. Probably the basic ethical inspiration of his political principles was too firm and fixed to yield any programmatic or strategic novelties. Grass' political-intellectual development has been in many ways a constant process of defining and redefining basic principles.

On certain issues he produced his own blend of proposals, but taken as a whole he did not add an new

ingredients. He drew his ideas from the mixed bag of programmes and theories which had been thrown up during and in the aftermath of the political turbulence of 1965 to 1969. The kind of references he made to Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and even to Marx bear witness to this. So does the way he identified himself with the concepts of Revisionism and Democratic Socialism in order to take a stand against revolution. These were concepts and traditions which he took up to fight off the far left, who appeared to be threatening the SPD's road to power. But once he had adopted them, he could not just drop them again when the SPD was elected in 1969. They had in fact made him formulate his priorities in more theoretical and programmatic terms. They were his terms of reference for scrutinising the SPD's performance as a government.

The main principle of democratic socialism in his view was power-sharing, co-determination was the key to a democratic future. But he had nothing to say about strategies for gaining this share of power or about whether it would prove to be an effective form of democratic control, be it over management or over government and administration. I suggest this neglect is characteristic of his political thinking. It is clear from the way in which his political ideas progressed that his ideological affiliation to Social Democracy came before his idea of what kind of society it could promise. It is never he who makes that idea concrete and he never asks himself what would be effective, but leaves that to others to work out. He did not touch strategy or ends; his priorities are means and basic principles.

Thus Grass' individuality lies not in the content of his ideas but in the spirit of his intellectual development. There is nothing remarkable about the proposals he has made for reforms. What distinguishes him is the literalness of a basic liberalism which carries right through his ideas. By this I mean that behind his conception of democratic socialism lies a concern first and foremost with democratic consciousness. Whether policies which he supports can lead to economic restructuring is for him an entirely secondary question compared with people's attitudes and awareness. Again the balance of his priorities favours the subject not the objective effects of social and political processes. That is why he accepts very partial answers to policy questions.

The socialism which Grass had erected on top of his fervour for parliamentary democracy was ultimately nourished by a moral impetus. Indeed it had to be because of its conceptual weaknesses. The problems he had in manipulating his own ideology to meet the changing debates of the period between 1965 and 1974 caused him to fall back on rhetorical solutions to intellectual problems. On the other hand, these weaknesses were themselves in part the outcome of his moral temper. For I imagine that his moral temper robbed him of a theoretical will. It is very likely that he lacked such a will given that moral choices and actions were always more important and urgent to him than considering problems analytically.

Most people bring moral feelings to politics, but

in Grass' case these feelings are more than just a basis to his views. They bear the weight of prescriptive criteria and colour the way he formulates political concerns. His ethics are linked to a bourgeois view of social and political behaviour. Individuals determine social and political affairs and social structures and institutions hardly play a part in the model from which Grass derives the moral moving force in his politics. In turn this individualism reinforces the moralism.

We can also detect this moral impetus in a number of rhetorical patterns in his political speech which structure the way he considers issues. His moral language shaped the part he played in public affairs. For instance, in the sixties he differed from the extra-parliamentary opposition over what to do about the Vietnam war because he insisted that any protest against the war must itself affirm the values of liberal democracy ; hence he refused to support the Vietcong. To criticise the very concept of democracy along with the war which was being waged in its name was at best useless and at worst shocking to him.

Grass had a way of making statements which paid little or no regard to changing conditions in international politics in order to emphasise moral norms. He criticised others for extreme views which failed to see the different sides of problems, but his idealist standards often made his own judgement almost totally black and white. Cases in point are the Arab-Israel conflict and the civil war in Biafra. The polemical affect came from his habit of substantiating his

position experientially and of not even trying to be objective. Indeed, his political philosophy is effectively an experiential one altogether. If he was not justifying his arguments by his own experience of the nation's past, then invariably he would be talking about someone else's experience.

Grass built his politics around persons as a way of translating moral choices into tangible and practical political choices which the public could make. The view of history which informs his speeches makes personalities the constants and time and place the incidental variables. This makes melodrama out of political history and on a number of occasions made his arguments historically insensitive.

It is important that moral sensibilities played such a big part in Grass' rhetoric, because these sensibilities are based on an individualism which acquired a political function in the kind of propaganda which the Social Democratic Voters' Initiatives made for the SPD and in how they mustered support. For they built their appeal around public personalities in the same way as Grass was wont to let persons stand for ideas in his speech.

The Brandt-Era : opportunities and limits for a writer in  
West German politics

The final part of the thesis describes the role

Grass played in politics both within and without the SPD, concentrating on those issues which seem to have been formative for him. His association with the SPD through the SWI can be seen as a result of his frustration as an intellectual. For Grass was someone who wanted to see results. His friendship with Willy Brandt gave him the chance to coordinate his own search for new waters with the efforts of the SPD to recast its appeal to further social groups.

Left-liberal intellectuals had been used to an oblique political role which was not adequate to the demands of the sixties. The quality of their political commitment changed and its tempo was recharged during the years from roughly 1966 to 1974, that is between the two major political crises which the Federal Republic has known. The first of these concluded the era of post-war boom, the second that of social-democratic reforms. The climax to both crises was the resignation of the respective Chancellors : Erhard and Brandt.

