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East German Journalists and the *Wende*:

A history of the collapse and transformation of socialist journalism in Germany

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by

Morgan Morille Schupbach Guzman

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor David Sabeau, Chair

This dissertation utilizes archival sources and interviews to examine the transformation of the journalism profession in East Germany from the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) through the unification of the two German states. During this period of dramatic political and social upheaval, East German journalists navigated the divide between socialist journalism of the GDR and democratic journalism of the Federal Republic. By embedding the history of this professional transformation within a broader narrative of the history of the collapse of communism in Germany and Eastern Europe, this dissertation identifies how the actions of journalists were largely determined by outside forces. Socialist journalism in East Germany was envisioned as a means to use the media to control the public, but in practice the

model primarily succeeding in controlling the journalists. As a result, the profession was at the mercy of larger social and geo-political tensions and was hampered by persistent and lingering structures of control that delayed the ability of journalists to undertake any substantive efforts of reform. However, once those structures eroded, there was a brief window where journalists were freed to reform the profession, and many envisioned a future for a democratic socialist journalism that embraced journalistic freedoms but held true to socialist principles of equality and social justice. These ideas were cut short by the rapid implementation of the Unification. West German publishing giants were able to quickly secure control of the East German press landscape, and Christian Democratic Union leadership in both East and West Germany ensured that West German broadcasting structures were expanded to the newly added Eastern German states. As a result, the journalists of the former GDR were left to again adhere to norms and structures imposed from outside. However, there was a significant population of East German journalists who were able to navigate the divide between the two regimes and adapt to the new conditions of the unification, utilizing elements of their East German background and training in their new careers in unified Germany.

The dissertation of Morgan Morille Schupbach Guzman is approved

Peter Baldwin

Ivan T. Berend

Gail Kligman

David Sabeau, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Daniel, my parents Richard and Viviane, my son Henry, and to the little one on the way. Thank you for your sacrifice, patience, and support. I could not have done any of this if it was not for you. Thank you for encouraging me to follow my dreams. I love you!

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VITA

EDUCATION

- 2004 B.A. *cum laude* Political Science
B.A. *cum laude* German Culture and Commerce
University of California, Davis
- 2008 M.A. German and European Studies
Georgetown University: School of Foreign Service

FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS

- 2000 Edward Frank Kraft Scholarship for Freshman
University of California, Davis
- 2000 – 2004 Dean’s List: Six Quarters
University of California, Davis
- 2002 – 2003 University of California Honors Study Abroad Program
Free University, Berlin
- 2008 Jill A. Hopper Award of Excellence
Georgetown University
- 2009 – 2014 Chancellor’s Prize Fellowship
University of California, Los Angeles
- 2010 Summer Polish Language Program
Jagiellonian University, Krakow Poland
- 2010 – 2011 FLAS Fellowship for Polish Language Study
Center for European and Eurasian Studies, University of
California, Los Angeles
- 2012 – 2013 Millennium Graduate Fellowship
University of California, Los Angeles
- 2014 -2015 History Department Fellowship
University of California, Los Angeles

PUBLICATIONS AND TALKS

- 2007 “Political Persecution and Imprisonment in Thuringia under the SED” and “Stasi in Thuringia”
- Brochures published by the *Thüringer Landesbeauftragten für die Stasi Unterlagen*: Erfurt, 2007 (under the alias: Morgan Morille Schupbach)
- December 2011 Guest Lecture: "German Responses to the French Revolution"
University of California, Los Angeles
- October, 2013 Guest Lecture: “The Holocaust, History and Memory: Toward an Aryan Europe”

Introduction

On September 9, 1989, a group of prominent East German dissidents signed an appeal to establish a “New Forum.” As socialist countries across the Soviet Bloc experimented with reform, the members of the New Forum were tired of the East German government’s hard-line policies, and they were discouraged by the ruling party’s silence in the face of growing domestic unrest. With this document they hoped to inspire the East German people and government to engage in an open dialogue about the major issues facing the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The frustrated artists and intellectuals who banded together to create the New Forum began their appeal with the observation that,

Communication between the state and society has obviously broken down in our country. Evidence of this is widespread disillusionment, to the point of withdrawal into the private sphere or mass emigration. Elsewhere, refugee movements of this size are caused by poverty, hunger, and violence. None of that exists here.

This disturbed relationship between state and society is paralyzing our creative potential and preventing the solution of existing local and global problems. We are wasting our time in sullen passivity, while there are more important things we could be doing for our lives, for our country, and for humanity.¹

This appeal placed the “disturbed relationship between state and society” at the center of the crisis facing the GDR. Over months and years tensions had been rising within East Germany. A number of issues including economic stagnation, defiantly hard-line policies, and authoritarian control methods had finally reached their climax and pushed thousands of East Germans to flee the country (either through the recently opened border between Hungary and Austria or through asylum at the West German embassies of the GDR’s socialist neighbor countries). As tensions

¹ Bärbel Bohley et al., “Founding Appeal of the New Forum,” September 9, 1989, GDHI, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=2875. The GDHI is a valuable resource of important documents from 500 years of German history, provided both in the original German and with their English translation. This project is the product of the German Historical Institute, of Washington DC.

reached their boiling point, the state-controlled socialist media remained frustratingly silent and continued to publish and broadcast the usual party propaganda messages. Meanwhile, news broadcasts from West Germany found their way to the television and radio antennas of the East German public. The result was a dissonance between the information about the crisis that came from the West and a deafening silence on the part of the domestic press. This only deepened the frustrations of many of the East German people and eroded any remaining trust they had in the party in power, the Socialist Unity Party (SED).

The crisis and the revolution it unleashed in East Germany were part of a broader cascade of events that occurred across socialist East/Central Europe and the Soviet Union, a cascade let loose by a number of interconnected and dynamic geopolitical and domestic tensions and incidents. At the center of the crisis in East Germany was the socialist media, both a symptom of the dysfunction of the East German state and a symbol of the failures of the socialist ruling party. This dissertation examines the history of socialist journalism within East Germany during the crisis and collapse of the German Democratic Republic in the late 1980s and follows the transition to democracy and unification with West Germany in the early 1990s.

By focusing on the profession of journalism and its transition from one system to the other, this dissertation explores how journalists responded to the shifting political environment. Structures, mechanisms, and practices of control and censorship pervaded the profession and persisted even after the leadership of the ruling party changed hands and the new government professed a *Wende*, or 180-degree turn, in policy. This belated and incomplete attempt to introduce Soviet style reforms of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) into the East German political landscape extended to the journalists, who were only able to experiment with autonomy and democratic practices after severing ties to the ruling party. Once free of party

influence, the profession underwent a dynamic process of reinvention in the early months of 1990 as journalists tried to define for themselves the role of journalism in a post-socialist or reformed socialist state. But these experiments were cut short by the rapid implementation of the unification of the two German states, forcing former socialist journalists to adapt to the new economic and political conditions of the West German media or exit the profession. Those who remained were able to profit from their formal education and experiences as writers to adapt to the new journalistic paradigm. What follows explores how some journalists experienced the rapid changes in conditions of work and adapted more-or-less swiftly to political and economic landscapes they could hardly have imagined on the eve of the *Wende*.

Structure, Sources, and Methodology of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Each of the first four chapters focuses on a specific period in the transformation of the East German media and each is framed around a central problem or event in that period. The first chapter grounds the dissertation in the pre-history of the revolution. It is structured around a scandal that erupted in East Germany in the winter of 1988, when the General Secretary of the SED, Erich Honecker, removed a popular Soviet magazine, *Sputnik*, from domestic circulation. This harsh act of overt censorship of a communist publication unleashed a massive outcry in the East German public. Through close analysis of this scandal, I describe some of the tensions that threatened the legitimacy of the ruling socialist party in the late 1980s prompted by pressure exerted by West German media, the open conflict between Erich Honecker's and Mikhail Gorbachev's visions for the future, censorship, and growing dissatisfaction with the East German media. The scandal highlights how precarious the ruling socialist party's claim to legitimacy was in the year leading up to the

democratic upheavals of 1989 and shows how the failures of the domestic press were at the center of the concerns of the growing opposition movement.

Chapter Two follows the ruling party's response to the growing geo-political and domestic crisis in the fall of 1989 and the impact it had on the socialist media. This chapter is centered on Egon Krenz's tenure as General Secretary, from his seizure of power in the fall of 1989 through his resignation in December. Although Krenz tried to introduce Soviet-style reforms to the East German state, his professed "Wende" was less of an about-face than a minor realignment in policy. Although media reform was at the center of the SED's new platform, change was difficult to effect so quickly. This chapter identifies certain persistent and lingering structures of control that remained in place during the Krenz regime, preventing the East German press from undergoing much of a transformation in the few months at its disposal.

Chapter Three follows the brief period from December 1989 through March 1990, when journalists and their institutions were finally free to sever ties with the ruling party and embrace newly introduced freedoms. Although some journalists and media scholars began to imagine a new style of journalism for an alternative East Germany—no longer authoritarian socialist, but not yet market capitalist—the political reality of impending unification with West Germany put an end to any of those schemes. Rather quickly, journalists and media institutions began to compete with each other or succumb to West German media interventions. This chapter shows how some eastern journalists briefly experimented with the idea of a "Third Way" for the GDR along with leftist opposition parties and the reformed ruling party with little support by popular opinion or political reality.

Chapter Four continues to follow the developments presented in Chapter Three, examining debates about the role of East German media in a unified German space and focusing

on the Media Control Council, a watchdog agency with representatives from across the East German political spectrum. The Council was formed in February 1990 to serve as an “ombudsman” for East German media institutions and professionals. The Media Control Council provides a particularly useful lens to understand the challenges facing East Germany in the spring and summer of 1990. Built on the ideals of the reform era, it was a pluralistic and egalitarian organization tasked with overseeing the transformation of the East German media. However, much like the “Third Way,” it was cut short by political developments, only extending the hope of East German self-determination past the point of political reality.

These first four chapters utilize a number of sources and materials to present the history of the transformation of the journalism profession. The foundation for the analysis comes from documents in the federal archives (*Bundesarchiv*) in Lichterfelde Germany, housing the official records of the SED (Socialist Unity Party, the ruling party of the GDR), the VDJ (the East German journalist’s union), mass organizations (like the youth organization, FDJ, and the East German central trade union, FDGB), and the ADN (the East German news service). I have also examined documents from the archives of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (known as the Stasi Archive or by its German acronym, BStU),² which consist primarily of reports from official and unofficial informants placed within media organizations across East Germany. These informants collected information for the state’s vast secret police apparatus. The Stasi documents, however, only reveal limited information for the history of the GDR.³

² Some of these documents were gathered from the Berlin BStU archive, while others have been digitized and made available online, for these documents I will include the pertinent website information so that these documents can be found online.

³ The unreliability of official written sources is not limited to the GDR. This is a problem shared by scholars of socialism and communism across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In their

The documents of the SED and the state-socialist government were created and maintained for a specific audience. Under the Honecker regime, government officials had to be careful about the information they collected and presented to the party leadership for fear of angering the General Secretary.⁴ Although the documents tend toward “beautification,” or an overly rosy representation of events within East Germany, through careful reading they can still be utilized to probe the political reality of the GDR.⁵

Archives have their limitations, so I have used other sources particularly personal testimonies from important actors during this period to understand how events developed.⁶ These documents include published memoirs and interviews of journalists and East German political

book on the collectivization of the Romanian Peasantry, Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery discuss at length the challenges of working with the official written sources of the Romanian Communist Party and the Securitate. They include important discussions about the strategic use of language and the internalization of party propaganda and postulates. Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 18–26.

⁴ In Egon Krenz’s memoir he recounts how Honecker unleashed a tirade about an FDJ (East Germany’s mass youth organization) report that was submitted to the Politbüro, “Niemand habe bisher gewagt, so etwas dem Politbüro vorzulegen, erklärt Honecker sichtlich verärgert.” Egon Krenz, *Herbst ’89* (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1999), 140–141.

⁵ See Corey Ross, *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots: The Transformation of East Germany, 1945-65* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 11. As referenced by Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 18.

⁶ Of particular importance to Chapter Two are the memoirs of Günter Schabowski and Egon Krenz, (Krenz, *Herbst ’89*; Günter Schabowski, *Der Absturz* (Rowohlt, 1991).) I have also utilized the work of a number of scholars who have published interviews with East German journalists over the past 25 years. (Stefan Pannen, *Die Weiterleiter: Funktion und Selbstverständnis ostdeutscher Journalisten* (Köln: Verl. Wiss. und Politik, 1992); Renate Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?: Gespräche mit Journalistinnen und Journalisten der DDR* (München: Ölschläger, 1992); Bernd Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?: ehemalige Journalisten der DDR arbeiten ihre Vergangenheit auf* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: P. Lang, 1996); Angelika Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben: Journalistenbiographien und Medienstrukturen zu DDR-Zeiten und danach* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1999); Michael Meyen and Anke Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR* (Berlin: Panama-Verl., 2011); Dominic Boyer, *Spirit and System: Media, Intellectuals, and the Dialectic in Modern German Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2005); Willi Steul and DeutschlandRadio Berlin, *Genosse Journalist: eine Sendereihe im DeutschlandRadio Berlin* (Mainz: D. Kinzelbach, 1996).

figures conducted by West German social and political scientists and journalists. Like any other documents, such testimonies are constructed to reflect an individual experiences and perspectives and have to be contextualized and deconstructed in their turn. A third important documentary source for these chapters comes from period publications. In the past two years, the Berlin Federal Library in conjunction with the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* has uploaded nearly 50 years worth of digitized East German newspapers to the Internet. They include issues of three major East German publications, *Neues Deutschland*, *Berliner Zeitung*, and *Neue Zeit*, from the mid 1940s to the mid 1990s.⁷ This is a powerful research tool for the evolution of reporting and journalism in the GDR. There were also conversations within West and East German journalism periodicals that reflected upon each other that I also found useful.⁸ Finally, I have framed my discussion in the context of contemporary historical research on East German journalism, emerging already in the 1990s but gaining ever-new perspectives in the decade and half of the new century.⁹

⁷ The project is available online under the following web address: <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/>

⁸ These periodicals include the West German periodical *journalist*, and the East German journal, *Theorie und Praxis des sozialistischen Journalismus: Wissenschaftlich Hefte der Sektion Journalistik an der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig*, which in 1990 changed its name to *Diskurs: Leipziger Hefte für Kommunikationsforschung und Journalistik, Sektion Journalistik der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig*.

⁹ These works include, Gunter Holzweissig, *Zensur Ohne Zensor: Die SED-Informationsdiktatur* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1997); Gunter Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei: Eine Mediengeschichte Der DDR* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002); Joachim Nölte, “Chronik medienpolitischer Ereignisse in der DDR,” in *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien?: Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, ed. Werner Claus (Berlin: Vistas, 1991), 17–116; Martin Sabrow, *Skandal und Diktatur: Formen öffentlicher Empörung im NS-Staat und in der DDR* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004); Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*; Heinz Geggel and Ulrich Bürger, *Das sagen wir natürlich so nicht!: Donnerstag-Argus bei Herrn Geggel* (Berlin: Dietz, 1990); Arnulf Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR: vom Ende der Ära Honecker bis zu den Volkskammerwahlen im März 1990* (Bochum: N. Brockmeyer, 1990); Peter Hoff, “‘Continuity and Change’: Television in the GDR from Autumn 1989 to Summer 1990,” in *After the Wall: Broadcasting in Germany*, ed. Tana Wollen, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith,

The final chapter of this dissertation, based on five extended interviews of former East German journalists I conducted in the spring of 2013, shifts the perspective and departs from the narrative form of the first chapters.¹⁰ I have placed these interviews along with published interview collections to analyze how journalists experienced the transition from one regime to the other and how memories have shifted over time.¹¹ Although the interviews cover much of the same period of the first four chapters, they offer different perspectives on the collapse of the GDR and the transition to the new journalistic environment in unified Germany, and they show how journalists were able to establish continuity between the old world of the GDR and the new world of the new Federal Republic. The journalists in the interviews were able to adapt to the new conditions, learn from mistakes and shortcomings, and utilize elements of their training to facilitate their post-Wende careers. By incorporating a range of interview collections published over the past twenty-five years, it is possible to see how memories and narrative construction shifted over time and how the Wende was reconfigured from a fundamental rupture in the lives of these individuals to an element of long careers that began in one world and continued through the next. Taken together these two narratives of the collapse, the historical and the personal, present a complicated account of a profession of individuals whose actions were structured and determined by outside forces.

and British Film Institute (London: British Film Institute, 1991), 11–26; Michael Haller, Klaus Puder, and Jochen Schlevoigt, eds., *Presse Ost, Presse West: Journalismus im vereinten Deutschland* (Berlin: Vistas, 1995).

¹⁰ These interviews were conducted in conjunction with UCLA’s Institutional Review Board. All questionnaires and communications with subjects were approved prior to implementation, and all participants were informed of their rights and were given forms of consent to sign.

¹¹ This chapter also includes a discussion of the strengths and limitations of personal testimonies and interviews as historical sources.

Important Themes

Throughout the dissertation a number of important themes emerge that follow the journalists during the process of transformation. The first of these recurrent themes is the tension between external controls and journalistic self-determination. Although Lenin envisioned socialist journalism as a tool to “educate” and control the masses, in the reality of the German Democratic Republic, socialist journalism only succeeded in controlling the journalists. The structures of censorship were so pervasive and internalized, that journalists themselves became one of the largest factors inhibiting reform of the profession. When they were finally released from party authority, there was a brief period when the journalists discovered a professional consciousness and tried to establish for themselves a path forward, but this process was cut short by the unification of the two German states and journalists were left to adhere yet again to norms and structures imposed from the outside. The struggle between conformity and self-determination was carried from one world to the next as East German journalists struggled to carve out areas of independence, autonomy, and identity within the broader media structures.

A second major theme is the centrality of the media to government control. Throughout the period under investigation, the ruling parties fought to control either the practice or structure of the media. For the SED, the media was “the strongest weapon of the party,” and the media policy of the state was central to its strategy of authority and control. For the democratic parties, the media was an essential component of the “fourth estate,” and central to the functioning of civil society. Within the process of transition as politicians and media professionals debated the future of the profession, the proposed structure of the media carried with it important elements of each party’s vision for the future of East German society as a whole. Whether socialist journalism, democratic journalism, or some third variant that combined the two, the media was

central to the legitimacy of the preferred political structure, and the battles over the future of the GDR hinged on the structure and function of the media.

A third overarching theme is the persistent and lasting impact of lingering structures, practices, and problems from the socialist period. Journalists were slow to adapt to the changing conditions around them because the profession was saddled with long-standing and pervasive mechanisms of internalized control and technological and economic inefficiencies from the Honecker era. These problems lasted long after the aging General Secretary was ushered out of office. As unification was being brokered, the East German media was mired in debt and reliant on obsolete technology and a dysfunctional production and distribution network. These problems were compounded by inexperience with market conditions and political and economic crises that prevented East German actors from responding quickly to rapidly evolving situations. The East Germans were incapacitated by the confluence of all these issues, and the result was the rapid wholesale adoption of West German structures through the unification.

