

STEFFEN ANDRITZKE

# LOST BOY IN THE CITY OF CULTURE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY



The story of oppression,  
hope & freedom

**Lost Boy  
in the  
City  
of  
Culture**

**Steffen Andritzke**

Autobiography

## I M P R E S S U M

Lost Boy in the City of Culture  
Steffen Andritzke

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ISBN: 9783986478568

# Foreword

This book is my autobiography, my story, my personal history, and it speaks for itself. It is authentic and the incidents I describe here are memories of everyday life in the GDR, of life in Weimar (the small town famous for Goethe and Schiller, Herder Liszt and the Bauhaus style) in the period before the Wall came down, and of events in real existing socialism / communism. This is where the title of my book "Lost Boy in the City of Culture" comes from, because Weimar was once European Capital of Culture several years ago. I describe very precisely what happened to me in the GDR at that time, and what I had to suffer because I dared to have my own opinion. Back then, there was no freedom in the Soviet-occupied zone. And there was no intellectual freedom either. The beginning of my ordeal was an experience of my uncle, who loved US-American music and was harassed by the socialist/communist state because of it. As a child, I was also treated badly by the state because, as a young boy, I dared to be a fan of a soccer team from the free part of Germany. My aversion to this lack of freedom and the constant paternalism of the socialist/communist rulers grew more and more. They reacted to my desire for freedom increasingly with reprisals. I describe some of these reprisals here in this book, and when you read it, you will be glad that you were able to grow up in a free country.

The anger and hatred in me were growing more and more, and I then joined violent soccer fans and went around the country with them as a hooligan. First in the GDR and later, after the fall of the Wall, also in West Germany. In GDR times, I took refuge in alcohol because of the many

repressive measures, but I also took hard drugs like cocaine and LSD after the fall of the Wall in 1990. Decades of hatred, alcohol and drugs .... and at some point, my body and mind couldn't take it anymore and I had what today is commonly called "burnout". I was completely done in. Broken. Fucked up.

Is there a happy ending to my life story? Well, read for yourself and keep an open mind. Is my life made of the stuff Hollywood films are made of? Well, decide for yourself when you have finished reading....

In any case, my book "Lost Boy in the City of Culture" is a motivation for all those whose lives have been going in the wrong direction and who now want to start changing their lives in a positive way. Perhaps it will also be an inspiration for one or another. Maybe even one of you would like to stop taking hard drugs. Or stop drinking so much alcohol. Or maybe not get so angry in certain situations anymore. My opinion and my experience on this is: It is never too late for a new start. Giving up is not an option. Hope springs eternal. And: Every person has the God-given right to their freedom and their own opinion!

And now I will take you with me and say: "Welcome to my life" .....

## **You always think that this never happens in your own family**

I cried my eyes out, and that only made my father angrier. He was ashamed of me; he was ashamed of the reason for my tears and of the fact that he now had to ride home halfway across town with a whimpering three-year-old in the child seat of his bicycle.

I was only three and a half years old, and my father had just picked me up from kindergarten. I stood crying at the top of the stairs, waiting for him to finally pick me up, taking me away from this environment of dumb and stupid children. The kindergarten teachers had already tried in vain to comfort me. But nothing helped. "What happened," Dad asked me, and I told him sobbing that a boy had just hit me. "Well, just hit him back," he replied, and before he finished this sentence, I began to whine even more.

"But then that hurts him too," I sobbed at him, and he looked at me in complete bewilderment. My father had really not expected such a stupid answer from his only son. "Well," he said after a short pause, "you'll just have to let the other children keep beating you up," he grabbed me and hurriedly put me in the child seat so that he could get home with me as quickly as possible.

Once there, I had finally calmed down a little. But I was still annoyed. Somehow it wasn't in my nature to hit other children, and in a certain way it was beneath me to whack someone. In my childish simplicity, I probably even thought that others had to be like me.

But that wasn't the case, and that was exactly what really made me angry. For me, fights were only something for stupid and mean children. At that time, I probably thought of myself as a "Mr. Noble" who simply didn't need to resort to this rude method of communication.

Anyway, compared to the others, I had much broader interests and preferred to take care of other things. Birgit, for example. She was not at all like boys, and that in turn I found mega-interesting. But my kindergarten buddies weren't interested in that at all. In fact, this affection for a girl caused irritation among the others, and when I invited Birgit to my birthday party together with my kindergarten buddies, it didn't fit in with the common cliché.

But I still didn't care. I did what I enjoyed and what I felt was right anyway. Others found that highly suspicious. It was hard for them to understand that there was someone who just did his thing and didn't join forces with others to form communities of purpose and then define himself within these communities of purpose.

One of these consortia among the boys was, of course, the "we-all-like-soccer" special-purpose group. I thought it was stupid. Did they all have to like the same thing in order to find acceptance within this group? Didn't anyone have their own opinion? Was everyone really interested in the same thing?

## **Alone**

So, the months and years went by and I got more and more used to doing what I wanted. Although I was always nice and friendly to the other children, if I thought a thing was right or interesting enough, I simply did it. No matter if the others thought it was good or not. Period!

