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The Communist Leadership's Criticism of Rock 'n' Roll Music as a Form of Western Subversion (October 13, 1963)

After riots in the rock 'n' roll scene, the Leipzig district leadership of the SED expressed its distaste for such youthful excesses. It placed the blame on Western influences and resolved to take decisive action against rock 'n' roll fans in the future. This, in turn, caused many young people to turn their backs on the regime.

On Certain Issues in Youth Work and the Emergence of Rowdy Groups

With the implementation of both the Youth Communiqué of the Politburo of the Central Committee and the Youth Act, progress has been made in many areas of society in our work with youth. The attitude of a large segment of young people shows that they have a proper and honest stance toward our Workers' and Peasants' State, toward socialist work, and toward learning.

We cannot, however, overlook the fact that there is a segment of young people who exhibit the tendencies of American non-culture [*Unkultur*], of Texas-style ideology, and of cowboyism, and that these tendencies have intensified in recent weeks and months. They are a manifestation of the constant confrontation with bourgeois ideology that is taking place while the West German reactionary social order is working to smuggle its non-culture into the GDR. These phenomena profoundly contradict the civilized moral and ethical sensibilities shared by all decent people.

The enemy aims to bring about the weakening of our ideology, especially among youth, to foster intemperance and anarchy, in order to pit segments of our youth against their own Workers' and Peasants' State and to incite them to disturb the public peace. They are spreading this agitation through their radio and television stations, especially over Deutschlandfunk, by smuggling indecent and inflammatory literature [into the GDR], but also, quite cunningly, by utilizing the non-culture of Western music and dancing, Beatles-ideology and collecting fads, and by encouraging slacking off at work. In West Germany, they depend on these ways of life to poison young people psychologically and to prepare them ideologically for their criminal war plans with all possible means of brutalization and of stimulation of the basest instincts.

It is our society's duty to combat all influences and manifestations of Western non-culture. Excesses, such as the ever larger recent proliferation of Beatles-groups with American names

and almost exclusively Western and indefinable musical repertoires (disguised as original compositions), have nothing in common with progressive life ideals. We support modern and civilized dance music, and we are also not opposed to infectious rhythms, but we decidedly disapprove of those groups that violate all codes of morality and ethics, that perform barefoot and half naked, that contort their bodies and intoxicate our youth with agitating rhythms in order to lead them to excesses.

Another expression of such excesses is the rowdy behavior of one segment of youth; this behavior is becoming increasingly visible at public events (athletic events, amusement parks, small trade shows, movie theaters, dances, youth clubs, etc.). Incidences of slander and agitation against leading party and state personalities are occurring at these events. Citizens are being harassed, accosted, and in some cases members of the security organs and party, state, and FDJ officers have been attacked.

The nature and frequency of these incidents in recent months prove that they are being purposefully organized and directed, but the masterminds and managers thereof are remaining behind the scenes. [. . .]

Source: "Zu einigen Fragen der Jugendarbeit und dem Auftreten der Rowdygruppen" ["On Certain Issues in Youth Work and the Emergence of Rowdy Groups"], Resolution of the Office of the SED District Leadership, October 13, 1965, *PDS-Archiv*, District Leadership Leipzig IV A-2/16/464; reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann and Georg Wagner, eds., *Das gespaltene Land. Leben in Deutschland 1945-1990* [*The Divided Country. Life in Germany 1945-1990*]. Munich, 1993, pp. 471-72.

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