The fourth and final theme deals with the essential role the West German media played in shaping and framing events on the ground in East Germany. Through the use of broadcast waves, the West German media were an ever-present participant in the events as they unfolded in the GDR. The media policies and practices under the Honecker regime were formulated in direct response to the presence of “enemy imperialist propaganda.” Censorship was justified under the threat of West German “propagandists,” who the SED feared could twist any domestic acknowledgement of weakness into a weapon against the East Germans. After unification, West German companies were free to enter the market and served as both benefactors and competitors for the East German press. It is impossible to understand this transition without understanding the interplay between the East and West German media.

At the center of all of these themes is control, either in the form of journalists' control over their own professional destinies, or political party control over the structure and function of the media or censorship, or a battle for dominance between a foreign and domestic press. The debates arising from the role of the media during the transition from state-socialism to western-style democracy reveal how essential journalism and media were to that society's self-understanding and how crucial they are to power dynamics within both authoritarian and democratic regimes. The important function of journalism has had the result that the history of socialist journalism has been highly politicized within Germany. Much of the historiography of the profession is mired in Cold War language of totalitarianism, framing socialist journalists in the language of perpetrators, complicit in propping up the authoritarian East German state.¹² This was only compounded by a number of public scandals in the 1990s and 2000s involving a number of East German journalists revealed to have worked for the Stasi, East Germany's massive domestic surveillance service.¹³ The goal of this dissertation is to take this politicized

¹² Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*; Holzweissig, *Zensur Ohne Zensor*; Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*; Pannen, *Die Weiterleiter*; Hans-Joachim Föller, "Abwehr Der Vergangenheit. Methoden Der Beeinflussung Der Urteilsbildung Im öffentlichen Raum Durch Ehemalige-SED Journalisten," in *Agenda DDR-Forschung*, ed. Heiner Timmermann, Dokumente Und Schriften Der Europäischen Akademie Otzenhausen 112 (Münster: Lit, 2005); For example see, Irene Charlotte Streul, "Die Umgestaltung Des Mediensystems In Ostdeutschland: Strukturwandel Und Medienpolitische Neuorientierung In Rundfunk Und Presse Seit 1989," *Aus Politik Und Zeitgeschichte* B40/93 (1993): 36–46.

¹³ "MDR Erfolgreiche Stasi," *Der Spiegel*, November 12, 2001, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-20660205.html>; "ARD Stasi-Spitzel Bleibt Beschäftigt," *Der Spiegel*, February 20, 2006, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-45977900.html>; "Der Ehrenrat hat gesprochen," *Der Tagesspiegel Online*, November 27, 2008; Florian Gathmann, "Ost-Journalisten Und Die Stasi: Große Bühne, Tiefer Fall," *Spiegel Online*, April 5, 2008, sec. Politik, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/ost-journalisten-und-die-stasi-grosse-buehne-tiefer-fall-a-545287.html>; Jörg Schallenberg, "Aktenfund: Neue Stasi-Vorwürfe Belasten Hagen Boßdorf Schwer," *Spiegel Online*, April 13, 2007, sec. Sport, <http://www.spiegel.de/sport/sonst/aktenfund-neue-stasi-vorwuerfe-belasten-hagen-bossdorf-schwer-a-477075.html>; "Stasi-Vorwürfe: ORB-Chefredakteur Boßdorf Entlastet," *Spiegel Online*, January 29, 2002, sec. Kultur, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/stasi-vorwuerfe->

conversation about the origins and transformation of East German journalists and ground it in historical context and individual experience. Rather than look at the guilt, complicity, or failures of East German journalists, this project seeks to understand the structural, political, and professional factors that shaped the behaviors of socialist trained journalists both within the GDR and in the post-GDR world. This investigation explores a profession that responded and adapted to intense political, cultural, and economic pressures, and illustrates what happens when a career bridges two worlds.

Finally, it is important to note that the East German journalists were not alone in this transformation. Socialist journalism in East Germany offered only one variation among many East/Central European interpretations of Lenin's model of the press. Socialist journalism was imposed across the Soviet bloc and shared the characteristics of censorship and party loyalty. While the focus of this dissertation is on the events that occurred within the East German space, throughout this text I will draw some broader comparisons and insights to events happening across East Central Europe. In the conclusion, I will return to the four themes that I have identified in this introduction and will place them in the context of the larger transformation of

orb-chefredakteur-bossdorf-entlastet-a-179765.html; "Spionage: Stasi Bespitzelte WDR-Journalisten," *Spiegel Online*, May 8, 2007, sec. Kultur, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/spionage-stasi-bespitzelte-wdr-journalisten-a-481669.html>; "Stasi-Skandal Bei 'Berliner Zeitung': Journalist Bespitzelte Studenten," *Spiegel Online*, March 28, 2008, sec. Politik, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/stasi-skandal-bei-berliner-zeitung-journalist-bespitzelte-studenten-a-544090.html>; "'Berliner Zeitung': Weiterer Redakteur Gibt Stasi-Tätigkeit Zu," *Spiegel Online*, March 31, 2008, sec. Politik, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/berliner-zeitung-weiterer-redakteur-gibt-stasi-taetigkeit-zu-a-544438.html>; "'Berliner Zeitung': 'Die Stasi Hielt Journalisten Besonders Geeignet Für Spionagezwecke,'" *Spiegel Online*, April 1, 2008, sec. Politik, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/berliner-zeitung-die-stasi-hielt-journalisten-besonders-geeignet-fuer-spionagezwecke-a-544613.html>; "Till Meyer: Journalist Mit IM-Vergangenheit," *Spiegel Online*, December 2, 2008, sec. Politik, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/till-meyer-journalist-mit-im-vergangenheit-a-592743.html>; DeutschlandRadio Berlin and Marx, Peter, "Spitzel im Auftrag des Volkes," in *Genosse Journalist: eine Sendereihe im DeutschlandRadio Berlin*, by Willi Steul (Mainz: D. Kinzelbach, 1996), 69–75.

socialist media in East/Central Europe. This will help situate the findings of this dissertation in the context of East/Central European transition out of state-socialism.

Chapter One: The *Sputnik*-Crisis (1988-1989)

Introduction

On Saturday, November 19, 1988, the front page of *Neues Deutschland*, East Germany's largest daily newspaper, displayed a photograph of Nicolae Ceausescu and Erich Honecker engaged in a "friendly handshake" beneath the headline: "The GDR and Romania will further deepen their cooperation."¹ During Ceausescu's two-day visit to the German Democratic Republic, Honecker bestowed the Romanian President and General Secretary the highest order of merit in East Germany, the Order of Karl Marx. The award commemorated Ceausescu's 70th birthday, and recognized his contribution to developing and fostering East German and Romanian friendship. The visit and award indicated the East German government's commitment to hard-line authoritarian socialism (in opposition to Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* [openness] and *perestroika* [restructuring] in the Soviet Union). However, the news item that drew the most attention that day was a short statement on the next page, under the headline: "Notice from the Press Office of the Ministry for Post- and Telecommunications:"

As stated by the Press Office of the Ministry for Post- and Telecommunications, the magazine *Sputnik* has been removed from the mailing-distribution-list. It does not provide any contribution to the consolidation of German-Soviet friendship; instead it provides distortive contributions on history.²

This brief proclamation announced the de-facto ban of *Sputnik*, an internationally distributed, Soviet, *Reader's-Digest*-style magazine published in Moscow and exported to Germany. The magazine's cancellation triggered a massive public outcry in East Germany and sparked one of

¹ "DDR und Rumänien werden ihre Zusammenarbeit weiter vertiefen," *Neues Deutschland*, November 19, 1988, 274 edition, sec. Front Page, DDR-Presse ZEFYS.

² "Mitteilung der Pressestelle des Ministeriums für Post und Fernmeldewesen," *Neues Deutschland*, November 19, 1988, 274 edition, DDR-Presse ZEFYS.

the largest scandals in the country's history. The objections, both from party loyalists and oppositionists, touched on a number of tensions that were building within East German society. In igniting these tensions, the *Sputnik* scandal provided an opportunity for East Germans to articulate and communicate a growing list of grievances and concerns for the country's future. These expressions reveal multiple pressures and strains, which amplified one another under the surface of East German society. These tensions can be loosely categorized into four groups: the tension between overt and covert censorship; the tension between Honecker's and Gorbachev's visions for the future of socialism; the problems posed by West German media penetration into East Germany; and the escalating strain between the East German people and their state. None of these pressures existed in isolation. They were interconnected, inciting one another and generating the complex dynamics that would eventually bring the GDR to the point of collapse.

On the surface this was a media scandal, one that revealed the disparity between overt and covert censorship. In banning *Sputnik*, the East German government engaged in a relatively rare act of *conspicuous* censorship. While there was no true free press in the GDR, censorship in East Germany was traditionally more inconspicuous and relied on structural and subtle methods of restricting the media and exerting ideological control. There was no East German Censor. In fact, Article 27 of the East German constitution guaranteed the freedom of the press and broadcast media, as well as the freedom of opinion. However, in order to maintain ideological control of the media, the media institutions were integrated into the political apparatus of the party. The Socialist Unity Party (SED) controlled the news, press, and broadcast institutions through a system of suggestions, directives, and understood expectations. The uproar and public outcry unleashed by the *Sputnik*-ban revealed the limit of what East Germans were willing to tacitly accept or tolerate when it came to the state's ideological control of the media.

A second tension revealed by the *Sputnik* episode, was the discordance between Honecker's hard-line authoritarian policies and Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union. For many scholars and contemporary observers, the *Sputnik*-ban communicated a clear repudiation by Honecker of Gorbachev's policy of glasnost and signaled the end to any hopes of perestroika style reforms under the existing SED leadership. After decades of deference and servility towards the Soviet Union, the reforms introduced under Gorbachev posed a difficult problem for the Honecker government, which had no interest in "openness" (glasnost) or "restructuring" (perestroika). The *Sputnik*-ban revealed the tense relations between Berlin and Moscow and the impact of Soviet glasnost on East German domestic developments.

A third and similar tension revealed by the scandal positioned the East German media and its government between the East and the West. The East German government worked diligently to shape and control the information presented by its news media professionals to the East German public. And while the government was able to place import bans on West German print media (as well other publications from the non-socialist West), there was no feasible way to stop West German radio and television broadcasts from reaching East German antennas. This tension between the state-controlled East German media and the availability of Western "enemy" broadcasts made the flow of information difficult to control. While the East German government was able to stop the domestic distribution of the *Sputnik* magazine, they could not prevent West German news anchors from discussing the magazine, its contents, or the political implications of instituting such a ban. As such, the ban revealed the potential of the Western news media to influence and incite the East German public, as well as the problems that this potential posed for the East German decision makers. Further compounding the tension between the GDR and Western media was the reaction of the East German public to the use of censorship against ideas

coming from the Soviet Union. While the state justified the censorship of Western media by raising the specter of the imperialist enemy, the East German public proved hesitant to accept similar tactics directed at East Germany's big brother, the Soviet Union.

Finally, the *Sputnik*-scandal revealed the crumbling relationship between the public and the state. The *Sputnik*-ban occurred in November of 1988, a year prior to the dramatic events that would eventually topple the SED and the GDR. As a result, it is hard not to view the scandal without seeing the Monday-Demonstrations, the massive emigration wave, and the crowds swarming the Brandenburg gate on the horizon. For some historians the *Sputnik*-scandal marks the beginning of the end, or at least an important and illustrative signpost on the path towards the collapse of the East German state.³ It is true that, within the reactions to the scandal, one can identify signs of the impending crisis only a year away. These tensions reveal the erosion of trust between the public and the state, as well as the disintegration of party unity. However, these simmering problems were not yet powerful enough to boil over into revolution. While there were a few instances of small illegal public protest actions, frustrated citizens channeled their rage into submitting state-sanctioned petitions to their party and organization leadership.⁴ Through these

³ See for example: Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*, 147; Sabrow, *Skandal und Diktatur*, 244.

⁴ "Hinweise zu einigen bedeutsamen Aspekten der Reaktion der Bevölkerung im Zusammenhang mit der Mitteilung über die Streichung der Zeitschrift 'Sputnik' von der Postzeitungsvertriebsliste der DDR" (ZAIG, November 30, 1988), MfS ZAIG 4244, 1-7, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-11-30_ZAIG/_tabelle.html?nn=2635460>p=2671856_list%253D2](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-11-30_ZAIG/_tabelle.html?nn=2635460>p=2671856_list%253D2;); "Vorkommnis an der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena," November 25, 1988, DY 30/2181/02, 115-117, Das Bundesarchiv; "Information über Reaktionen und Meinungsäußerungen zur Streichung der sowjetischen Zeitschrift 'Sputnik' von der Postzeitungsliste von Mitarbeitern des Verkehrs und Nachrichtenwesens" (Hauptabteilung XIX, November 25, 1988), MfS HA XIX 4818, 26-30, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU),

actions part of the public, at least, confronted the state on its own terms; but they were not yet ready to challenge outright the legitimacy of the state itself.

The goal of this chapter is to use the *Sputnik*-ban and its aftermath to examine the tensions outlined above, in order to reveal the complicated and dynamic role the media played in the policy and society of the German Democratic Republic in the late 1980s. The *Sputnik* ban exacerbated existing tensions between the public and the state, Honecker and Gorbachev, the East and the West, it helped the public clarify and codify frustrations and turn them into demands for reform, it turned the tacit social contract allowing the state to censor and control the media into a point of contention and thrust the problems within the state-run media into the center of the demands for political reform.

Literature Review

There has been no monograph devoted solely to the *Sputnik* episode. However, the scandal's ability to highlight existing tensions and problems within East German society on the eve of the revolution has made the *Sputnik* episode a popular illustration for scholars interested in the collapse of the GDR, the popular uprising, and the transformation of Germany in 1989/90. As a result, scholars tend to present the *Sputnik* episode as evidence of a larger argument at the center of their work.

http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-11-25_Reaktionen/_tabelle.html?nn=2635460>p=2671862_list%253D5; Zentralrat der FDJ, "Information über erste Reaktionen von Jugendlichen auf die Mitteilung über das Streichen der Monatszeitschrift 'Sputnik' von der Postzeitungsliste," November 24, 1988, DY30/IV2/2/2.039/237, Das Bundesarchiv; "Information über Reaktionen von DSF-Gruppen und Einzelpersonen zur Streichung des 'Sputnik' von der Postzeitungsliste" (Hauptabteilung XX, December 16, 1988), MfS XX/AKG 1485; 63-65, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-12-16_Reaktionen/_tabelle.html?nn=2635460>p=2671850_list%253D4.

Some historians see the *Sputnik* ban as evidence of Honecker's rejection of glasnost and perestroika, and view the scandal in terms of the relationship between East Germany and the Soviet Union. Charles Maier, for example, described the scandal in these terms in his book *Dissolution*.⁵ The media historian, Gunter Holzweissig also saw the scandal as a rejection of Gorbachev's reforms, but he went further to claim that it is that rejection that directly led to democratic revolution in 1989.⁶ For Holzweissig, the scandal exemplified Honecker's strong hand in dictating media policy in the GDR, and he was not the only scholar that shared that view.⁷ Franca Wolff in her book, *Glasnost erst kurz vor Sendeschluss*, presented the scandal as an egregious example of censorship in the GDR and as evidence of Honecker's single-handed control of media policy at the end of his tenure.⁸ For the social psychologist Angelika Holterman, the *Sputnik* scandal exemplified Honecker's adherence to anti-fascism as an essential element of his own identity and experience, and its importance to the ideology of the German Democratic Republic.⁹

The *Sputnik* scandal served as a useful case study for Martin Sabrow, who used the incident to illustrate his argument that the GDR was a "Consensus Dictatorship" (*Konsenzdiktatur*), which legitimized its power by claiming the consensus from below. Sabrow defined the *Sputnik*-scandal as an "Affirmative-scandal," which resembled scandals that emerged under the Third Reich (except in this instance, the inviolability of the *Führer* was supplanted by the inviolability of Socialism). Sabrow argued that the public indignation surrounding the

⁵ Charles S. Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 122.

⁶ Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*, 147.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 147–156.

⁸ Franca Wolff, *Glasnost erst kurz vor Sendeschluss: die letzten Jahre des DDR-Fernsehens (1985-1989/90)* (Böhlau Verlag Köln Weimar, 2002).

⁹ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 25–33.

scandal was not directed at the idea of the socialist project, but rather its mismanagement in the hands of the party. Citing the thousands of petitions submitted to government organizations, Sabrow tied the public's outrage to the government's handling of the scandal; arguing that the people were more upset with the management of the scandal than the subject of the scandal itself. The public's outrage was directed at how the state handled the scandal, not with the inherent subject of the scandal itself.¹⁰ This differed from the types of "fundamental" scandals that led to the collapse of the state in 1989, where the public outcry could no longer be channeled through official mechanisms for dissent but rather challenged the legitimacy of the state itself.

Oliver Werner also centered his analysis on petitions and undertook a close analysis of 88 petitions submitted to the government of the district Leipzig. He arrived at a similar conclusion to Sabrow, arguing that the people chose to direct their dissent "inward" through legal and legitimate expression of dissent as opposed to outward public but illegal forms of protest. As such, Werner saw the *Sputnik*-Scandal as marking the end of the pre-Wende era; it was a moment balanced on the precipice, where the state-mechanisms for control began to unravel.¹¹ Laura Bradley on the other hand, looked at the way that the *Sputnik*-ban inspired alternative forms of illegal protest. She examined the way in which artists expressed their dissent through artistic media like music and poetry. In her analysis of these alternative forms of protest, she argued that the state had violated a tacit social contract with the public, and the expressions of dissent delimited the degree to which the public was willing to accept state censorship.¹² Each of

¹⁰ Sabrow, *Skandal und Diktatur*, 28–29, 244–257.

¹¹ Oliver Werner, "Die 'Sputnik' - Krise in der SED 1988/89," in *Revolution und Transformation in der DDR 1989/90*, ed. Günther Heydemann, Gunther Mai, and Werner Müller (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999).

¹² Laura Bradley, "Challenging Censorship through Creativity: Responses to the Ban on Sputnik in the GDR," *The Modern Language Review* 108, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 519–38, doi:10.5699/modelangrevi.108.2.0519.

these analyses identified important components of the ban, but they were limited to the scholars' specific view of East German society in the late 1980s. By looking at a number of tensions at the heart of the *Sputnik* scandal, this chapter will ground the scandal in the political, and social context of the late 1980s, thereby providing an alternative perspective and insight into the media landscape of East Germany on the eve of the Wende.

Historical Context

The *Sputnik* affair occurred during a particularly tense period in East German history. During this period, Soviet reforms challenged the inner stability and authority of the East German state. The geopolitical tensions building across the Soviet bloc and the Western world shaped the political landscape within the GDR. To understand what happened with *Sputnik*, it must first be situated within the historical context of the period.

