'Détente' and 'classroom' are two words which do not automatically fit into the same thought process. 'Détente' has largely been hijacked by the world of high-level politics; 'classroom' is seldom a place we associate with major political developments. It may therefore seem incongruous or pretentious to speak of 'detente in the classroom'.

Yet, on further reflection, the incongruity starts to break down. We may remember how, for example, in Britain some politicians have campaigned against 'Peace Studies' courses in schools as if the nation's future depended on its young people not being polluted with alternatives to establishment views on nuclear weaponry and East-West relations. We may compare history and political education text books in, say, the FRG and the GDR, and observe the importance that is attributed by both countries to the ideological formation of young people in the classroom. Power élites know that the power they have rests more safely (and sometimes crucially) on a supportive popular consensus than on rumbling or open public discontent. They see the education system as a means of building that consensus.

To speak of 'détente in the classroom' can thus be controversial and have far-reaching conclusions. The process centrally involves the participation of the teacher in the breaking down of East-West enemy images, of the ideological certainties which so often take the place of rational assessment. It involves the contradiction of a mass of ideologically determined 'fact' and 'research findings', and the attempt to question fundamentally the guilt and fear which are, despite differences between them, the basis and rationale of the defence and armaments strategies of both superpowers. It thus works to undermine culturally the immense economic and political strength of the military-industrial complex, which after all relies on educational establishments for research, and on which to some extent those education-
al establishments rely for resources. It must, however, involve not only 'contradicting' and 'questioning', but the proposition of realistic alternative perspectives.

At this point, teachers of GDR studies may be asking what precisely this has to do with them and their students. They may see themselves as just humble specialists in this or that aspect of GDR society. It must be replied to them that lecturing or teaching about the GDR has to be very much part of this controversy. The GDR is a model case insofar as it has become the most economically successful of the Eastern Bloc states, and insofar as it is part of the German crucible of East-West relations which not only demands East-West comparisons, but also will play a central role in whatever the future holds for Europe. Standing in front of groups of 18-22 year olds, teachers are not constantly conscious of all these perspectives, but they are there; the 18-22 year olds will in the future hold influential positions as administrators, members of the business community, teachers, academics, journalists, parents, politicians, voters. . . . All of them are at a formative stage in their development. The responsibility of these teachers lies in what choices they make about how to teach their subject. Put bluntly, are they going to teach within the matrices and expectations of the established ideology and its own 'false objectivity' (as Christa Wolf has put it)? Or are they going to question that ideology, take the other ideology (with its claimed objectivity) into account, and try to teach and research within a third fraternity which is seeking to promote East-West reconciliation, and the kinds of truths about 'the other side' which the ideology-based 'objectivities' have suppressed? These are aims, it should be added, which are entirely consistent with our countries' duties as signatories to the CSCE (Helsinki) Accords.

The evidence (to be referred to in more detail later on) concerning lecturers on the GDR in higher education in Britain is that virtually all of them support the latter, pro-détente course. They have long since recognised the near nakedness of the emperors, and have taken up sceptical and critically differentiated positions in relation to the ideological stereotypes and the evidence produced to justify them. Taken together, these lecturers are therefore to be seen as a body of people working against received ideas and what is assumed to be the ideological consensus. They are attempting to cut the barbed wire of prejudice and to give their students, in the light of their various findings, an in-