

## UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE EX-GDR

By January 1992, 4.2 million residents of the ex-German Democratic Republic had lost work and not found a replacement. Only 1.35m of them were officially counted as unemployed. Both unofficial and official counts of unemployed rose further in 1992, the official figure in the Autumn being 27% of the total economically active, ie. working or unemployed.

The extracts from German press below show parallels with UK struggles over the value of unemployment statistics. They also form a backdrop to the rise of fascist ideas breeding on dissatisfaction and disillusionment with other political options, as well as to the resistance to fascist movements.

Professor Heinz Kallabis summarises the statistics of unemployment as at January 1992, in the area of the ex-GDR:

- 1.35m officially registered unemployed
- .50m expansion of further education, re-education and re-training
- .40m ABM work experience [with conditions similar to YTS in the UK]
- .78m early retirement
- .30m 'nil-hours' workers, officially on the books of their previous workplace, but in fact not working at all
- .54m street pedlars
- .40m emigrated workers [ubersiedler]

Of these 4.2m, 3.3m are de facto temporarily or permanently unemployed. This mass unemployment is distinguished from that which has followed capitalist economic and structural crises in, for example, West Germany. It is the results of de-industrialisation, the destruction of agriculture, and the tearing down of scientific and technical structures.

It is special because it embraces all social groups.

Berliner Linke, August 1992:

- The number of newly unemployed in July was double that of June.
- Over 6m are hit by unemployment in all its forms in the whole of Germany, 45% of those economically active in the ex-GDR.
- Women in the ex-GDR are proportionately hit harder: 64% unemployment.

- 65,000 single parents are unemployed. Youth and disabled unemployment have grown.
- The official statistics exclude a growing number of long-term unemployed who are in receipt of social welfare benefits (200,000 in December 1991) or not receiving any social benefit at all.
- Job opportunities, July 1993: 118 unemployed for every vacancy.

British-German Friendship Society 'Updated situation in East Germany July 1992' (129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7 7QG):

A new law will shortly be introduced which will end this unsatisfactory situation and will show a real figure of workless reaching 50% in 1992.

Anti FA (anti-fascist paper), August:

The country that was once called the GDR has become an annexe, as also in the statistics:

- Industrial production in 1992 was 30% of its 1989 level. The destruction is comparable to that during the 2nd world war.
- Over 50% of all EC fallow land is in the ex-GDR, where agricultural employment has dropped from 900,000 to 250,000.
- Science and research: 50% staff reduction since 1989.
- Births in 1991 were 54% of the 1989 figure. Marriages in 1991 were 39% of the 1989 figure.

Professor Heinz Kallabis again:

This is a new social phenomenon for the GDR citizen, who is unprepared, who has no social or individual strategies to deal with and manage it. The accustomed connection between work and life in the GDR contributed considerably to the formation of social relations and a system of values. This connection is being destroyed.