Glasnost

It is impossible to understand the impetus behind the decision to ban the popular Soviet magazine *Sputnik* without first examining the conflict between Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union and the media policy of the SED under Honecker. When Gorbachev was named General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1985, he spearheaded a number of reforms under the banner of "perestroika," or restructuring, targeted at revitalizing the entrenched party bureaucracy. Over the ensuing years, one facet of these reforms gained increasing importance and prominence both within the Soviet Union and abroad. The concept of "glasnost," or openness, encouraged the public to join the process of perestroika by means of a more open media policy. During a party conference in Moscow in December of 1984, Gorbachev described the importance of glasnost in the following terms: "Widespread, timely, open information is evidence of trust in the people, respect for their reason and feelings, and their

ability to sort out these or those events for themselves.” He argued that glasnost, “raises the activity of the masses,” and that greater openness would serve as a check on “bureaucratic distortions.”¹³ As Joseph Gibbs argues in his book, *Gorbachev’s Glasnost*, Gorbachev never intended glasnost to mean true freedom of the press, and Gorbachev never spoke of glasnost in those terms; rather, the policy intended to expand the parameters of acceptable media coverage as well as the discretion of news editors.¹⁴

This newly expanded playing field was reflected in the Soviet media of the late 1980s and can be seen for example by the shifting focus of the magazine in question: *Sputnik*. *Sputnik* magazine was styled on *Reader’s Digest* and contained articles and book excerpts touching on a broad range of subjects. The magazine was created for the purpose of foreign propaganda, and articles were selected and curated to fulfill that objective. The goal was to introduce the foreign public to the art, literature, politics, and achievements of the Soviet people. For example, a February 1983 editorial titled, “Learning from History,” targeted the new presidential administration of Ronald Reagan, claiming that Americans were like the French Bourbons: “they have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.” America had returned to a policy of threats and demands, whereas the Soviet Union offered a seat at the negotiation table.¹⁵ Other editorials from that year discussed the benefits of Socialism for mankind, innovations in environmentalism, and disarmament.¹⁶ However in the late 1980s, the magazine mirrored the political shift within the Soviet Union, and it quickly switched course fervently taking up the banner of glasnost and

¹³ Translated excerpts of this speech appear in Joseph Gibbs, *Gorbachev’s Glasnost the Soviet Media in the First Phase of Perestroika* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A & M University Press, 1999).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3–10.

¹⁵ “Learning from History,” *Sputnik Magazin*, February 1983, 4–5.

¹⁶ See the March 1983, April 1983 and June 1983 Editions of *Sputnik* magazine, publisher Novosti, Moscow

perestroika and devoting recurring sections to “Glasnost and Democracy” and “Restructuring.” With this shift in focus, the magazine gained in popularity within East Germany. By October 1988, the Soviet publisher Novosti was exporting 180,000 copies of *Sputnik* to the GDR.¹⁷ While Gorbachev had spoken of glasnost prior to his election as General Secretary, the concept gained increasing importance throughout his tenure. By 1988, glasnost was a central component of Gorbachev’s restructuring program. In August of 1988, Vadim Medvedev, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union met with General Secretary Erich Honecker in Berlin. During their conversation Medvedev spoke of the importance of glasnost to the Soviet reform project:

This is what is understood by glasnost, a Russian word that is understood almost entirely throughout the world without translation. It is important, that people with diverse opinions can compare with one another, that they do not only gather/absorb the correct ideas of Socialism from direct propaganda, rather that these correct ideas are consolidated and deepened within them through argumentation.¹⁸

Medvedev argued that while the Communist Party maintained the power to ban any statements that contradicted party ideology, it chose not to do so, because, he argued: “the society and the people have to have to be able to contend with such opinions.”¹⁹ Rather than forbid the publication of heterodox opinion, the Communist Party instead preferred to meet these

¹⁷ “Information über die Sicherstellung der UdSSR-Zeitschrift ‘Sputnik’ Nr. 10/88” (Hauptabteilung XIX, October 3, 1988), MfS HA XIX 4774, 2, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-10-03_information.html;jsessionid=314AFAB1BAF2048D0AAD40C3C63B50F1.2_cid329?nn=2635460.

BStU, MfS HA XIX 4774, 2 “Information über die Sicherstellung der UdSSR-Zeitschrift Sputnik, Nr. 10/88.12/1/15 1:12 PM

¹⁸ “Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch des Genossen Erich Honecker, Generalsekretär des ZK der SED und Vorsitzender des Staatsrates der DDR, mit Genossen Wadim Medwedjew, Sekretär des ZK der KPdSU, am 24.8.1988,” August 24, 1988, DY30/IV2/2/2.039/281, Das Bundesarchiv. p 5

¹⁹ Ibid., 6.

statements head-on and challenge controversial assertions with informative and ideologically orthodox critiques. Medvedev recounted a recent example of how the Soviet Union handled such delicate situations. The historian Afanassjew had published an article in *Prawda* that the Soviet government felt had “crossed the line.” In the article, Afanassjew stated that Socialism did not have any accomplishments to show for itself; therefore it was time to start over. The Communist Party was faced with the dilemma of whether or not to allow *Prawda* to publish the article. In the end, the party conceded and agreed to the publication, but they required that *Prawda* include an accompanying commentary that challenged Afanassjew’s argument. Medvedev confessed that this rebuttal proved not as persuasive as Afanassjew’s original article so the party subsequently published additional and more effective articles to counter Afanassjew’s position. In justifying the party’s decision to allow the publication of such a flagrant challenge to the party’s ideological doctrine, Medvedev argued, “Afanassjew is so well-known, that a denial of publication would have given him the opportunity to claim his freedom of opinion had been restricted.”²⁰ The CPSU made the calculation that allowing Afanassjew to publish his article was less dangerous than giving him concrete evidence of oppression, with which he could foment even greater dissent.

The idea of glasnost extended beyond allowing a “plurality of opinions” and included an open discussion and revision of the past. Throughout the late 1980s, historians and scholars were granted unprecedented freedom to challenge some of the standing historical doctrine surrounding the early decades of communism, both within the Soviet Union and throughout socialist Europe. While this new freedom did have its limitations (the Katyn massacre in Poland, for example, remained taboo), the party allowed for a greater critical historical investigation of the Soviet

²⁰ Ibid., 7.

Union's problematic former figurehead Josef Stalin. Once an infallible figure, Stalin—and his historical legacy—were now open to debate. During his speech commemorating the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, Gorbachev spoke of the new, more critical, understanding of Stalin's actions and their repercussions:

There is now much discussion about the role of Stalin in our history. His was an extremely contradictory personality. To remain faithful to historical truth, we have to see both Stalin's incontestable contribution to the struggle for socialism, to the defense of its gains; the gross political errors, and the abuses committed by him and by those around him, for which our people have paid a heavy price and which had grave consequences for the life of our society.

...

The guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage before the party and the people for the wholesale repressive measures and acts of lawlessness is enormous and unforgivable. This is a lesson for all generations. Contrary to the assertions of our ideological opponents, the Stalin personality cult was not inevitable. It was alien to the nature of socialism, represented a departure from its fundamental principles and, therefore, has no justification.²¹

It was this component of glasnost, the challenge to historical doctrine, which proved the most troubling to the German Socialists. While the party leaders in East Germany maintained that Gorbachev's commemoration speech fit within the acceptable boundaries of historical doctrine (this speech was repeatedly cited as adhering to the accepted historical narrative), Honecker was concerned with some of the more extreme examples of historical revisionism that were cropping up in the Soviet Union -- and even worse-- exported abroad.²² Honecker complained of articles published in German-language Soviet magazines, which challenged the historical narrative set forth by Gorbachev during his commemorative speech:

²¹ "Gorbachev on History; Revolution's Road From 1917 to Now: The Leader Takes Stock," *The New York Times*, November 3, 1987, sec. World, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/03/world/gorbachev-on-history-revolution-s-road-from-1917-to-now-the-leader-takes-stock.html>.

²² Monika Nakath, *SED Und Perestroika: Reflexion Osteuropäischer in Den 80er Jahren*, Gesellschaftswissenschaftliches Forum e.V (Berlin: Helle Panke, 1993), 22.

Articles are appearing, which include opinions that are not in agreement with Gen. Gorbachev's speech in honor of the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution. These are met with incomprehension, and not only for us. If others do not speak of this, that is their matter, but it is well known here [in the GDR]. Thus, in articles that appear in the magazine *Neue Zeit* [New Time], which appears [in the GDR] in the German language, the development of the Soviet Union is designated "Barrack-yard-Socialism," it is as if socialism began only today. ... It is correct, to highlight shortcomings and individual negative occurrences. This has been done [here in the GDR] in conjunction with the XX Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. But, one cannot negate the entire history of the Soviet Union.²³

As glasnost allowed historians, journalists, scholars, and artists to engage critically with the foundational myths of socialism in the Soviet Union, the German leadership watched with unease as the German socialist historical narrative began to fall under the same level of scrutiny. In many instances, the archival records reveal that Honecker took these attacks on the established historical narrative personally. In that August meeting with Medvedev, Honecker countered *Neue Zeit's* description of "Barrack-yard-Socialism" with his own experiences living in the Soviet Union in the year 1930/31. "Despite the difficult living conditions, he and the people he worked along-side in the factories were enthusiastic about the development of Socialism."²⁴ These re-examinations of the foundational myths of socialism in Germany and the Soviet Union were perceived as direct attacks on the GDR, the socialist project, and Honecker himself. While the East German General Secretary could not prevent Gorbachev from allowing such disruptive art and scholarship from appearing within the Soviet Union, he demanded the Soviets prevent its export to the GDR. Honecker referred Medvedev to articles that had appeared in *Neue Zeit* and *Sputnik*, and asked that the Soviet Union exert its influence to ensure that such opinions not be printed in publications destined for the broader East German reading public.²⁵ Medvedev, moved

²³ "Gespräch Honeckers mit Medwedjew," 26.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 26.

by Honecker's personal remembrances of his inter-war stay in the Soviet Union, promised to take the matter immediately to Gorbachev upon his return to Moscow.²⁶

Glasnost was fine for the Soviets but was not part of the Socialist Unity Party's platform. While the Soviet Union engaged in reform and restructuring, the East German leadership fought to maintain the standing bureaucratic order against the daily attacks from the West. Throughout 1987 and 1988, when glasnost was mentioned on the pages of *Neues Deutschland*, it was usually in conjunction with a West German propaganda campaign directed against the increasingly formidable GDR. A frequent subject of concern was the West German radio station that broadcast under the name *Glasnost* which, according to commentaries published in *Neues Deutschland*, was run by West German "string pullers," and "fabricators of lies" who sought to "instigate speculation with this term as if it were currency."²⁷ Günter Schabowski, then a member of the Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee, claimed at the time that the West German leadership "twisted their tongues" on terms like perestroika and glasnost, "as they provide us with extra lessons on matters of socialism."²⁸ In fact, the media policy of the Socialist Unity Party in the late 1980s was not interested in openness; rather, there was strict enforcement of party ideology and control.

The East German government was not alone in its rejection of glasnost. As the November 19 front page of *Neues Deutschland* illustrated, the Honecker regime drew closer to Ceausescu in Romania as the Soviet Union moved down the road to reform. Ceausescu firmly rejected the

²⁶ "Protokoll Nr. 4/88 Sitzung des Politbüros am 26. Januar 1988, III. Zur Veröffentlichung von Auszügen aus dem Theaterstück von M. Schatrow, 'Weiter... weiter... weiter...!' in Heft 1 und 2/88 der Zeitschrift 'Neue Zeit' Moscow," January 26, 1988, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/57, 166-170, Das Bundesarchiv.

²⁷ S. Maslow, "Komsomolskaia Prawda. Über dem Abgrund der läge," *Neues Deutschland*, February 6, 1988, 31 edition, DDR-Pressé ZEFYS.

²⁸ Schabowski, Günter, "Fundament unserer Politik ist die ökonomische Strategie," *Neues Deutschland*, December 3, 1988, 286 edition, DDR-Pressé ZEFYS.

Soviet leader's call for openness and restructuring, and the Romanian leader's rigid and meticulous control of the press in the face of growing pressure from Soviet reforms and Western imports were even more severe than Honecker's media philosophy.²⁹ Ceausescu, hoping to counter balance the momentum toward reform building across Eastern Europe, approached both Honecker and the leadership of Czechoslovakia to form a "conservative coalition" within Eastern Europe.³⁰ In Czechoslovakia, the "old guard"—hardliners who had been put in place to ensure stability within the Soviet sphere of influence following the collapse of the Prague Spring in 1968—retained control of the Communist Party and resisted the reform developments in the Soviet Union as well as Hungary and Poland.³¹ These three governments feared the instability that would come with the revelations of glasnost and resisted reform by perpetuating media censorship and controls in the face of increasing public dissent.

State Controlled Media in the GDR

The media institutions in East Germany were under the strict control and oversight of the state. This control was institutionalized through a series of bureaucratic and structural measures to ensure that the media could be wielded as the "sharpest weapon of the party." Journalism in East Germany was structured around an idea proposed by V.I. Lenin in his 1901 essay, "Where to Begin." For Lenin, in order to serve the revolution, the press needed to be a "collective propagandist, collective agitator, and collective organizer."³² This phrase formed the core of the socialist journalist profession and meant that the press served a vital role in the establishment and

²⁹ Peter Gross, "Romania," in *Glasnost and after: Media and Change in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. David L Paletz, Karol Jakubowicz, and Pavao Novosel (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1995); VLADIMIR TISMANEANU, "Ceausescu Against Glasnost," *World Affairs* 150, no. 3 (December 1, 1987): 199–203.

³⁰ William H. Luers, "Czechoslovakia: Road to Revolution," *Foreign Affairs* 69, no. 2 (April 1, 1990): 77–98, doi:10.2307/20044305.

³¹ Ibid.

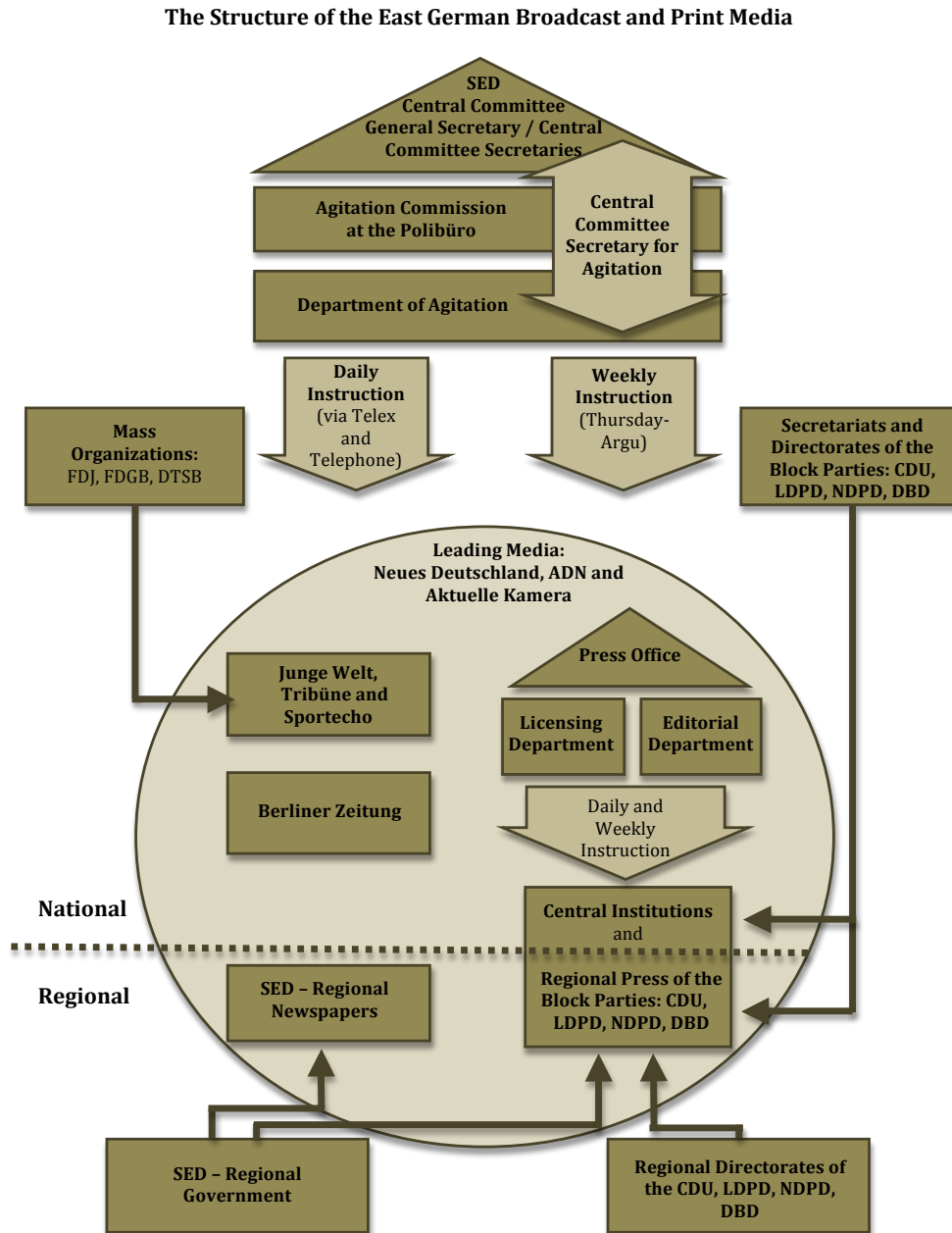
³² Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 18.

development of the socialist state.³³ The media was to work hand-in-hand with the party to educate, train, and engage the public on behalf of the socialist cause. As a result, the party maintained strict control of the media, and used the broadcast and print media to inform and shape public opinion. This relationship was firmly established in the structure and hierarchy of the party.³⁴

³³ See the discussion of the role of Socialist Journalism in the understanding of journalists in Chapter 5.

³⁴ This idea of socialist journalism was not limited to the GDR, prior to the shift in policies under glasnost, the state socialist leaders across Eastern Europe would meet to coordinate socialist media policies, to form a united propagandistic front. See for example the notes from the January 5-6, 1984 meeting of socialist media institutions in Sofia: "Information über konkrete Vorschläge zur engeren Zusammenarbeit der Zentralorgane sozialistischer Bruderländer - unterbreitet auf der Beratung am 5. und 6. Januar 1984 in Sofia-Bojana," January 5, 1984, DY 30/IV 2/2.037/50 9-11, Das Bundesarchiv.

Figure 1: The Structure of the East German Broadcast and Print Media³⁵



³⁵ This diagram is based on a diagram that appears in Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 17.