Of course, not everyone liked that, and I was about to feel that in a painful way.

It was a sunny day, and during playtime in kindergarten Birgit pulled me aside. She whispered softly in my ear that she would like to invite me to her birthday party. "But don't tell anyone; I don't want the others to tease us about it again," she added anxiously. But I didn't feel anxious at all. I was over the moon, feeling like a little prince who had been heard by his beloved. Determined, I pulled her under the slide of the playground and kissed her just like that on her sweet pout.



Wow! What outrageousness; what a dare and what a feeling to just steal a kiss like that at the age of almost six!

Unbelievable! What had I done; what had I dared to do?!

Incredible! I was all churned up inside and felt like a valiant knight who had dared to wake the fair maiden with a kiss. Pride spread through every pore of my body, and when I went upstairs to the washroom with all the other children to wash my hands before lunch, I almost floated up the stairs. I realized that I had crossed a line with that smacker, and I was proud as hell because I had just taken whatever I felt like. Never before had I washed my hands with such euphoria!

"We saw exactly what you were doing under the slide just now," it penetrated my ear from afar, and instinctively I felt that this was not a statement but an accusation. Slowly I turned off the tap and turned around. In front of me stood Peter with three of his cronies. They stood threateningly in front of me, grinning hatefully and slyly. They made me feel that they believed they now had total power over me; precisely because they had ganged up against one.

Whack! The blow of the "bravest" of them found its target right under my eye. It hurt like hell, but I stubbornly refused to show the pain. Defiance spread through me. I was determined not to show any reaction. Silent and motionless, I stood in front of them, as if I had been fixed in that spot. But inside I was seething, and an up until then unknown rage was spreading through me. And it was not the physical pain from this blow that stirred me up inside, but rather the fact that others came together just to lambaste one. I found it highly repulsive and disgusting that there were boys who formed a coalition in order to vent their anger on one individual and, under the protection of a group, to have their revenge on someone who they already knew was not in the mood for a fight.

Motionless, showing no outward reaction, I stood in front of Peter and his gang. My anger turned to hate. Hatred; abysmal hatred for those who had banded together for ulterior motives to torment an individual. This hatred was also mixed with powerlessness and incomprehension, but it was so strong, so all-consuming, that I felt I was about to burst and cut the throats of every single one of them. Woe betide anyone who would ever feel this hatred ...

Of course, I didn't cut any child's throat back then. But from today's perspective, the foundation was laid for reacting to powerlessness, anger and hatred with violence.

## **Corpus Delicti**

And then I went to school. It was actually not so bad there. Learning was remarkably easy for me. I grasped everything quite quickly and got very good grades. Another pleasant thing was the fact that I quickly made good friends there. And since I never felt compelled to do homework or felt the obligation to study at home, I naturally had a lot of free time, which I of course loved to spend playing with my friends. Our favorite game was a kind of "cops and robbers", where one group of children had to search for and chase the others. That was really exciting; it was great, and the bigger we got, the bigger got our territory, in which we played this game. By now, it stretched from the lower part of Humboldt Street to the cemetery and the Goethe School - an area that could definitely be described as "big" for an eight-year-old.

Not only hiding in the cemetery, but also climbing over the fences of the Goethe School on Sundays and holidays was considered a test of courage in those days. But that's where the best hiding places were. Even I dared to climb over the

fence and hide there on days when the school was closed. Anyway, at that time I was the hero in our group of kids: I had been given a pair of binoculars by my grandfather! It was a rather old, worn-out pair of binoculars, but in our little kids' world, for a while they were the greatest treasure you could own and bring to our games. It was a kind of relic that could only be owned by the group that had the task of hiding from the other children; of running away from them and not letting themselves be found. Moreover, by a strange coincidence, as the owner of this binoculars, I was often in the group that had the privilege of hiding from the others ...

This time, too, I was in that group and was even appointed the leader. I boldly gave the order that we would hide in the schoolyard first, and like a proper leader, I ran off immediately. The others followed me and I bravely climbed the high fence of the school, jumped down on the other side and ran further around the corner of the school building.

Boom! I banged against something that wasn't usually there.

It was headteacher H, a burly man about one meter eighty-five tall.

"Where are you off to in such a hurry, there's no school today," he yelled at me from above. He looked at me contemptuously from head to toe and made me understand that I was a fool and a culprit who had done a terribly bad thing and was stupid enough to get caught. I was met with disapproval and contempt. His demeanor did not bode well, and it seemed as if he was only looking at me for more proof that I was actually an even naughtier boy who should be punished severely.

And headteacher H found it! His face darkened abruptly, as if he had seen the devil himself, when his Marxist, omniscient gaze spied my binoculars. With arrogant

satisfaction, he bent down to me and breathed hatefully into my face: "These, sunshine, are binoculars of the imperialist class enemy! We will investigate very carefully where you got this object from!"

Being eight years old, I did not quite realize the implications of this, but I was very afraid. Because no matter what it meant - it could not really be anything good. Triumphantly, the big man tore the corpus delicti from the eight-year-old's neck, the cord to which it was attached cutting me badly just before it broke.