In between the Federal Republic experienced an ideological rejuvenation followed by a flourishing of civic confidence. People could feel they were insiders to the whole political process and culture, to the political struggles which were taking place and to the way political decisions were taken. This insider feeling was epitomised by Brandt's personality as a progressive democratic leader. For the time it embraced many writers and intellectuals as well. It is noticeable that a high number of them considered in what form they should participate directly in the democratic



process : as members or associates of political parties, of voters' initiatives, of Bürgerinitiativen, of trade unions. Their political disposition matured from passive critique to active civic commitment.

Grass is a pertinent figure to take as a case history because he was the one who first broke away from the self-centred terms of writers' debates about their social and political role. The image intellectuals had had of themselves up to the mid-sixties had been fashioned from a faith in the place of social criticism and intellectual critique in the life of a democracy and in the possibility of reform. This model of the intellectual as watchdog faltered when the liberal democracies of the West ceased to appear to them to be pluralist in their social and institutional make-up. Grass went through this disintegration of faith to come out with a new pressure-group in the voters' initiatives, which he believed brought the first signs of reinvigorating democracy in West Germany.

The hour of the Wählerinitiativen came from the SPD's own need to tackle gaps in its catchment and from Brandt's interest in opening up the political process. The problems which faced the party in its bid for power were the objective basis upon which the voters' groups could flourish with party blessing. The first SWI was also the culmination of Grass' individual political development, the child of his political maturity. However, there were contradictions in its beginnings which bound its growth. Its rise and fall was linked to the changing character of the SPD-FDP govern-

ment : a change from reform to crisis-management in the economic recession which became apparent in 1973/4.

My contention is that the SWI was bound to falter as a new form of civic political participation, because it could never remain consistently popular and independent. It was hampered by its ties on the one hand to the party of government, on the other to people of high cultural and academic status. The SWI's work had the virtue of making people aware of their right to play an active determining part in elections. Its weakness was that its propaganda was in many ways as emotive and uncritical as that of the political parties. The combination of politicising and depoliticising qualities in its approach brought the SPD to power but thwarted the SWI, despite its success in the federal election in 1972.

Since the federal election in 1976 the social-democratic voters' movement has become a spent force, and Grass has played no more than a sporadic part in West German politics and public debate. There is no reason to assume that he has retreated permanently from active involvement, nevertheless I believe that this study has shown that his career in politics between 1960 and 1974 should be regarded as a unified and contained whole, precisely because it corresponded to a transitional period in the political and economic history of the Federal Republic. This period came to an end with the period of uncertainty which we still face today under the international recession.

Happily someone who supports my appraisal of the dependence of Grass' political work on a period which is now over is the man himself! In 1975 he assessed his experience in much the same terms as this study has done. This is a point of agreement to end with :

All das, was man sich gewünscht hat, wofür man gearbeitet hat, jeder auf verschiedene Art und Weise, mit verschiedenen Wünschen, ich nun (...) im Verhältnis zur SPD, mit Hilfe von Wählerinitiativen, all das hat kurzfristig zum Erfolg geführt und ist in einem bestimmten Bereich beendet oder auch gescheitert. Diese Kra Brandt, und ich möchte dazu auch gleich noch Gustav Heinemann nennen, ist eine für deutsche Verhältnisse einmalige Periode gewesen, oder zumindest erstmalige, so etwas haben wir hier noch nie erlebt, und sie ist sehr kurz gewesen; (...) Wichtig scheint mir, daß das vorbei ist, nicht grundsätzlich, damit ist nicht alles zerstört, was getan worden ist, aber vieles wird als Bauruine stehenbleiben; es sei denn, andere arbeiten daran weiter. #1

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FOOTNOTES

1. Der Butt/Roman, Darmstadt & Neuwied, 1977.
2. 'Gespräch mit Günter Grass', in: Hans Ludwig Arnold:  
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3. "Dich singe ich Demokratie", in Allgemeine Zeitung Freiburg, 13/7/65.
4. "Ein Staat ist noch kein Vaterland", in Christ und Welt, 11/2/66.
5. "Willy Brandt und die Friedenszyklika", in Süddeutsche Zeitung, 11/11/66.
6. "Israel - unser Nachbar", in Kölner Stadtanzeiger, 7/6/67.
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8. "Politik interessiert zur Zeit mehr", interview with Dieter E. Zimmer, in DIE ZEIT, 27/10/67.
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16. "Grass empfiehlt Prager Modell", in Süddeutsche Zeitung, 29/6/68.
17. "Das Nichts in der hohlen Hand", in Der Abend, 26/9/68.
18. "Völkermord vor aller Augen", in DIE ZEIT, 11/10/68.
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25. "Man kann nicht bei der Nein-Position stehenbleiben", in Frankfurter Rundschau, 10/3/69.
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33. "Wenn es nicht klappt - dann Opposition", in Abendzeitung - 8 Uhr Blatt, 1/10/69.
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