The daily supervision of the media originated with and disseminated from Erich Honecker himself. Honecker took a much more hands-on approach to the media than his predecessor Walter Ulbricht. In a 2010 interview, Günter Schabowski remarked,

It was fun for [Honecker]. He really wanted to be a journalist. On the one hand he knew that he was immensely superior, but he did not consider himself too good to write an article or commentary. He even accepted it when I personally edited his work.³⁶

The archives are riddled with examples of Honecker editing and rewriting articles and commentaries. Sometimes Honecker would write his own article and have it published under another journalist's byline. For example, on October 26, 1987, the editor-in-chief of the youth newspaper *Junge Welt*, Hans-Dieter Schütt, submitted a review of the Soviet film *Die Reue*, which had been broadcast by the West German channel ZDF but banned within East Germany. Honecker personally edited Schütt's review of the film, removing and inserting entire sections. Schütt's original document was returned, covered in scribbled notes, adjusting tone, and removing certain "buzz words." Honecker's edits were incorporated wholesale into the article, which appeared in *Junge Welt* under Schütt's by-line.³⁷ Similarly, in a 1991 interview Schütt remembered being invited to Honecker's office to interview the General Secretary. When he arrived for the interview, Honecker posed for a photo and handed the editor a finalized print out of the already completed interview, ready for publication.³⁸

Honecker's directives were communicated through the office of the Secretary for Agitation. The Secretary's job was to enforce a uniform ideological message and tone throughout

³⁶ Ibid., 36.

³⁷ Hans-Dieter Schütt, "Kürzlich sendete das BRD-Fernsehen..." (*Junge Welt*, October 26, 1988), DY30/IV2/2/2.039/18-23, Das Bundesarchiv; Schütt, Hans-Dieter, "Kunst und Geschichtsbewußtsein," *Junge Welt*, October 26, 1988. Honecker's contribution to the *Junge Welt* review of *Der Reue*, is analyzed in Wolff, *Glasnost erst kurz vor Sendeschluss*, 207.. Wolff points out that Honecker was careful to remove "Reizwörter" buzz words, especially those referring to Stalin, that were likely to incite dangerous discussions among the public.

³⁸ Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 76–82.

the various print and broadcast institutions. In 1978, Honecker installed Joachim Herrmann—the former editor-in-chief of *Neues Deutschland*—as Secretary for Agitation, and many journalists and editors have cited Herrmann with increasing the authoritarian controls on the media in the late 1970s and 1980s.

[Herrmann] understood himself to be Honecker’s megaphone. To this was added his mentality. If you telephoned with Herrmann, you were better off holding the receiver far from your ear. He screamed, he repeated himself, he instructed everyone. This is not how you create an environment where people trust one another.³⁹

The Agitation department was able to enforce and exercise control primarily through a weekly “Argumentation Meeting” known colloquially as the *Argu*. During these weekly meetings—held either by Secretary Herrmann or the Director of the Agitation department, Heinz Geggel—the editors of the major East German media institutions would gather at the Politburo to receive instruction. These meetings served two primary functions. In a closed media system, without public press briefings or open access to information, *Argu* served as the primary form of communication from the party leadership to the media institutions. However, within this information role was nestled a more insidious function. Through the *Argu*, the Department of Agitation would communicate the directives for the upcoming media cycle. This weekly meeting was the primary instrument of control in the East German media system.⁴⁰ The directives originated with Honecker and were communicated through Herrmann and Geggel at the *Argu*, and then disseminated by the editors to their journalists and media staff. These directions were transmitted orally, which turned the whole process into “an absurd game of telephone,” as orders were passed down the chain of command.⁴¹

³⁹ See for example the interview with Hans Modrow in Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴¹ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 88.

Beyond this weekly meeting, the Department of Agitation also interfered in the daily practice of journalism. It was commonplace for the party leadership to contact editors directly via telephone or telex throughout the week to direct them on which stories would be included, prohibited, or changed. Articles of particular ideological or propagandistic value were sent to the department for approval and review.⁴² The final edit remained in the hands of Geggel, Herrmann, and Honecker.

Not all measures of censorship and control in the GDR, however, were this explicit. In addition to the direct manipulation of the press taken by the party leadership, there were other more subtle forms of censorship and control. With such a system, it was common for journalists and editors to develop a practice known as “scissors of the mind,” which meant that they were aware of what stories would be accepted and tolerated and willingly avoided taboo subjects in a form of self-censorship.⁴³ This practice was enforced through not only daily practice but also a

⁴² See for example a Neues Deutschland commentary submitted to Geggel in July of 1987 on the signing of the Helsinki Accords. Geggel’s edits were incorporated into the final publication: “Helsinki als Aufgabe,” *Neues Deutschland*, August 1, 1989, ZEFYS; Geggel, Heinz, “Memo from Geggel to Krenz regarding the Article: ‘Helsinki als Aufgabe.’ with proposed edits,” July 31, 1987, DY 30/IV 2/2.037/17 75a-75h, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁴³ The practice of self-censorship and conformity is not unique to the GDR. Writers and intellectuals across Eastern Europe have identified ways in which the individual participates and conforms through surface actions, while maintaining opposition or internal dissent. In *Captive Mind* Czesław Miłosz presented this form of self-censorship as *Ketman*. For Miłosz, the concept of *Ketman*, which he borrows from Islam, is the practice of feigning obedience to the state in all outward appearances while maintaining inner private opposition. He portrays this process as a type of “inner revolt,” and allows the intellectual to maintain sanity and happiness under a system of ideological oppression. Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 50–70. Miłosz’s *Ketman* is a more active and dissident form of self-censorship than the East German “Scissors of the Mind,” where journalists simply understood the ideological barriers and avoided them intentionally. This is not a form of passive resistance, but a form of self-preservation. The East German “scissors” better resembled Václav Havel’s green grocer, placing the slogan in the window because he knows he is supposed to, and not because he actively supports the party ideology. See Václav Havel and John Keane, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1985).

systematic education and training program that recruited and groomed journalists to follow the model set forth by Lenin. There were only a few prescribed paths to a career in journalism, and the most common path went through the journalism program at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig. Entrance to the program required the proper political credentials (for example, every journalist belonged to one of the handful of political parties permitted in the GDR, with an overwhelming majority, 80 percent, belonging to the ruling party, the SED),⁴⁴ and acceptance was limited to those students who had proven themselves able to toe the party line.⁴⁵ Once enrolled, students were not only trained in the handicraft of journalism but also had to take the requisite coursework in Marxism-Leninism (known colloquially as ML).⁴⁶ Through careful selection and training, journalists were groomed to see their role as party functionary, whose work it was to support and further the socialist cause.⁴⁷ To perform this role successfully they followed the ideological dictates handed down by the party leadership. Those who ventured too far off the prescribed path were either admonished or had their jobs terminated, and newspaper editors risked jeopardizing the future of their entire media organization. Within the archives of the Central Committees Department of Agitation, there are numerous letters from and regarding editors and journalists who were relieved of their positions for veering too far from the party line.⁴⁸ To challenge the party was to take a serious professional risk, and in a system where the party controlled nearly everything, the consequences could be quite severe.

⁴⁴ Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 62.

⁴⁵ Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*, 43.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 45–46; Anke Fiedler, *Medienlenkung in der DDR*, *Zeithistorische Studien* 52 (Köln: Böhlau, 2014), 304–305.

⁴⁷ Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*

⁴⁸ Georg Fischer, “Letter to Joachim Herrmann from Georg Fischer,” February 10, 1989, DY30/IV2/2.037/37, 15-17, Das Bundesarchiv; Geggel, Heinz, “Letter to Joachim Herrmann from H. Geggel,” March 23, 1989, DY30/IV2/2.037/37, 65-67, Das Bundesarchiv; Horst Lang,

West German Media in East Germany

One of the arguments frequently touted by the East German leadership to explain the need for ideological conformity, or to explain away demands for glasnost was the constant presence and danger from West German media. Although the East German government carefully orchestrated a uniform media machine, they could not prevent West German radio and television broadcasts from penetrating the heavily armed and guarded border. As with many other areas of East German history and politics, the East German media were engaged in a daily ideological battle with the West. Powerful Western broadcast antennas were able to transmit West German television and radio programming deep into East Germany. With the exception of small portions of the Northeast and Southeast, known colloquially as the “Valley of the Clueless”, most East German citizens were able to receive Western broadcasts via their radio and television antennas.⁴⁹ The ability of East Germans to escape the reality of their daily lives through their evening consumption of West German media was described by Stefan Wolle as a “collective departure,” in which many East Germans “no longer lived in the GDR.”⁵⁰ Having access to West German media, Wolle argued, took some of the pain out of being deprived of one’s liberty. While many scholars point to the overwhelming popularity of West German media and speak of the East German’s preference for Western over native programming, Michael Meyen argued that the data does not support such broad claims.⁵¹ Meyen countered these claims by stating that

“Letter to Joachim Herrmann from Horst Lang,” March 1989, DY30/IV2/2.037/37, 66, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁴⁹ Hans-Jörg Stiehler, *Leben Ohne Westfernsehen : Studien Zur Medienwirkung Und Mediennutzung in Der Region Dresden in Den 80er Jahren* / (Leipzig : Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2001).

⁵⁰ Stefan Wolle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971-1989* (Ch. Links Verlag, 1998). 71.

⁵¹ For preference of West German over East German programming, See: Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*, 49. For discussion of the popularity of Western media See: Konrad Dussel, *Deutsche Rundfunkgeschichte: eine Einführung* (Konstanz: UVK-Medien, 1999), 177.

access to West German media did not imply consumption and, especially in the case of East German women, they were too tired in the evenings to stay up to watch the nine o'clock West German news broadcast. He argued that the major impact of the availability of West German broadcasts was that it gave East Germans the ability to check the veracity of East German news reporting.⁵² It was this function of the West German media in the GDR that proved the most important and damaging to the credibility of the state. In many important instances, like the *Sputnik*-ban, the East German media employed a strategy of silence and diversion away from troublesome news items. Rather than utilize the strategy suggested by Medvedev in his 1987 meeting with Honecker of countering dissent with argumentation and conversation, Honecker and the SED leadership opted to censor and deflect attention away from such topics. The SED media policy was defined by its strategy of "success propaganda" (*Erfolgspropaganda*). The party feared that any negative news reported by East German sources could serve as a propaganda boon for West German broadcasters. Rather than risk supplying ammunition to the enemy, the SED embargoed any acknowledgement of weakness or problems. The only news that East German media was allowed to report portrayed the Republic in the best possible light.⁵³ The SED would not hand the West a knife that could be used to stab them in the back.

The flaw in this strategy, however, was that when problems emerged, the East German media remained quiet. The result was a troublesome silence in the East German media, a silence filled by West German media, who were free to present the information as they wished, without

⁵² Michael Meyen, "Kollektive Ausreise? Zur Reichweite Ost- Und Westdeutscher Fernsehprogramme in Der DDR," *Publizistik* 47, no. 2 (2002): 218.

⁵³ Karl-Heinz Arnold and Otfried Arnold, "Herrschaft über die Medien. Die Gleichschaltung von Presse, Rundfunk und Fernsehen durch die SED," in *Das Grosse Haus*, ed. Hans Modrow (Berlin, 1994), 111–112; "Anhörung Joachim Herrmann," *Neues Deutschland*, January 28, 1990, sec. Im Blickpunkt.

a counter-balance from the East.⁵⁴ The effect of this media policy was disastrous and resulted in undermining the public trust. As evidenced by reactions to the *Sputnik* scandal, and the subsequent scandals and crises that plagued the SED leadership throughout its decline, this strategy of silence and spin turned the public against its native media organizations and the profession of journalism itself. When the state collapsed in the fall of 1989, it took its engrained media institutions with it.

Increasing State Censorship in the late 1980s

The decision systematically and suddenly to remove access to a previously popular and widely distributed socialist publication was a relatively unusual act on the part of the East German government. While import restrictions prevented Western publications from distribution into East Germany, the *Sputnik* ban was a rare example of explicit outright censorship. However, it was not the first time that the government had prevented the distribution of a Soviet publication for ideological reasons. *Sputnik* was not the only exported Soviet magazine to use the principle of glasnost to challenge the boundaries of acceptable historical revisionism. Honecker also cited the Soviet magazine *Neue Zeit* as a point of concern in his meeting with Medvedev. In May of 1987, alarmed by the increasingly anti-Stalinist tone of its articles, the Politburo tasked the Department of International Relations of the Central Committee to regularly analyze the articles published in the magazine and “submit suggestions for a reaction.”⁵⁵ Within months,

⁵⁴ For example in March of 1989, a Mr. Breitzkreutz wrote to Joachim Herrmann to complain about the coverage of certain events in the East German press. When an East German minister cancelled his trip to the Federal Republic, the East German press portrayed the cancellation as a protest action, however, Mr. Breitzkreutz claimed, “anyone who watches West German television, or speaks with informed individuals has a different variation...” Mr. Breitzkreutz was using the West German broadcasts to vet the East German media for accuracy. See “Letter Exchange between Mr. Breitzkreutz and the office of Joachim Herrmann,” March 30, 1989, DY 30/IV 2/2.037/37 42-56, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁵⁵ Cited as [SAPMO-BArch ZPA IV 2/2/] in Nakath, *SED Und Perestroika*, 21.

they determined that a serious reaction was warranted. In its first two issues of 1988, *Neue Zeit* published an anti-Stalinist play by the Soviet playwright Mikhail Shatrov, titled *Onward... Onward... Onward*. The play, consisting of a series of dialogues between Bolsheviks, depicted Stalin as a murderer and argued that Stalin's faults originated with his deviations from Leninist principles. The play ended with the stage direction: "Everybody wants Stalin to leave... but he still remains on the stage."⁵⁶

The SED determined that the play was too dangerous to be distributed to the East German public. All of the copies of the magazine were seized and withheld from distribution. On January 20, 1988, Hermann Axen, a member of the Politburo, met with A. Dobrynin of the Central Committee of the CPSU along with Vadim Medvedev. During their conversation they discussed the East Germans' seizure of *Neue Zeit*. Axen defended the SED's actions, stating that the CPSU had the right to define its own history, but that the Soviets needed to be aware that the history of the CPSU touched on the history of all communists and especially the history of the Communist Party in Germany. Axen argued that the SED had to take a stand, because Shatrov's play was published in a magazine destined for the German speaking audience. Axen argued that the GDR was in daily and uninterrupted conflict with imperialist propaganda by West Germany, which possessed stronger and more technologically advanced means to disseminate its ideas. And these means were only strengthened by the use of Soviet publications to further antagonize the GDR and its people.⁵⁷ It was for these reasons, argued Axen, that the GDR would not permit

⁵⁶ Bill Keller Special To The New York Times, "MOSCOW JOURNAL; A Pen Breathes Revenge; Stalin Is Steeped in Evil," *The New York Times*, January 15, 1988, sec. World, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/01/15/world/moscow-journal-a-pen-breathes-revenge-stalin-is-steeped-in-evil.html>.

⁵⁷ "Veröffentlichung von Auszügen aus 'Weiter... weiter... weiter,'" 167.

the distribution of such “utterly wrong, damaging opinions” to the East German readership.⁵⁸ In response, Medvedev acknowledged that the SED had the right to handle the matter as they saw fit; however, he warned against the proposed course of action. It was of no use to try to silence opinions that the party did not share. Medvedev argued Gorbachev had clearly outlined the Party’s narrative of history since the October Revolution, so now it was the task of individual historians to fill in that outline, a process that required an open and honest discussion with the public. This was why the CPSU published its own critical historical rebuttal of Shatrov’s positions alongside the play’s publication in *Prawda*. Medvedev warned, whether it was published in German or Russian, once printed, a publication could not be silenced or covered up.⁵⁹ Unwilling to let the matter rest with Medvedev’s warning, Axen claimed that Shatrov’s play was intended for serialization over three issues in *Prawda* but never re-appeared in issues two or three after its initial printing. Therefore, the Soviet Union must have found the material problematic enough to censor in Russian but not in the German language magazine *Neue Zeit*. The magazine was designed for export and was a component of the Soviet Union’s foreign propaganda strategy, and therefore, the GDR had the right to question the targeted dissemination of such problematic material. On the drive to the airport, Dobrynin acknowledged that the *Prawda*’s publication of *Onward... onward... onward...* instigated large protests and repudiations within the party organization, especially in Moscow. Dobrynin assured Axen that he therefore understood the SED’s perspective.⁶⁰ The SED chose not to heed Medvedev’s warning and silently withheld three issues of the magazine from distribution.⁶¹ However, as distribution

⁵⁸ “Veröffentlichung von Auszügen aus ‘Weiter... weiter... weiter.’”

⁵⁹ Ibid., 167–168.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 168–169.

⁶¹ Brigitte Grunert, “25. Februar 1988,” *Der Tagesspiegel Online*, February 25, 2013, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/berliner-chronik-25-februar-1988/7832426.html>.

of *Neue Zeit* recommenced with the fourth 1988 issue, there was no widespread public outcry concerning the missing magazines.

It is clear from Honecker's and Axen's meetings with the Soviet representatives that while the Soviet Union seemed to tolerate and purportedly even value the open re-evaluation of the history of communism and the Soviet Union, these actions had become increasingly problematic for the East German leadership. Despite Honecker's request for the Soviet Union to censor German-language Soviet publications destined for export to the GDR, magazines like *Sputnik* continued their critical investigations of Stalin, his crimes, and his legacy. In the back of the September 1988 issue of *Sputnik*, where the magazine advertised exciting upcoming articles, it announced that the next issue would contain several features contributed by historians, writers, and war veterans, which would be dedicated to "one of the most controversial subjects presently being debated in the Soviet Press." The October issue would contain an entire section devoted to "Stalin and the War."⁶² But, alas, that issue would never reach the East German reading public. *Sputnik* had taken its exploration of the past under the banner of glasnost too far, and the SED leadership under the direction of Honecker felt pressured into taking the dramatic step of banning the publication for the foreseeable future.

The *Sputnik* Ban

The decision to forbid the distribution of the Soviet magazine *Sputnik* was not a spontaneous act. Rather, tension had been building between Honecker's tightly controlled media machine and the burgeoning historical debate and revision occurring in the Soviet press. The SED had made its intentions and policies clear to the Soviet Union. Publications that crossed the line, that challenged the boundaries of acceptable historical interpretation as was the case with

⁶² "In Our next Issue," *Sputnik Magazine*, September 1988, 176.

Neue Zeit and *Sputnik*, would not be distributed to the East German reading public. Medvedev had warned the East German leadership that once published, ideas could not be silenced: the bell as the saying goes, cannot be un-rung. However, the party had successfully censored *Neue Zeit* without the walls falling around them. When faced with what it perceived as an egregious and provocative distortion of historical facts in the October issue of *Sputnik*, the party, under the direction of Honecker, stopped the distribution of the magazine, not just for the month but indefinitely. This time however, the public noticed, and the outcry that followed left the state scrambling to contain the crisis. The *Sputnik*-ban triggered widespread dissent and outcry, and frustrations soon expanded to encompass much more than a singular act of censorship. For many East Germans, the *Sputnik*-ban became one item in a long list of grievances that had been uncomfortably tolerated for decades. The debates and conversations instigated by the ban helped establish a framework and context for an increasingly dissatisfied public. The *Sputnik* Scandal did not cause the collapse of the East German state, but in the late months of 1988 it revealed the widening cracks in the state's foundation.