"Stand up straight, boy!" he ordered me; and while he lectured me on what a miserable creature I was for daring to own binoculars from the class enemy, "it" gradually came back. Slowly, subtle at first, it crept up inside me and spread everywhere; every cell, every pore and every atom in me was now again seized by this powerlessness. I stood there stunned, helpless, and faster than I would have liked, this all turned into anger and hatred.

"Don't make such a stupid face, you snotty brat!" he shouted at me, covering me with memorized communist slogans, all of which had to do with the prophecy of defeating the class enemies of communism.

Although, in my childish mind, I could not understand the whole depth and scope of such declarations of principle more profoundly, I already knew from my school lessons about the communists' total claim to rule over the whole world, and about the fact that Marxism-Leninism ultimately wanted to sweep all "class enemies" from the face of the earth.

As if I were fixed by invisible steel ropes, I stood there for what seemed like an eternity and had to listen to commie slogans, which were mixed with digs about what a bad boy I was. At some point, after what felt like eight and three-quarters hours, I was dismissed by Dictator H. And of

course, the ordeal didn't end there. My parents were summoned to school, and with threats and insults, the school administration tried to force them to disclose the name of the counter-revolutionary, who had dared to give the child a pair of class-enemy binoculars.

In truth, however, it was really only about an old, shabby, olive-green pair of binoculars, on which nothing, really nothing pointed to the country they came from. It was simply a pair of binoculars ... and headteacher H was the hero of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) who, in the face of danger and in a gigantic battle, was able to pry away this vicious tool of imperialism from an eight-year-old ...

## **You must tell us!**

It was the beginning of the seventies and my natural aversion to this SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) state grew at the same time. But it was not only the "binoculars affair" that made the little boy doubt the totalitarian machinery of power. In fact, it was the unnatural demands that were placed on a person every day in real existing socialism.

Besides, one of these "tasks", which this system also imposed on us children, was formulated very clearly by one of our teachers. With "Children, you must tell us when mummy and daddy watch West German television at home", we were urged at school to blow the whistle on our parents if they dared to watch channels from the western part of Germany. It was the time of the Cold War, and citizens of the GDR were not actually allowed to watch West German TV. Of course, many did not comply with this directive - but then they also had to expect getting into trouble with the Stasi (state security service of the GDR).

But what kind of abnormal, sick mind did these rulers must have had to demand that the children entrusted to them incriminate their own parents?

At home, too, we watched the channels of the class enemy. But for every program we watched on West German TV, we were also given the "safety instruction" not to tell anyone at school under any circumstances.

Another event that evoked in me a natural disgust for the SED state, and at the same time a feeling of powerlessness, was the harassment of my uncle by the lackeys of this omnipresent surveillance state. Anyone who did not live within the state's standardized and prescribed guidelines was regarded as a hostile and negative force and had to be combated. This was also the case with my uncle Kani, who was completely devoted to music and played in a rock'n'roll band. But everything that came from the USA was opposed by the East German communists, and everything that looked like (individual) freedom was demonized. Of course, he didn't just have music in his blood - his whole attitude to life, his appearance, everything was rock and roll. But unfortunately for him, rock and roll was not part of the Party's collective consciousness. And independent people or individual thinking were certainly taboo. On the contrary: Individualism was perceived as a threat, and if a nonconformist way of life was discovered, it had to be readjusted and put back on track to follow the path set by the Party. By force if necessary. Kani was thus "discovered" and arrested in the middle of the street by People's Police officers in broad daylight and taken to the People's Police District Station. There, the comrades cut off his long, subversive hair, inspired by the rock'n'roll culture of the class enemy. Just like that.

People were treated like shit by this state.

# Satisfaction

It wasn't that I went frequently to my uncle Kani's house as a child, before he broke up with my father's sister. But on my few visits to William Shakespeare Street, he did one thing above all: he infected me with a craving for riotous music. I was particularly taken with the Rolling Stones at the time. It was indescribable what the song "Satisfaction" triggered in me. The power, the energy and the cocky manner of Jagger & Co. took me on a path of inner freedom - far away from the predefined uniform culture of the artist comrades of the German Democratic Republic. The only stupid thing was that I could rarely hear the Stones on the radio and even less on TV. The only possibility was Beat Club or Disco '71 with Ilja Richter. But whenever I got to see Mick Jagger on West German TV, while sitting in an armchair in front of the TV set, the left nine-and-a-half-year-old leg twitched back and forth in the living room together with the right nine-and-a-half-year-old leg. Unfortunately, it was all completely asynchronous and erratic.

But that didn't bother me.

And so, from then on I sat waiting in front of the television every Saturday late in the afternoon to watch Disco '71 on ZDF (West German broadcaster). My father sat there too. In front of the same television set. But he wasn't waiting for the Stones. He was watching the Sports Show on ARD (West German broadcaster). But I was not interested in that at all. Especially not soccer! Since our black-and-white set couldn't show two channels at the same time, I had to wait until my father turned over. I was bored to death, and while my father was enjoying the Bundesliga soccer teams, my left and right leg were working out that together they were actually nineteen years old. I knew that at nineteen, it