On September 30, 1988, all 180,000 copies of the magazine *Sputnik* were seized by the East German Press Office and withheld from distribution. On October 3, the Ministry for State Security (MfS) reported that the October issue of *Sputnik* contained multiple articles that dealt with the topic of "Stalinism" and were "composed, utilizing the possibilities of Glasnost." The first, an editorial titled "Why Mull over the Past?," spoke of the "incorrectness" of information conveyed to the public in history books. The second, an article titled "Stalin and the War," posed the "polemical" question: "Would there have been a Hitler without Stalin?" Other articles included a discussion by Dr. Richard Sorge of Stalin and the partisan movement. These articles countered the standing historical narrative of the early history of the Republic. The question was,

how would the party respond? The October 3 MfS report indicated that the decision to cancel the magazine was still being decided “centrally.”⁶³ In fact, the decision of what to do with *Sputnik* rested “at the center” in the hands of Honecker himself.

In memoirs, interviews, and testimonies published after November 1989, many in Honecker’s inner circle described a similar set of circumstances. Günter Schabowski, then a member of the Politburo and Central Committee, used the *Sputnik*-ban as an example of Honecker’s strong hand in decision making in his 1991 Memoir, *Der Absturz*.

During the course of a conversation with the head of the Agitation-Department, despite his objection, Honecker had the Soviet magazine *Sputnik* removed from the Post-distribution list, virtually forbidding it, due to [the magazine’s] promotion of perestroika as well as several historical contributions. The Politburo was not asked. That was an unprecedented act of personal despotism [*Willkür*].⁶⁴

In a published “conversation” between the historian Siegfried Prokop and the former Central Committee and Politburo Member Alfred Neumann, Neumann also stated that the decision to ban *Sputnik* was Honecker’s alone, and he described the General Secretary arriving to the Politburo in the morning so “boiling with rage” that he “held a philippic [a fiery damning speech] against *Sputnik*. No one knew what to say.” Neumann went on to describe how Honecker subverted the usual chain of command and issued his directive directly to the Agitation and Propaganda department, bypassing those responsible for the Post (including Neumann himself). “That was an intervention,” Neumann stated, “that never should have happened.”⁶⁵ Once Honecker decided to ban the magazine, there was a problem of how to inform the public about the disappearing magazine. The *Neue Zeit* ban had been implemented in silence, and *Sputnik* also disappeared without comment. The reaction to the missing magazine was

⁶³ “Information über die Sicherstellung.”

⁶⁴ Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, 116.

⁶⁵ Siegfried Prokop, *Poltergeist Im Politbüro: Siegfried Prokop Im Gespräch Mit Alfred Neumann*, 1. Aufl (Frankfurt (Oder): Frankfurter Oder Editionen, 1996), 55–57.

immediate. Prokop and Neumann remembered lines around the corner waiting for the delivery of the magazine. *Sputnik* was one of the few magazines available to the East German public due to the severe paper shortage in the GDR,⁶⁶ and without it, the kiosks were empty.⁶⁷ Sources within the Soviet Embassy reported to the MfS that there had been “multiple” inquires, submitted by East Germans to the Embassy regarding the missing magazine.⁶⁸

On November 4, Dieter Langguth (Heinz Geggel’s deputy) met with students from the University of Jena. During the five-hour-long forum, the students generated a list of twenty-eight questions regarding the media policy of the GDR that they requested Langguth pass along to Herrmann. Two areas of concern dominated the list. The first was the inaccuracy of East German reporting when compared to West German news broadcasts, and the second was the GDR’s resistance to Gorbachev’s reforms. Question 27 read, “Why are we being prevented from reading what the Soviet Press has written about Stalin?”⁶⁹ With growing internal pressure, the SED decided to break the silence regarding the disappearance of *Sputnik*. On November 19, each of the major East German daily newspapers published the same short statement cited at the outset of this chapter, attributing the decision to the Ministry for Post and Telecommunications and citing “distortive contributions to history” as the justification for the ban. Later inquiries and

⁶⁶ The paper shortage will be discussed in detail in the upcoming chapters.

⁶⁷ Prokop, *Poltergeist Im Politbüro*, 58.

⁶⁸ “Information zur Reaktion von DDR-Bürgern zum Nichterscheinen deutsch-sprachiger Pressezeugnisse der UdSSr in der DDR” (Hauptabteilung II, November 14, 1988), MfS ZAIG 149222, 12, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-11-14_reaktion.html;jsessionid=314AFAB1BAF2048D0AAD40C3C63B50F1.2_cid329?nn=2635460.

⁶⁹ “Memo from D. Langguth to Joachim Herrmann about a Forum of ca. 100 Students at the University of Jena and their questions for the SED Leadership,” November 4, 1988, DY 30/IV 2/2.037/17 79-82, Das Bundesarchiv.

investigations revealed that the Minister for Post and Telecommunications, Rudolf Schultze, only found out about the ban when he read the official statement published in *Neues Deutschland*.⁷⁰ Internally, the newspaper distribution office was instructed to answer any inquires and petitions from the public regarding the ban with the following statement, which pulled its text directly from the *Neues Deutschland* announcement:

We confirm the receipt of your petition from ...

As you have surely gathered from the daily press from 19 November 1988, the magazine *Sputnik* has been removed from the Post-distribution-list. It does not provide any contribution to the consolidation of German-Soviet friendship; instead it provides distortive contributions on history.

The pro-rated subscription price for the non-delivered issues from the fourth quarter of 1988, totaling 4- Mark, will be refunded to you shortly.⁷¹

The published statement did little to quell the unrest and frustration surrounding the missing magazines. On November 22, the party leadership was informed about frustration and unrest among students at the Friedrich Schiller University, where the students in *Komsomol*, the youth organization of the CPSU, published a wall newspaper denouncing the ban.⁷² Further accounts of frustration came from a local chapter of the SED party within DEFA, the state-owned film studio of the GDR. In a statement to the party leadership, the local chapter of documentary filmmakers warned that the ban of *Sputnik* had a “signaling effect,” that reached far beyond the matter at

⁷⁰ ADN, “Postminister erfuhr durchs ND vom Aus für Sputnik,” *Berliner Zeitung*, November 10, 1989, 265 edition, DDR-Presse ZEFYS. Also see Krenz, *Herbst '89*, 178.

⁷¹ Hammer, “Maßnahmen zur Zeitschrift ‘Sputnik’” (Hauptabteilung XIX, November 21, 1988), 9, MfS HA XIX 6935, 7-9, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-11-21_Massnahmen/_tabelle.html?nn=2635460.

⁷² “Vorkommnis an der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena.”

hand, especially when seen in conjunction with the recent cancellation of certain Soviet films that had been promoted as part of the “Week of Soviet Films.”⁷³

The Cancellation of Soviet Films

On November 22, the General Director of the DEFA Studios, Hans-Dieter Mäde, informed his assembled colleagues that the Ministry for Culture had decided to remove five Soviet films from theaters: *Das Thema* (1979), *Die Kommissarin* (1967/88), *Spiele für Schulkinder* (1986), *...und Morgen war Krieg* (1986), *Der kalte Sommer des Jahres '53* (1988). He assured his colleagues that this was not an artistic critique of the films; it was a political decision. The films had been shown as part of the “Week of Soviet Films” and had already been seen by over 500,000 viewers. The party leadership had become concerned about the public’s reaction to the films, especially the impression the films could make on young children. The goal of banning the films, according to the Ministry of Culture, was to ensure that the ongoing debates surrounding the 70 years of revolutionary history would neither be strengthened nor encouraged.⁷⁴ Three of the five films dealt critically with various eras of Soviet History, from the actions of the Red Army during the Revolutionary War, the drafting of school aged children to fight in WWII, to the legacy of Stalin’s abuses of power. The remaining two films touched on the politically charged topics of censorship versus artistic integrity and the suffering of abandoned children in group homes. The announcement that the films would be withdrawn from theaters was met with much frustration for the party members at DEFA, who quickly drew a connection between the removal of the films and the cancelation of *Sputnik*. Members of the

⁷³ “Erklärung der Grundorganisation der SED des DEFA-Studios für Dokumentarfilme, Betriebsteil Babelsberg, zur Einstellung des Vertriebes der sowjetischen Zeitschrift ‘Sputnik’ in der DDR,” November 25, 1988, 110, DY30/2181/02, 110, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁷⁴ “Mitschrift einer Parteileitungssitzung der Grundorganisation des DEFA-Studios für Spielfilme in Potsdam-Babelsberg am 22. 11. 1988,” November 22, 1988, 111, DY 30/2181/02, Das Bundesarchiv.

party leadership argued that a country that lived with the daily penetration of Western broadcast media was strong enough to handle the content of these films and the articles in *Sputnik*. It would be better to encourage a domestic conversation than to allow West German television to shape and dominate the discussion of the reforms in the Soviet Union.⁷⁵ Some argued that the announcement in *Neues Deutschland* unleashed “anarchy” within the GDR and provided the “class-enemies” the perfect ammunition to attack the GDR. “With the *Sputnik* announcement, a fuse was laid.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, in enacting the ban without a clear explanation or justification, the party placed its members and promoters in a precarious position. How could they defend the decision to censor the magazine, if they did not know why the decision had been made? Party members were left with little ammunition to ward off ideological attacks from oppositional forces. One member of the party leadership at DEFA said:

I have been in the party a long time, and I cannot remember a time when I felt as a comrade so helpless and clueless in discussions with non-party members as I do now. I cannot underpin any discussion with facts or arguments. I am constantly falling into the traps of non-party members. That cannot be expected of comrades.⁷⁷

The connection between the withdrawal of the Soviet films and the cancellation of *Sputnik* was recognized not only by the filmmakers at DEFA, but also by observers both in the West and East. Taken together, these two acts communicated a rejection of the Gorbachev reform program and signaled a more hard line path for the GDR.

“Against the Misrepresentation of History”

One week after the brief November 19 announcement, *Neues Deutschland* published two additional articles that dealt with the October issue of *Sputnik* in a more extensive manner. These articles, published successively on *Neues Deutschland*’s “News and Commentary” page,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 113.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

highlighted specific portions of two *Sputnik* articles that were the most problematic for the East German leadership. The first article appeared on November 24 and was a reprint of an article that appeared in the West German socialist newspaper *Unsere Zeit*. This article defended the accusation that certain items within *Sputnik* were “distortive contributions to history” and argued that it was not the place of outsiders to judge the actions of the East German government. Furthermore, those in the West who argued that the banning of *Sputnik* was an open challenge to Gorbachev’s “new thinking” were simply “representing the political calculus of the [West German] conservatives.”⁷⁸

On the following day, *Neues Deutschland* published its own attack of the *Sputnik* articles. The editorial, titled “Against the Misrepresentation of History,” highlighted the most shocking claims made by the authors in *Sputnik*. Of particular concern were two statements; the first that “Stalin paved the way for Hitler” and the second more brazen claim was that “Stalin was Hitler’s marionette.” The author of the *Neues Deutschland* article countered these claims, stating:

Who paved Hitler’s way? In truth, it was the *Freikorps*, the *Reichswehr* (who first allowed him to campaign openly), Finance magnates, powerful monopolists, and large landowners who paved this path. Their marionette, to be more exact, their instrument, was Hitler.”⁷⁹

After detailing the accepted history of the Communist Party—from Friedrich Ebert and Wilhelm Groener’s “deplorable” pact, which crushed the dreams of the communist revolutionaries, to Hitler’s rise to power backed by the industrial barons, against which the Communist Party was powerless to intercede—the author painted the claims made by the authors in *Sputnik* as an attack against East German Constitutional Law.

⁷⁸ Wolfgang Brauer, “‘Unsere Zeit’ Dusseldorf: Die DDR Und Der ‘Sputnik,’” *Neues Deutschland*, November 24, 1988, DDR-Presse ZEFYS.

⁷⁹ He, “Gegen Die Entstellung Der Historischen Wahrheit,” *Neues Deutschland*, November 25, 1988, DDR-Presse ZEFYS.

To be blunt, in our anti-fascist, socialist German country, the “exculpation,” the white washing of Hitler, of Fascism, and his crimes, their explanation -- through the equalization of Hitler with Stalin—is impermissible. Such representations are in opposition to the Constitution of the GDR. To its Preamble, which states: “In continuation of the revolutionary tradition of the German working class, and underpinned by the deliverance from fascism, the people of the German Democratic Republic, in accordance with the processes of historical development of our epoch, have realized their right to socioeconomic, governmental and national self-determination and shaped the developed socialist society.” To Article 6: “1 The German Democratic Republic in accordance with the interests of the people and its international commitments has eradicated German militarism and Nazism from its territory. It practices foreign policy that serves socialism, freedom and international understanding.”⁸⁰

The editorial was published under the name “He,” an abbreviated byline attributed to *Neues Deutschland*’s deputy editor Hajo Herbell. However in his 2002 book, *Herztöne: 19 kurze Texte und eine wahre Geschichte*, Herbell claims that the true authorship of the commentary belonged to Erich Honecker. According to Herbell, Joachim Hermann, the Central Committee Secretary responsible for Agitation, handed him the text of a speech given by Honecker and told him he just needed to revise it, remove any awkward phrasing, but not change the content. Hermann dictated that Herbell, “hold himself word for word to the intention of the chief. He wants a sharp, combative commentary, ... as clear and combative as he himself expressed it.” Herbell countered that he had not read the October issue of *Sputnik* and did not know the content of the articles in question. Hermann replied that you did not need to know something to attack it. The Deputy Editor claimed he did as he was told, and the article appeared in *Neues Deutschland* as intended by the General Secretary.⁸¹

The November 25 editorial encapsulated the SED’s and Honecker’s grievance against *Sputnik* and the October issue. This was not a rejection of Gorbachev’s entire reform program as

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Herbell’s account from *Herztöne* [Hajo Herbell, *Herztöne 19 kurze Texte und eine wahre Geschichte* (Berlin: NoRa, 2002).] is cited in multiple sources including, Burghard Ciesla and Dirk Kūlow, *Zwischen den Zeilen: Geschichte der Zeitung “Neues Deutschland”* (Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 2009), 206.

some observers in the West saw it. Rather, Honecker saw the growing historical revisionism developing in the Soviet Union under glasnost as a direct attack on the historical foundation of the party, thereby threatening the legitimacy of the state itself. By attacking Stalin and his legacy, the Soviet authors and artists called into question the entire foundational myth of the East German state. The fight against fascism and its defeat formed the core of the GDR's historical identity, and these anti-fascist credentials were codified into the constitution itself. The *Sputnik* articles cast a critical eye on the actions of the German Communists during Hitler's rise to power, and during the fight against fascism during the Second World War. Honecker and the leadership of the SED in the late 1980s did not want the East German public to question the established historical narrative, which presented communism and the communists first as victims of fascism and then its ultimate vanquisher. If the German Communist Party or Stalin were found in any way complicit in the rise of fascism in Europe, the entire foundational story of the state could be called into question.

The controversy surrounding the political and historical debate over the relationship of Hitler to Stalin was not unique to the East-Bloc. The 1980s saw the emergence of a large and public debate among West Germany's historical community about the role of the two leaders in the modern history of Germany and Europe. This "historians debate" pitted the West German conservative historians Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber against the social philosopher Jürgen Habermas and the left wing of the German historical academy. The conservative historians placed the actions of Hitler within the context of Stalin's crimes, drawing a line of causation and relativity from Stalin's persecution of the kulaks and bourgeoisie to Hitler's mass extermination of the Europe's Jewish population. Nolte argued that Stalin provided the inspirational and terrifying example (*Vorbild* and *Schreckbild*) for Hitler to follow. Habermas took great issue

with Nolte's attempt to relativize the crimes of Hitler and his argument that the concentration camps across Eastern Europe were a historical response to the Gulag. This debate was not only historical but also political as the conservatives were seen as trying to rehabilitate Germany's historical legacy and rekindle nationalist pride in the history of the nation.⁸² The public nature of this debate in the Federal Republic and the massive response to questions of historical interpretation and methodology point to the charged political atmosphere around national historical narratives. While public debates and discourse were characteristic of democratic civil society in the West, Honecker feared the volatility and instability that could emerge from similar debates erupting east of the Iron Curtain.

Responses to the *Sputnik* ban

On November 25, the day the editorial was published in *Neues Deutschland*, a member of the Politburo, Horst Dohlus, presented Honecker with a report of some initial reactions to the article, "Against the Misrepresentation of History." Dohlus assured the General Secretary that the editorial

... Was met with unanimous approval by all layers of the society. In the first comments and opinions, workers—including many comrades—expressed that the editorial was a convincing and completely correct examination of the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the German Communist Party and other revolutionary parties.⁸³

Most of the East Germans quoted in the report were thankful that they now had a strong ideological foundation and facts with which they could conduct their "aggressive

⁸² For a detailed overview of the "Historian's Debate," please see, Peter Baldwin, *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians' Debate* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

⁸³ Schmidt, "Information über erste Stimmen und Meinungen zum Leitartikel 'Gegen die Entstellung der historischen Wahrheit'" (Abteilung Parteiorgane des ZK, November 25, 1988), DY30/2181/02. 119-122, Das Bundesarchiv.

political/ideological work” [*offensive politische /politisch-ideologische Arbeit*].⁸⁴ The editorial gave them the necessary ideological weapons and facts to finally engage in the daily discussions and debates with non-party members regarding the ban. A few responders were frustrated that the article had been granted publication by the Soviet Union in the first place.⁸⁵ All sixteen of the “typical voices and opinions” expressed support or even gratitude for the decision to ban the magazine. However, one comment by Waltraud Reiber, a party secretary for concerts and guest performances in Berlin, reflected a consistent thread of criticism present in most of these responses.

Today’s publication in ND is an excellent argumentation, which helps us greatly in political work. However, the bitter fact remains that [the editorial] came several days too late.⁸⁶

Many of these supporters of the ban criticized the state’s delayed communication and response. The state’s choice to remain silent regarding the ban only exacerbated the growing frustration surrounding the decision and left party-loyalists with little ground to defend the ban.

Unfortunately for the state, Dohlus’s report did not accurately reflect the reality of the situation. The decision to ban *Sputnik* was widely unpopular, and the November 25 editorial did little to quiet the unrest. From the moment the magazine failed to appear in mailboxes and kiosks, East German citizens registered their concerns and frustrations through legal and illegal means. Newspapers were flooded with hundreds of letters. The President of the Society for German Soviet Friendship (SGSF) received 510 petitions, and 1,186 were sent to the local

⁸⁴ See comments by Dieter Rüdigkeit: VEB Automobilwerke Zwickau, “Werktätige aus Karl-Marx-Stadt”, Uwe Langmark: Parteisekretär, Kreisbetrieb für Landtechnik Grabow Kreis Ludwigslust, Genosse Michael Warzecha: Stellvertretender Parteisekretär/Ingenieur-Hochbau Berlin, Karin Matsch: Oberbekleidungskombinat Erfurt, and Waltrud Reiber: Parteisekretär der Konzert- und Gastspieldirektion Berlin in: *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ See comments by Heiner Friedrich: Reifenkombinat Fürstenwalde, as well as Sabine Jones: BGL-Vorsitzende and Helga Geßner: Kaderabteilung both from Krankenhaus Berlin-Prenzlauer-Berg. In *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

branches of the organization. The Central Board of the SGSF received 22 membership withdrawals, and over two thousand members renounced their membership at the local level (331 of these members rescinded their withdrawal after meeting personally with the leadership of the organization).⁸⁷ Over 800 Petitions were sent in to the Central Committee.⁸⁸ Others expressed their feelings to their colleagues and comrades during party or professional meetings; these discussions were reported to the central party leadership either by the organizations themselves, or through the clandestine reports of informal employees of the MfS.⁸⁹ These legal and institutional methods of dissent represented the majority of responses to the ban in 1988 and early 1989. However, a much smaller number of individuals chose to register their dissent through various forms of illegal public protest. Taken together, these reactions, both legal and

⁸⁷ “Reaktionen von DSF-Gruppen.”

⁸⁸ Werner Müller, “Abschlußinformation über die Bearbeitung der im Zentralkomitee der SED eingegangenen Eingaben zur Streichung der Zeitschrift ‘Sputnik’ von der Postzeitungsliste,” January 12, 1989, DY 30/25731, 330-337, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁸⁹ “Hinweise zu einigen bedeutsamen Aspekten der Reaktion der Bevölkerung im Zusammenhang mit der Mitteilung über die Streichung der Zeitschrift ‘Sputnik’ von der Postzeitungsvertriebsliste der DDR”; “Information: Inoffiziellen Hinweisen zufolge sollen sich Vertreter der dem politischen Untergrund zuzuordnenden Gruppierungen...” (Hauptabteilung II, December 15, 1988), MfS HA II 28577, 57, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-12-15_reaktionen.html;jsessionid=314AFAB1BAF2048D0AAD40C3C63B50F1.2_cid329?nn=2635460; “HA XIX: Information über Reaktionen und Meinungsäußerungen”; *ibid.*; “Reaktionen von DSF-Gruppen”; “Information über weitere Reaktionen von Mitgliedern der Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetischen Freundschaft zur Streichung des ‘Sputnik’ von der Postzeitungsliste der DDR” (Hauptabteilung XX/1, January 12, 1989), MfS HA/XX 6321, 12-14, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1989-01-12_Reaktionen/_tabelle.html?nn=2635460>p=2671838_list%253D3; “Information über erste Reaktionen von Jugendlichen auf die Mitteilung über das Streichen der Monatszeitschrift ‘Sputnik’ von der Postzeitungsliste” (Zentralrat der FDJ, November 24, 1988), DY30/IV2/2/2.039/237, 121-125, Das Bundesarchiv; Zentralrat der FDJ, “Erste Reaktion von Jugendlichen.”

illegal, share a number of common themes and touched off powerful tensions that simmered within East German society in the late 1980s.⁹⁰

Censorship and the Role of Media in East Germany

While there had been a small number of public protests and actions against the East German media policy prior to the *Sputnik*-scandal, the GDR's media policy of strict ideological control of information had existed for decades without massive protests or large-scale demands for reform. This is what makes the *Sputnik* scandal an especially useful case study. The reactions to the ban both in the form of state-approved petitions as well as public protests reveal the limits of what many in the public were willing to tacitly tolerate when it came to government control of information and media.

Many responses acknowledged the reality of censorship within the East German system. On November 14, the MfS compiled a report of the initial public response to the absence of *Sputnik*, prior to the official announcement on November 19. In the report the MfS listed a number of questions that had been posed to the Soviet Embassy regarding the non-appearance of *Sputnik*. The MfS noted that while some individuals wondered if the publisher had delayed the shipment of *Sputnik*, or if the circulation of the magazine had been reduced, others asked more "provocative" questions:

- Which writers in which articles expressed possibly unpleasant thoughts?
- Is it possible, that the responsible Party and State functionaries of the GDR restricted the shipment as an act of censorship?⁹¹

⁹⁰ These tensions, as identified in the introduction were, 1) a growing frustration with state-censorship, 2) the shifting relationship between the public and the state, 3) the antagonistic relationship between the West and East German media, and 4) the tensions between Honecker's and Gorbachev's diverging political visions.

⁹¹ "Information zur Reaktion von DDR-Bürgern," 12.

Censorship was so endemic to the state-socialist system that people immediately suspected the hand of the government when the magazine failed to appear. Further comments reported by the MfS, however, reveal why this specific act of censorship crossed a line. The MfS reported that some individuals argued that the non-appearance of *Sputnik* amounted to an “incapacitation” (*Entmündigung*) of the *Sputnik* reader and a violation of the Helsinki accords, which committed the signatories to the free flow of information across borders. Information was regularly and systematically withheld from readers, to the point where it became an acquired skill to read the official press against the grain and distill information from what was and was not explicitly stated. This daily practice of systematic censorship was also an “incapacitation” of the East German citizen, but most petitions and comments did not seek to overhaul the entire media system or to liberalize the media. Rather, it was the act of censorship *against a Soviet publication*, against a publication from within the Socialist sphere that raised the *Sputnik*-ban from tolerable (if not regrettable) censorship to a fundamental violation. Here the boundaries of acceptable media control on the part of the state were made clear.

A January 12, 1989 report, commissioned by Honecker, evaluated over 800 petitions that had been submitted to the Central Committee. Petitions have a long history in European governmental administration and were a common form of communication between the public and the government in the state-socialist system.⁹² In the GDR, party members valued the right given to them by SED party statute to “direct questions to any higher institution of the party up to the Central Committee and to demand an answer to the essence of the matter.”⁹³ In a 2010 interview, former Central Committee member and eventual Prime Minister of the GDR, Hans

⁹² For a discussion of the history of the petition, and the petitioner’s use of language see, Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 264–275.

⁹³ “Letter Exchange between Mr. Breitzkreutz and the office of Joachim Herrmann,” 51.

Modrow said that the petition was a way for the public to exert pressure on the state. While the singular petition could help someone move up the waiting list for an apartment or a car, taken together a mass of petitions were “an instrument, to help understand, what was actually happening in the society.”⁹⁴ The January report claimed that the majority of petition writers,

justified their reactions with the fact that the news about the removal of *Sputnik* from the Post distribution list occurred without a political explanation. They explained that they would not have turned to the Central Committee if the contents of the editorial “Against the Misrepresentation of Historical Truth” published on 25 November 1988 in *Neues Deutschland* had been made available at the time of the first press release.⁹⁵

In other words, the major violation was not the act of censorship but the lack of justification for that censorship. As Martin Sabrow pointed out in his chapter on scandal and dictatorships, the petitions revealed that the East German public was not challenging the legitimacy of the SED state, the idea of state-socialism, or even censorship itself.⁹⁶ However, as was clear with the 25 November report to Honecker on the initial reactions to the editorial, the comments and petitions presented in this report cannot be taken at face value. There are a number of factors that could have shaped the information presented in this report. First, this was information that was selected and cultivated for Honecker by members of the SED leadership. As was shown with Dohlus’s report to Honecker regarding the ND editorial, information in these reports was tailored to please the General Secretary. Negative or troubling information might be withheld or minimized, which the case with Dohlus’s report of the editorial’s overwhelming positive reception.⁹⁷ Second, petition writers needed to be careful how they constructed their petitions since they were actively engaging with and drawing the attention of the repressive regime. Petitions were useful to the

⁹⁴ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 45.

⁹⁵ Müller, “Abschlußinformation über die Bearbeitung,” 2.

⁹⁶ Martin Sabrow, “Die Wiedergeburt des klassischen Skandals. Öffentliche Empörung in der späten DDR,” in *Skandal und Diktatur: Formen öffentlicher Empörung im NS-Staat und in der DDR* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 255.

⁹⁷ In Günter Schabowski’s memoir he claims that reports were re-written so that they would not be seen by Honecker as a “provocation.” Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, 253–254.

state, only if they were deemed constructive. “Provocative” petitions were either ignored or resulted in consequences ranging from a meeting with party representatives, the MfS, or dismissal from the party. Every petition triggered a mandatory “conversation” with representatives of the party (or organization) leadership.⁹⁸ During these meetings, petition writers were pressured to recant their criticisms and acknowledge the justification of the ban. From the 800 petitions that were evaluated in this report, eighteen resulted in party dismissals, and fifteen were routed to the local party leadership for “party-proceedings” (*Parteiverfahren*). A large subset of petition writers distanced themselves from their original positions when confronted by party representatives.⁹⁹

While the petitions revealed contours of the public’s response to the *Sputnik* ban, they were not the only way in which the public communicated its concern. A number of individuals and groups engaged in public demonstrations of their opposition to the ban. An MfS report, compiled on November 30, detailed a small number of incidents. Some groups penned open letters to the Soviet publisher Novosti, or posted “wall newspapers” in the halls of universities and offices. In one instance, the MfS reported that a “church employee” stood at a pedestrian tunnel at Alexanderplatz on November 22, 1988 and unrolled a sign criticizing the *Sputnik* ban.¹⁰⁰ Two days later, the West German newspaper, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* received eyewitness reports of the same incident, reporting that a man stood in the pedestrian zone of Alexanderplatz and held up a sign saying: “For a free press, freedom for *Sputnik*.” *Süddeutsche Zeitung* claimed

⁹⁸ Müller, “Abschlußinformation über die Bearbeitung.”

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4–6.

¹⁰⁰ “Hinweise zu einigen bedeutsamen Aspekten der Reaktion der Bevölkerung im Zusammenhang mit der Mitteilung über die Streichung der Zeitschrift ‘Sputnik’ von der Postzeitungsvertriebsliste der DDR,” 5.

that the man was “hailed away” within minutes.¹⁰¹ The MfS report mentioned that there were three additional instances in which certain slogans or watchwords were posted in Berlin and Erfurt. These watchwords: “Freedom of the Press for *Sputnik* Now”, “*Sputnik* lives” and “Honey [a play on the name Honecker], relinquish *Sputnik*.” These actions both by the “church employee” and by the anonymous posters shed light on a more critical response to the ban, which challenged the practice of censorship more fundamentally than the petitions noted in the January 12 report. Rather than accept that censorship had its uses, these demonstrations used the *Sputnik* ban as an opportunity to publically challenge the restrictions placed on the press in East Germany.

Most of the responses to the *Sputnik* ban came from people outside of the journalistic profession. However, this is not to say that the ban was silently accepted among journalists. The response of media professionals is particularly interesting, because the *Sputnik*-ban involved further government interference into the journalistic profession and provided the journalists an opportunity to comment on the role of censorship practices within the profession. Two cases in particular reveal the reaction among media professionals to the ban. In one case, an informant for the MfS compiled reports of discussions among ADN journalists revealing varying degrees of acceptance and resistance to the ban. In the second case, one media professional—a Moderator for the youth radio station DT-64—used her show as a platform to express her feelings toward the ban.

The Ministry for State Security maintained contacts and informants within many companies, factories, and institutions in a variety of sectors across East Germany and the state’s media institutions were not immune to internal covert surveillance. The informants were

¹⁰¹ Berlin AP, “Protest in Ostberlin gegen Sputnik Verbot,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 24, 1988, 271 edition.

responsible for documenting internal attitudes, conversations and situations that could be of interest to the MfS. As a result, when the *Sputnik*-ban prompted immediate “intense discussions” among the journalists, the MfS was duly informed of the content and tenor of these conversations. Two reports, one submitted in December of 1989 and a second in January of 1989, detailed the emerging response of journalists to the ban. Both reports stated that the ban was widely rejected by the majority of journalists. One source reported the consistent opinion that the act of banning *Sputnik* was considered an “ill-advised, politically false step with unforeseeable consequences.”¹⁰² Even after journalists were presented facts and justifications in their party groups, “a large number of the employees of ADN were not in favor of the decision. They are of the opinion that combative opinions should also be printed and that every reader should come to terms with that themselves.”¹⁰³ This sentiment, that journalists should be able to provide the public with greater information and allow the public greater autonomy to interpret information on their own, was tied directly to the frustration that the East German citizens received provocative and combative information from the West.

Many, who supported the ban, spoke bitterly over the fact that again the opportunity was missed to educate our citizens in a timely manner about the facts and considerations that led to this decision, and therefore the field was conceded to the enemy.¹⁰⁴

This sentiment was repeated in many divisions of ADN. “Once again, the majority of East German citizens were pre-informed about internal events by Western media.”¹⁰⁵ The journalists were surprised and frustrated by the fact that West German media were able to report almost

¹⁰² “Information zur Problematik ‘Sputnik’ und ‘Freie Welt’” (Hauptabteilung II, Dezember 1988), MfS HA ZAIG 14922, 1-2, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-12-](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-12-18_Reaktionen/_tabelle.html?nn=2635460>p=2671844_list%253D2)

[18_Reaktionen/_tabelle.html?nn=2635460>p=2671844_list%253D2](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-12-18_Reaktionen/_tabelle.html?nn=2635460>p=2671844_list%253D2).

¹⁰³ Schmidt, “Information über erste Stimmen und Meinungen...,” 8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

immediately on the content of internal party information and do so without any competition or counter-information from the East. The East German journalists felt that their imposed silence regarding the ban was a missed opportunity and only resulted in aggravating the situation.

[Publishing] opposing points of view and opinions from competent GDR-journalists and authors in *Sputnik* and in relevant magazines here at home would have been more appropriate, according to the majority of comrades and colleagues, than this abrupt step. The prohibition of a publication, which played a considerable role in the service of Soviet-German friendship, should be the last possible step.¹⁰⁶

Some journalists argued that in addition to the general public, they themselves were being incapacitated (*Entmündigt*) by this decision. As was the case with the petitions, the reactions of the journalists within ADN did not deny the legitimacy of censorship. Again, it was the implementation of the ban that frustrated the journalists. While some journalists did call for greater freedom of opinion and more autonomy for the East German citizen to interpret information on their own, they used the *Sputnik*-ban to advocate and argue for greater freedom *within* the existing system, not an upheaval of the system itself. These conversations reveal that on the one hand, journalists felt the freedom to discuss political and social issues internally, a fact confirmed by many journalists in the post-Wende period.¹⁰⁷ However, on the other hand, journalists were aware that their conversations and actions were being monitored, and there were consequences for taking too aggressive a stand. For example, the December report on ADN includes a comment by the Secretary of the Central Party Executive Committee of ADN, “whoever asks about the non-appearance of the October issue of *Sputnik* is acting as an enemy of the party.”¹⁰⁸ As a result, it is not surprising that the reported discussions—while critical of the state—did not go too far in challenging the legitimacy of party politics and structures.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

¹⁰⁸ “Information zur Problematik,” 1.

While most journalists and media professionals acted within the constraints of the system, expressing their distain of the ban thorough appropriate channels without challenging the legitimacy of the state, one journalist chose to make her rejection of the *Sputnik*-ban a public declaration. Silke Hasselmann was a moderator for the youth radio station *DT-64*. After reading about the *Sputnik* ban on the way to work that morning, she opened her Saturday mid-day program with a song by the British glam-punk band *Sigue Sigue Sputnik*, which, according to Hasselmann, was supposed to provide a subtle clue to the listener for what she was about to say. This was followed by the announcement: “A *Sputnik* crash landed today.”¹⁰⁹ Hasselmann continued her careful commentary throughout her multi-hour broadcast. In a 2009 radio interview, Hasselmann explained that she used song titles to help communicate her message, so that in introducing a new song from the band *Pankow* she said, “At the microphone is Silke Hasselmann, with, ‘Mutiny in the eyes [*Aufruhr in den Augen*].” Throughout her broadcast, she made subtle references to the magazine’s cancellation, never explicitly condemning the actions of the party, but communicating her feelings to the public through sarcasm and innuendo as illustrated by the following transcribed excerpt.

But surely you occasionally day dream, for example when you open the newspaper. They always provide topics of conversation, and especially today. As was not reported in the news, next to the winning lotto numbers and the first-league football tips, and other diverse newsflashes that could lead to one or another exciting conversation among your circles of loved ones and friends. Sadly, today there is one less magazine to provide us with information. But that is only fair; after all sometimes an issue has not appeared before [*gab es doch eine Ausgabe auch schon nicht*]. We readers cannot afford these delivery irregularities...¹¹⁰

Although Hasselmann had to veil her criticisms, nevertheless, her message was communicated. Some of her colleagues admired her courage for saying what previously had remained unsaid.

¹⁰⁹ “Anspielung Der Moderatorin Auf Die (vorangegangenen Nachrichten Nicht Gemeldete) Streichung Des Sowjetischen Digest Sputnik von Der Liste Des Zeitschriftenvertriebs in Der DDR,” November 19, 1988, 2010317, ARD-Hörfunkdatenbank.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

One of Hasselmann's coworkers, Marion Brasch said, in that same 2009 interview that she thought that what Hasselmann had done was "great."

She dared, what none of us had previously dared, and that was to name things by their name ... as was with *Sputnik*, with the word "Sputnik", it naturally sunk in for everyone, and everyone knew what had happened.¹¹¹

Others were less comfortable with the fact that Hasselmann had strayed so far out of bounds. For example, another *DT-64* coworker Thomas Braune remarked,

As much as we cheered for ourselves... we also knew that you could not do that. We were not journalists in a vacuum, rather we were journalists in the GDR, and that also meant maintaining a certain political correctness.¹¹²

The degree to which Hasselmann had to subvert her message and the reaction of her co-workers revealed some of the deep structural levels of censorship present in the East German media.

Journalists did not have to be told what was permissible and what was not, they knew. They had been groomed for the position through their education and training to know that there were certain things you simply did not say. Hasselmann knew that she had crossed a line with her broadcast, saying that she "trembled like a leaf" as soon as the on-air light was turned off.¹¹³

Marion Brasch noted that there was no groundswell of support for Hasselmann among the journalists. "That was the general mood at the station as was the case with the country, that you did not dare do such things, and that one feared the consequences."¹¹⁴ And there were consequences for Hasselmann's actions. All radio broadcasts were taped on a large recording device nicknamed: "Fat Berta." As a result, a tape of Hasselmann's broadcast made its way up the chain of command to the Central Committee. Hasselmann was banned from the microphone and transferred to a different division within the radio bureaucracy. Hasselmann's editor at the

¹¹¹ Jürgen Balitzki and Marcus Heumann, "Ein Sputnik Ist Heute Abgestürzt. Vorwendezeit Bei Jugendradio DT 64" (Deutschlandfunk RBB/DLF, November 9, 2009).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 7.

time recounted that, regardless of how he felt about her actions, he was not in a position to support or commend Hasselmann. If he had, he argued, the entire *DT-64* program would have been placed in jeopardy.¹¹⁵ On the one hand, Hasselmann's broadcast revealed why such public displays of dissent were so rare among journalists and why journalists continued to operate within the boundaries of the established system without challenging its legitimacy. Journalists faced professional and personal consequences if they strayed too far from the established course. And there was a deeply ingrained sense of what a journalist could and could not do. The journalistic profession was structurally embedded in the party apparatus, and the role of the journalist was defined by an allegiance to the socialist cause. Challenging the state went against the East German journalist's professional ethos and against the socialist journalist's affirmed role of propagandist, organizer, and agitator. However, her case also revealed that public displays of resistance were nevertheless possible, if not profitable, for those who dared to speak up.

East versus West

The goal of the East German media as defined by Lenin's concept for socialist media was to educate and cultivate the East German citizen, to ensure that the East German socialist citizen internalized the proper ideological interpretation of events and information. However, the East German state did not hold a monopoly on the transmission of information. The GDR's geographical location on the periphery of the socialist bloc made it particularly vulnerable to the penetration of Western media. This was a critical problem for the GDR, an obstacle not shared by other socialist states. East Germany found itself in a position, unique among socialist countries, wherein its borders could be infiltrated daily by sophisticated Western propaganda in its own tongue. This circumstance of history, geography, and geopolitics forced the East German

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

media system into a defensive position. As a result, Honecker's media policy developed in response to the pervading influence of enemy broadcast transmissions. This battle between East German and West German media was at the very core of the *Sputnik* scandal.

In early 1988, when the SED leadership was faced with *Neue Zeit*'s publication of the controversial play, *Onward... onward... onward*, Herman Axen told Soviet representatives:

Polemics with Soviet authors and media are in no way in our interest. One must always bear in mind that such publications can be exploited immediately by the imperialistic enemy for their smear campaigns.

In our cosmopolitan conditions, and in the face of confrontations with the enemy, who possesses strong material and technical means in the media, precisely in relation to those of the GDR, we navigate a daily and continuous contention with imperialistic propaganda in the GDR. That the western media slanders the socialist GDR, our population knows that, we have lived with that since the foundation of the GDR, and that is "normal" so to say.

It is more serious however, when the class enemy can obtain the ammunition for his propaganda and diversion from Soviet publications. That is why we will not allow the distribution of such completely wrong, damaging points of view in the German editions of Soviet publications.¹¹⁶

The SED leadership justified the ban of *Neue Zeit*, in part because they feared how the West German media could use the publication against them. The party feared that if it allowed Soviet authors to publish damaging and controversial articles in German in the GDR, the West would capitalize on the opportunity to further undermine the ideology of the GDR. The "daily and uninterrupted" presence of West German media was at the center of East German media policy, and decisions were made and formed by what the "imperialist propaganda" makers might do. Glasnost was dangerous, because West German media made it dangerous. The SED felt it could not engage in difficult conversations and openness with the public without that process being hijacked by the ever-present and meddling Western media institutions. Throughout the *Sputnik* scandal, the SED leadership and its supporters pointed to the insidious influence of Western

¹¹⁶ "Veröffentlichung von Auszügen aus 'Weiter... weiter... weiter,'" 167–168.

propaganda. The leadership would frequently dismiss the concerns of East German citizens by casting them as ideas spread by West German media.¹¹⁷ In a report on certain problems affecting the district of Halle, including the problem of the *Sputnik*-ban, one official wrote:

In terms of the deletion of *Sputnik* from the mailing-distribution, the reactions are diverse. There is ambiguity [*Unklarheiten*] especially in intellectual circles, among students, as well as the youth in general, in which statements are predominately borrowed from Western mass media.¹¹⁸

The accusations of Western influence may not have been too far off the mark, considering that the Western broadcast media were the only institutions reporting on the *Sputnik* scandal outside of the two statements published in *Neues Deutschland*.

The penetration of western broadcasts deep into East German territory not only served as a justification for the censorship of *Sputnik*, but also formed a central component of the argument for those who opposed the magazine's cancellation. A frequent refrain of those who questioned the ban pointed to the ever-present bombardment of western propaganda as a primary reason to trust the East German citizens with difficult and controversial subjects. The argument went as follows: if East Germans were mature and intelligent socialists who could properly interpret and disregard Western propaganda, they should also be trusted with controversial discussions emanating from the Soviet Union. In an MfS report on reactions to the *Sputnik* ban, older party members reflected this argument: "In Western Media broadcasts, information is disseminated daily that is directed against developments in the GDR, so that one should be able to cope with

¹¹⁷ In addition to "Information über einige Probleme aus dem Monatsbericht des Genossen Böhme, Bezirksleitung Halle," December 1988, DY30/2251/01, 70, Das Bundesarchiv., see "Information über erste Reaktionen," 121; Müller, "Abschlußinformation über die Bearbeitung," 332; "Hinweise zu einigen bedeutsamen Aspekten der Reaktion der Bevölkerung im Zusammenhang mit der Mitteilung über die Streichung der Zeitschrift 'Sputnik' von der Postzeitungsvertriebsliste der DDR," 5.

¹¹⁸ "Information über einige Probleme."

individual articles in *Sputnik*.”¹¹⁹ Members from the Society for German Soviet Friendship echoed this rationalization, questioning why a country that allowed its citizens to install antennas to receive Western broadcasts would not trust its citizens with the media politics of friendly countries.¹²⁰

The *Sputnik*-scandal did not exist in the absence of Western Media in the GDR. Not only did the presence of Western broadcasting form at least part of the rationale for censorship, and opposition to that censorship, but the Western reporting on the scandal also provided the East German public with the majority of information regarding the ban. The East German government argued that it censored *Sputnik* to ensure that its articles and ideas could not be manipulated by West German propaganda. However, the SED could only affect the distribution of the magazine within its own borders. Although the East German officials tried to convince the Soviet leadership to prevent the export of controversial ideas in German language publications, the Soviets did not comply. *Sputnik* still found its way to West Germany. The SED’s strategy of censorship and silence failed to produce the intended results. In banning *Sputnik* and remaining silent for so long, the East German leadership ceded the introduction and interpretation of the *Sputnik* articles to the West. As a result, it was the West German media who was pushing the narrative on the *Sputnik* ban. On October 26, 1988, four weeks before the ban was announced in *Neues Deutschland*, the West German radio news program “Echo des Tages” (Echo of the Day), reported that the magazine would not be distributed and therefore censored.¹²¹ On November 21, the Monday after the cryptic and short announcement of the ban appeared in East German

¹¹⁹ “Hinweise zu einigen bedeutsamen Aspekten der Reaktion der Bevölkerung im Zusammenhang mit der Mitteilung über die Streichung der Zeitschrift ‘Sputnik’ von der Postzeitungsvertriebsliste der DDR,” 4.

¹²⁰ “Reaktionen von DSF-Gruppen,” 65.

¹²¹ Hartwig Heber, “Berlin-Ost - Sowjetische Zeitung wird nicht ausgeliefert,” Radio, *Echo des Tages* (WDR 3, October 26, 1988).

newspapers, the *Sputnik* ban was discussed on three different WDR radio programs, with the West German reporters drawing connections to the banning of the Soviet films. On *Echo des Tages*, Hartwig Heber—in a segment titled, “New GDR Repressions”—argued that the SED was censoring Soviet cultural products that in their eyes contained and disseminated: “too much perestroika.”¹²² That same evening, *Saarländischer Rundfunk* made the *Sputnik* ban the main topic of their hour-long evening radio news program, *Abendmagazin*, discussing the ban from multiple angles, including other recent acts of censorship and the reaction from Moscow.¹²³

Without any concrete information emerging from the party, outside of the cryptic statement that the magazine failed to contribute to Soviet-German friendship, the East German public only had the West German narrative to follow. The Western media tended to draw a clear connection between the ban and Gorbachev’s reforms, seeing the ban and other acts of censorship as a rejection of the “new thinking” coming out of Moscow. Newspaper reports cited the recent visit of Ceausescu as a sign that the GDR was forging a new course, rejecting Moscow and aligning itself with the repressive Romanian regime.¹²⁴ Others pointed to the recent crackdown on church groups as evidence that the SED regime was increasing pressure on the “supporters of Moscow reforms.”¹²⁵ To the frustration of many party members and media professionals, the West German media filled the silence left by the censored and hamstrung East German press. The impact of this imbalance was substantial. On the one hand, the West was able to establish the narrative surrounding the ban. More critically, however, in ceding the

¹²² Heber, Hartwig, “DDR - neue Repressionen,” Radio, *Echo des Tages* (WDR 3, November 21, 1988), 406404.

¹²³ Susanne Reinhardt, “‘Sputnik’ auf der Abschußliste. DDR-Probleme mit ‘Glasnost.’” *Abendmagazin* (SR, November 21, 1988), 0950468, ARD-Hörfunkdatenbank.

¹²⁴ HZ, “Harte Landung bei Sputnik,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 21, 1988.

¹²⁵ “DDR verstärkt Druck auf Anhänger Moscovener Reformen, Demonstrant für verbotene Zeitschrift Sputnik verhaftet,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, November 24, 1988.

microphone to the West, the SED leadership only further strengthened the power, popularity, and primacy of the Western broadcast media. In their report on reactions to the ban, the MfS declared that many within their organization feared that the ban only increased the dependence of East Germans on West German broadcast media, since West German television programs were now reporting on the actual contents of the *Sputnik* articles.¹²⁶ The *Sputnik* ban proved that the Western media outlets were the only reliable source of information in the GDR and that in a crisis the East German media would remain frustratingly silent. The SED's strategy had backfired completely. Not only did they increase the dependence on Western Media, they also enhanced the public's interest in Gorbachev's "new thinking." Now East Germans were utilizing their contacts in the non-Socialist West so that they could sneak in materials published by the Socialist East.¹²⁷

East versus East

Gorbachev's reforms placed the SED leadership in a precarious position. The East Germans were economically, politically, and socially dependent on the Soviet Union. This dependency was deepened by a strong cultural affinity held by many East Germans for their socialist big brother. Many older East Germans saw the Soviets as their liberators from fascism, and many younger and reform minded East Germans saw the transformation in Moscow as a beacon of hope for their own country. All East Germans grew up with the much repeated propaganda slogan, "To learn from the Soviet Union, means to learn victory."¹²⁸ Therefore, when Gorbachev began to steer his country toward a new path for socialism, a path that the East

¹²⁶ "HA XIX: Information über Reaktionen und Meinungsäußerungen."

¹²⁷ "Hinweise zu einigen bedeutsamen Aspekten der Reaktion der Bevölkerung im Zusammenhang mit der Mitteilung über die Streichung der Zeitschrift 'Sputnik' von der Postzeitungsvertriebsliste der DDR."4.

¹²⁸ In many reports, this slogan is cited as an example of the hypocrisy of the ban, see for example: "Information über erste Reaktionen," 122.

German government had no interest in following, Honecker and the SED party leadership had to walk a difficult line of supporting Moscow's reforms within the Soviet Union, while distancing themselves from the possibility of reform within the GDR. Notes from the weekly *Argu* with Heinz Geggel revealed this tension. In February of 1987, Geggel issued the following commands to the collected heads of the East German media institutions:

Do not constantly pass certain words back and forth—like “new thinking” ... We do not need to think *new*! First we need to consider the NEW thinking! [The term] that Gorbachev used in Moscow, in front of artists, writers, scholars, business people, pastors, is his affair, and was only directed at certain groups, who really do need to think “new”! The word is of course not forbidden—but do not toss about terms. ...

Do not portray the Soviet Union as ideal. They have difficulties. Hopefully they will fulfill the promises of the resolutions from the XVIII Party Congress. There is enough anti-Sovietism from next-door; we will not additionally take part. So there will be no films like *Die Reue* [Repentance] etc.¹²⁹ They only portray one side. Other Soviet Comrades think as we do and demand that we speak our opinion loudly: We, however, are silent. ... As it stands now, our exchange of articles and programs benefits nothing. We follow our line, the Soviet Union theirs, under their conditions, and we are no judges.¹³⁰

The resulting media strategy involved virtual silence within the East German media regarding perestroika and glasnost, punctuated by a few carefully crafted statements and articles distinguishing East Germany and its path from that of the Soviet Union. Kurt Hager, the SED's chief ideologist, made the most famous of these statements to the West German magazine *Stern* in April of 1987. When asked if the East Germans were going to copy the Soviet Reforms he answered: “Would you, by the way, feel obligated to redo the wallpaper in your apartment just

¹²⁹ The film *Repentance* [or *Die Reue*] was an award winning Soviet film that was made in 1984, but not released until there was a more favorable political environment under glasnost in 1987. The film dealt critically with the legacy of Stalin and abuses committed under his leadership. The film was never shown in the GDR, but was broadcast on West German television on a channel that East Germans could receive. *Junge Welt* published a very critical review of the film, a review that was written by the editor of the newspaper but heavily edited by Honecker himself.

¹³⁰ Geggel and Bürger, *Das sagen wir natürlich so nicht!*, 173–174.

because your neighbor redid his?"¹³¹ Hager's statement was one of only a few public signals given by the SED indicating their stance on Gorbachev and his reforms. Again, Honecker and the East German leadership feared that their own media would be used against them by West German propaganda, so rather than risk the publication of something potentially damaging or revealing, perestroika and glasnost were added to the growing list of taboo subjects.¹³² This media silence in East Germany made *Sputnik* a rare and valuable resource for many East Germans who were interested in the ongoing transformation of the Soviet Union. When the magazine disappeared, there were few reliable alternatives available. As Holger G., a petition writer and FDJ Secretary from Karstädt, put it:

I cannot understand why the Post Ministry would cancel *Sputnik*. I am anxiously following the information coming out the Soviet Union, especially regarding perestroika. I am not interested in distortive historical representations. I get *Sputnik*, so that I can inform myself about current processes.¹³³

A report on reactions within the youth organization FDJ stated that many young people felt "robbed" of an important source of information about the Soviet Union.¹³⁴ Members of the Society for German-Soviet friendship were particularly dependent on the magazine. Many members of the organization had received subscriptions as a reward for their good works within

¹³¹ Kurt Hager, "Kurt Hager beantwortete Fragen der Illustrierten 'Stern,'" *Neues Deutschland*, April 10, 1987, sec. Politik.

¹³² For example, *Neues Deutschland* published only sixteen articles in the year 1988 that referenced either Perestroika or glasnost, and a majority of these articles detailed West German or oppositionist attacks using the ideas of perestroika and glasnost to attack the GDR or other socialist countries. Other articles came from Soviet authors who were critical of the reforms and their impact on the daily lives of Soviets. The West German monthly magazine *Der Spiegel* published over 10 times the number of articles mentioning the term "perestroika" in the same year. For an example of the growing list of taboos see Anne Bäumer-Schleinkofer, ed., *Die Westlinke und die DDR: Journalismus, Rechtsprechung und der Einfluss der Stasi in der DDR und der BRD; Symposium, 26.-27. Mai 2005, Universität Mainz* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2005), 55.

¹³³ Zentralrat der FDJ, "Erste Reaktion von Jugendlichen," 124. See also comments from Andreas G. and Dieter M. Müller, "Abschlußinformation über die Bearbeitung," 125..

¹³⁴ Zentralrat der FDJ, "Erste Reaktion von Jugendlichen," 122.

the organization, and when the magazine was taken out of distribution, they argued that the SED was silencing a valued source of information and endangering the relationship between the Soviet Union and the GDR.¹³⁵ Functionaries from within the organization pointed out that it was becoming harder and harder for them to fulfill one of their organizations key statutes, namely to convey and promote a clear and vivid picture of what life was like in the Soviet Union. They argued that the GDR was propagating an antiquated and artificial perception of the Soviet Union that had little basis in the contemporary reality. With the removal of *Sputnik* and the Soviet films, it was now becoming harder and harder to find and access current Soviet film material and publications to convey an accurate impression of contemporary life in the Soviet Union.¹³⁶

For those looking for signals of the East German government's intentions regarding Soviet-style reforms, the *Sputnik* ban was particularly illustrative. As one paper put it: "The GDR-leadership does not like glasnost and perestroika."¹³⁷ Many within East Germany also perceived this signal. The November 30 MfS report on reactions to the ban reported that there was a "frequent recurring perception" that the ban was an

... expression of the fundamental ambivalent or adverse attitude of the party and government leadership of the GDR to the politics and transformation within the Soviet Union after all. ... The simultaneous presentation of the highest award of the GDR, the Order of Karl Marx to N. Ceausescu, a known 'anti-reformist', strengthens this appraisal.¹³⁸

According to the same report, many people had pointed to the fact that this was the first time that the leadership of the SED made a decision that was an open and direct confrontation against the

¹³⁵ "Reaktionen von DSF-Gruppen," 65.

¹³⁶ "Hinweise zu einigen bedeutsamen Aspekten der Reaktion der Bevölkerung im Zusammenhang mit der Mitteilung über die Streichung der Zeitschrift 'Sputnik' von der Postzeitungsvertriebsliste der DDR," 4.

¹³⁷ HZ, "Harte Landung bei Sputnik," 2.

¹³⁸ "Hinweise zu einigen bedeutsamen Aspekten der Reaktion der Bevölkerung im Zusammenhang mit der Mitteilung über die Streichung der Zeitschrift 'Sputnik' von der Postzeitungsvertriebsliste der DDR," 4.

politics of the Soviet Union.¹³⁹ However, the cancellation of *Sputnik* was not a calculated step targeted at reform minded East Germans, rather it was an emotional and reactionary impulse on the part of Honecker resulting from a simmering frustration he had toward the Soviet's recent re-examination of the past.

Honecker's rejection of perestroika for the GDR went deeper than mere politics. Post-Wende memoirs by high-ranking East German officials point to Honecker's skepticism toward Gorbachev. Günter Schabowski stated in his 1991 memoir, *Der Absturz*, that Honecker's animosity toward Gorbachev originated from the fact that they were of different generations. Sociologists have long emphasized the role of generations and the impact of historical events on generational identity formation.¹⁴⁰ As defined by the media scholars Michael Meyen and Anke Fiedler, Honecker belonged to the "founder generation," a cohort of individuals socialized by the German Communist Party, whose formative experiences were shaped by resistance to Hitler and the experiences of war. Honecker actively opposed Hitler and the Nazi Party. He was imprisoned in Brandenburg for the duration of World War II, and he spent a year at the International Lenin-School in Moscow where he met Stalin. Honecker saw Gorbachev, who was nearly twenty years his junior as a newcomer whom he judged as disastrous for the real-socialist community. Honecker judged Gorbachev and felt that the younger Soviet did not respect the established ideological dogma that had been valid up until the 1980s.¹⁴¹ Honecker's life-story and identity were defined by his formative experiences during the war, making the established historical narrative of that period of profound personal importance. When discussing his aversion to the new historical revisions coming out of the Soviet Union, Honecker turned to his own experience

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Karl Mannheim: Essays* (Routledge, 1952), 276–322.

¹⁴¹ Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, 197–198.

of living in the Soviet Union under Stalin as evidence against the new historical claims.¹⁴²

Throughout the year 1988, Honecker and members of the party leadership made it clear that they would not tolerate attacks on Stalin and the early history of the Communist parties in Germany and the Soviet Union. The decision to ban *Neue Zeit* in January was based primarily on Shatrov's play and its critique of Stalin. The GDR would not allow the publication of materials that attacked Stalin or the early history of the CPSU or KPD (the pre-war German Communist Party), because these were perceived as attacks on the historical foundation of the party and the GDR.

Geggel echoed this stance during his March 10 Argu:

The line remains: We support everything that the Soviet Comrades are doing to realize the resolutions from the XXVII Party Congress. ... We will publish nothing in the direction of "debunking"; we will not follow that. With all of its mistakes and errors and confusions, the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is heroic. Without the Soviet Union there would be no Angola, no socialist Cuba, and also not a large number of socialist countries—so not everything can be wrong.¹⁴³

The actions of the early Communists and of Stalin all led to the formation of the GDR and the state that now existed. To call those actions into question was to question the foundation of the state itself. East Germany's media strategy of "Success-Propaganda" did not allow for a critical examination or "debunking" the past.¹⁴⁴ The media and the party had their eyes firmly trained forward. In the eyes of the East German leadership, critical investigations into the past would only raise "outrage and questions" and would only provide the West Germans with "ammunition for its propaganda."¹⁴⁵ Schabowski explains Honecker's rationale regarding the anti-Stalinist Soviet works as follows:

The banning of *Sputnik*, the attempt to obstruct or prohibit the performance of modern Soviet plays, the cancellation of Soviet films were aimed at creating an ideological "off-limits" area to seal off [the GDR] from the spill over of "new thinking." Honecker could

¹⁴² "Gespräch Honeckers mit Medwedjew," 291–292.

¹⁴³ Geggel and Bürger, *Das sagen wir natürlich so nicht!*, 200.

¹⁴⁴ "Anhörung Joachim Herrmann."

¹⁴⁵ "Veröffentlichung von Auszügen aus 'Weiter... weiter... weiter,'" 162.

not and did not want to understand that Gorbachev, as an instrument of history, had set certain processes in motion that would not steer clear of the GDR, simply because [Honecker] considered it his masterpiece.¹⁴⁶

Honecker hoped that he could insulate the GDR from the reforms occurring in the Soviet Union, that through censorship and the manipulation of the media, he could stave off the debates and transformations occurring in the larger socialist sphere. These historical re-examinations not only encouraged opposition and dissent, but they also threatened Honecker's legitimacy and legacy. In 1991, Honecker, under the threat of criminal prosecution and living under the protection of the Soviets, penned a short book detailing the events that led up to his ouster and the collapse of the GDR. At the end of this book, *Zu Dramatischen Ereignissen*, Honecker opened up about his decision process regarding Gorbachev and the *Sputnik* ban. He stated that his entire life he felt "bonded" to the Soviet Union, a fact that "... I did not deny facing the fascist "Peoples Court," and I will not do it today." But he was not interested in disseminating materials that "served neither the improvement of Socialism in the Soviet Union nor that of the GDR." In retrospect, he admitted that the *Sputnik* decision was a mistake: "I admit that the motivation for the removal of *Sputnik* from the mailing-distribution-list is an example of the fact that one should not make decisions based on emotion, which are later proven to be false."¹⁴⁷ Honecker then noted that he found it "curious" that there was more outrage surrounding the ban than regarding the actual articles in *Sputnik*, which "alleged 'guilt' on the part of the KPD for the outbreak of Second World War because they were not capable of presenting a united front to block the path of Fascism."¹⁴⁸ For Honecker, even with the benefit of hindsight, the historical revisionism in the original *Sputnik* articles was more of a violation than his order to censor the magazine. In his eyes, his only mistake was making a rushed decision based on emotion, rather than taking the

¹⁴⁶ Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, 217.

¹⁴⁷ Erich Honecker, *Zu dramatischen Ereignissen* (Hamburg: Runge, 1992), 87.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

time to construct a more calculated response. This admission fits with the consensus of historians and former members of the Politburo that the decision to ban *Sputnik* was a personal decision of Honecker's, which went against the suggestions of other members of the Politburo who advocated that a carefully worded historical critique of the articles be published to counter any controversial or damaging claims. Once the General Secretary made his decision, however, the members of the Politburo fell in line and followed their orders.¹⁴⁹ Honecker's emotional decision had the exact opposite effect than he had hoped. The cancellation of *Sputnik* only drew attention to critical debates and conversations, deepened the interest in the Soviet transformation, and permanently damaged the already vulnerable public trust in the state.

The State versus the Public

When Honecker ordered the removal of *Sputnik* from the mailing distribution list, he underestimated the potential negative reaction to the ban and overestimated his government's ability to silence and smother dissent. As a result, the ban revealed the growing disconnect between the party and the East German people. The *Sputnik* ban marks, for many historians and observers, an important point of transition for the East German government, where their central control began to erode and the public grew more confident and defiant in its opposition to the state.¹⁵⁰ The cancellation of the magazine was perceived as a gross violation: a violation of trust, of civil rights, of international law, and the East German's own intellectual maturity. As one member of the DSF put it,

¹⁴⁹ Krenz, *Herbst '89*.

¹⁵⁰ Zentralrat der FDJ, "Erste Reaktion von Jugendlichen"; Werner, "Die 'Sputnik' - Krise in der SED 1988/89"; Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*; Sabrow, "Wiedergeburt des klassischen Skandals."

This decision was a despotic act: to claim for oneself a right that was not authorized by the people of the GDR. One cannot speak in the name of the citizens, when one does not know their beliefs.¹⁵¹

It was not that the *Sputnik* ban was the first such violation. The East German state had encroached upon many rights of the East German public over its forty-year tenure. However, this was a very public act that was seen by many to be in clear defiance of the GDR's own law, as well as the country's international commitments. The MfS Report from 25 November 1988, stated that a "non-insignificant" number of people regarded the cancelation as a,

... Limitation of the right of freedom of information guaranteed in our constitution... With the decision we have evinced to what extent fundamental ideas of the freedoms of personality, thought and exchange of information, as stipulated by the Helsinki Accords and follow-up conferences, will be implemented in the GDR.¹⁵²

The January 1989 report on *Sputnik* petitions confirmed this sentiment, stating that several petitioners viewed the cancelation as a limitation on the freedom of opinion and a violation of the GDR constitution.¹⁵³ This overt act of censorship in conjunction with the banning of the Soviet films, the distancing from Gorbachev, and the honoring of Ceausescu, all indicated that the SED leadership was steering the GDR in a very ominous direction. Some warned that this decision revealed a "dangerous trend" in East German politics, and one petitioner cautioned: through decisions such as these, one unleashes intellectual movements rather than containing them.¹⁵⁴ If this was not the first time the East German state had encroached on the rights of its citizens, what was it about this act that unleashed such a response? The true violation for many individuals was that Honecker had revealed how little he trusted his people and how little the people could trust their media and government. In silencing Soviet voices and cracking down on inter-party dialog and debate, the SED further consolidated its control over the direction of the socialist project at

¹⁵¹ "Reaktionen von DSF-Gruppen," 65.

¹⁵² "HA XIX: Information über Reaktionen und Meinungsäußerungen," 28.

¹⁵³ Müller, "Abschlußinformation über die Bearbeitung," 234.

¹⁵⁴ "Reaktionen von DSF-Gruppen," 65.; "HA XX/1: Information über weitere Reaktionen," 13.

the expense of its people. If the SED did not trust its base, on what foundation did the state stand? With the Sputnik ban, the SED chipped away at its increasingly fragile foundation of support.

Entmündigung

By far the most common refrain, shared by petitioners, members of the party, members of the DSF, the ARD, students, and intellectuals was that in banning *Sputnik*, the SED had declared its citizens *entmündigt*. The word *Entmündigung*, translated into English as “incapacitation,” shares both legal and philosophical importance. In the legal tradition, to declare someone *entmündigt*, or incapacitated, is to state that they have limited legal capacity as would be the case of someone of limited mental or health capacities. Philosophically, the idea of *Mündigkeit* was important for both Kant and Adorno and was central to their understanding of enlightenment and democracy. Immanuel Kant opened his short treatise on the question, “What is enlightenment?” with the statement:

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity [*selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit*]. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage [*Unmündigkeit*] when its cause lies not in lack of understanding [*Verstandes*], but rather of resolve and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere Aude!* [Dare to know]. Have courage to use your own mind! Thus is the motto of Enlightenment.¹⁵⁵

Theodore Adorno extended this idea of *Mündigkeit* to be one of the central components of democracy, stating:

Democracy is founded on the education of each individual in political, social, and moral awareness as embodied in the institution of the representative vote. If this process is not

¹⁵⁵ In this translation, *Unmündigkeit* (as in the lack of *Mündigkeit*) is translated as immaturity, and is translated in other texts as “nonage,” or “tutelage.”

to result in irrationality, then a prerequisite must be the capacity and courage of each individual to make use of his reasoning power.¹⁵⁶

This understanding of Mündigkeit as the process of making use of one's own reasoning power without the direction or guidance of another is central to the arguments against the *Sputnik* ban. When East Germans claimed that the state was engaging in Entmündigung, or incapacitation, (the removal of Mündigkeit), they were arguing that the state had removed the individual's ability to reason for themselves. The MfS summed up this argument in their November 30 report:

The main argument of those who express a lack of understanding or rejection [of the *Sputnik* ban] is that with [the ban] the population of the GDR has become politically incapacitated [*entmündigt*]. Such an act is an expression of a lack of trust on the part of the Party and State Leadership in the political maturity and the national consciousness of the citizens of the GDR.¹⁵⁷

The East Germans who challenged the ban argued that they were politically mature and responsible citizens who could handle difficult and controversial discussions as clearly demonstrated by their ability to consume and filter West German broadcast media without becoming vulnerable to its imperialist propaganda.¹⁵⁸ Their argument, that the state did not respect or trust the citizenry, was founded on the complex relationship between the state media and its role in educating and forming an educated socialist public. As agitators, organizers, and propagandists, the East German media were tasked with creating a society of "mündig" socialist citizens, to instill in the citizenry the proper ideological consciousness to properly interpret and internalize events on their own. This practice of "persuasion" was common across Eastern Europe as communist and socialist parties tried to create societies of active and affirmative

¹⁵⁶ Theodor W. Adorno and Hellmut Becker, "Education for Maturity and Responsibility," *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 3 (1999): 21.

¹⁵⁷ "Hinweise zu einigen bedeutsamen Aspekten der Reaktion der Bevölkerung im Zusammenhang mit der Mitteilung über die Streichung der Zeitschrift 'Sputnik' von der Postzeitungsvertriebsliste der DDR," 2.

¹⁵⁸ "HA XIX: Information über Reaktionen und Meinungsäußerungen," 28–29.

participants in the socialist project.¹⁵⁹ Marx himself advocated on behalf of free speech declaring, “The essence of the free press is the character-ful, rational, moral essence of freedom. The character of the censored press is the characterless monster of un-freedom; it is a civilized monster, a perfumed abortion.”¹⁶⁰ However, in banning *Sputnik*, and withholding information from the public, the SED tacitly acknowledged the failure of its media to complete its most essential task. Instead of trusting the East German citizenry with difficult topics and allowing them to engage independently, honestly, and freely with the debates and discussions across the Soviet sphere, the media policy of the GDR treated its citizens as unruly children who were too immature to handle difficult topics. In reporting on the *Sputnik* ban, one West German opinion writer pointed the juxtaposition of Marx’s views and the SED’s policies:

The old gentlemen in the Politburo should read the young Karl Marx, who wrote that “permanent immaturity” [*permanente Unmündigkeit*], has to be defended by those who fight against the freedom of the press. The population of the GDR is, however, arguably considerably more mature [*mündiger*] than its leadership believes.¹⁶¹

This frustration regarding the state’s lack of trust in its population was not new to the *Sputnik* ban. In fact, just prior to the institution of the *Sputnik* ban, in October of 1988, Marike B., a non-party member from Mühlenbeck, wrote to the Central Committee declaring:

It cannot be confidence boosting to continue to treat the citizens of our country as immature individuals [*unmündige Leute*], to feign things one way, that are in reality different. Many citizens are concerned about how this country will progress.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ For an example of this process of “persuasion” in Romania see, Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 172–173, 283–323.

¹⁶⁰ Karl Marx, “On Freedom of the Press. Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication of the Proceedings of the Assembly of the Estates” (Rheinische Zeitung, May 1842), 27, Marx/Engels Internet Archive (Translation), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_On_freedom_of_the_Press.pdf.

¹⁶¹ zba, “Unmündig,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, November 26, 1988, sec. Meinungen.

¹⁶² Werner Müller, “Aus jüngsten Briefen an das Zentralkomitee,” October 1988, 355, DY 30/25731, Das Bundesarchiv.

Similarly, Jörg T from Dresden wrote in a letter to his regional party newspaper that in the absence of an open and honest discussion regarding the growing emigration wave of East Germans: “I feel snubbed, and declared immature [*zum Unmündigen gestempelt*] by my government, and that after 11 years of Marxist-Leninist education.”¹⁶³ Prior to the ban, East Germans were already questioning the level of trust exhibited by the government in its citizenry. In censoring *Sputnik*, however, the state unintentionally brought this simmering frustration to the fore and provided a clear example for frustrated citizens to cite. Here the growing tensions and shifting relationship between the state and its people became particularly clear.

Repercussions

The reaction to the *Sputnik* ban made the growing divide between the party and the state apparent to the SED itself, and the party leadership and subordinate organizations employed a consistent strategy to address the crisis. First, it was important that outbursts of protest and opposition be directed into appropriate and manageable channels like that of the petition or a letter to the editor. The petition allowed for dissent to be expressed to the authorities but in a quiet form. The SED did perceive the petition as an act of protest, but one that could be analyzed, tracked, and did not carry the same risks as public displays of opposition.¹⁶⁴ Petitions and letters allowed the party to manage and analyze situations as they emerged and allowed for a systematic response. For example, at the Friedrich Schiller University, students and party representatives within the Linguistics Department generated a number of spontaneous letters and signature campaigns in reaction to the *Sputnik* ban. All of these separate incidents were “canalized,” grouped together and considered one ‘incident.’ With these multiple spontaneous and disparate acts now grouped as one incident, the party could more easily address and resolve

¹⁶³ Ibid., 359.

¹⁶⁴ “Reaktionen von DSF-Gruppen.”

the situation.¹⁶⁵ One problem that the party faced, particularly at the FSU, was the fact that the party and organization representatives within the various departments supported their students' expressions of dissent. Letters from the students were championed and co-signed by various party and organization functionaries, who felt their responsibility was to present these opinions to the appropriate authorities.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, in order to address and resolve the situation the party had to first bring these functionaries into line. In response to a number of such incidents that occurred at the Friedrich Schiller University, the party leadership called a meeting with the party representatives within the affected departments. The goal of this meeting was to "clarify the functionaries' problems with regards to content, and to induce their willingness to advocate these resolved decisions."¹⁶⁷ The ultimate goal of these measures was to ultimately convince the letter writers to take back their letters.

This was the primary strategy of the SED in response to the outcry regarding the ban. The party used ideological persuasion to pressure those who spoke out to recant their dissent. It was as if the SED felt that once party discipline was re-established, the situation would be under control. The following cases of dissent within the MfS illustrate this strategy. In January 1989, the MfS submitted a summary of three incidents of opposition to the ban within their own organization. Two of these incidents involved long-standing propaganda officers, each of whom had been moved, independently of one-another, to write letters denouncing the *Sputnik* ban. One letter was intended for the desk of Honecker, the other was addressed to the Agitation Department of the Central Committee. Both MfS employees had made their criticisms of the SED's information policy and their intentions to put these feelings on paper known to their

¹⁶⁵ "Zentralrat der FDJ. Information: An der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena erscheinen...", November 24, 1988, 126, DY30/IV2/2/2.039/237, 126-128, Das Bundesarchiv. 126.

¹⁶⁶ "Zentralrat der FDJ. Information: An der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena erscheinen..."

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 127.

colleagues and superiors. As a result, the letters were intercepted before reaching their intended recipients. During separate party meetings in January, each man was called before his assembled comrades and confronted with his non-conforming positions and actions. Each man was reminded of the fierce attacks, waged daily against the party and the state. One man remained defiant, until “he was advised of his responsibilities to fulfill the party program, the statutes, and the party resolutions overall, as well as the resolution of the current challenges facing the party.” Only then did he begin to undergo a “process of transformation” in his response to the ban. Eventually both men were moved to express “self-critical” attitudes and distance themselves from their written statements. Following their ideological transformations, one man was demoted and both received official reprimands (one a simple *Mißbilligung*, the other a more serious *Rüge*) and the matter was deemed closed.¹⁶⁸ The third incident involved three young MfS corporals who questioned the rationale behind the *Sputnik* ban. The men, none of whom were members of the SED, approached a number of their party affiliated colleagues questioning the reasons behind the ban and its appropriateness, especially in light of the public’s reaction. When they were unable to elicit a sufficient explanation from their peers, they penned a letter to the Central Committee of the SED, hoping for some clarity. As a result of this letter, the three men were approached and given the reasons outlined by Honecker in his speech before the Central

¹⁶⁸ Schindler, “Ergebnisse der Bearbeitung von Schreiben, die von Angehörigen des MfS im Zusammenhang mit der Nichtauslieferung der Zeitschrift ‘Sputnik’ 10/88 an das ZK der SED gerichtet wurden” (Parteiorganisation im MfS Parteikontrollkommission, January 19, 1989), MfS SED-Kreisleitung 4581, 35-40, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1989-01-19_Ergebnisse/_tabelle.html;jsessionid=314AFAB1BAF2048D0AAD40C3C63B50F1.2_cid329?nn=2635460. 36-37. The use of censures and reprimands to enforce party discipline was a common practice within the socialist and communist parties of Eastern Europe. For examples of such in Romania see, Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 165, 175, 184, 188, 196.

Committee as well as the editorial in *Neues Deutschland*. When the men accepted this party explanation for the ban the matter was resolved. However, the head of the Politics Department (*Politabteilung*) and the secretary of the local party chapter were concerned about the inability of these men's party-affiliated colleagues to sufficiently handle their questions. They resolved to ensure that they would respond "more quickly, more articulated, and more convincingly to the questions and problems raised by members of the collective." All three incidents revealed to the MfS that not all of their members were in a position to respond correctly and appropriately to incidents like the *Sputnik* ban. These events shed light on the "necessity of unshakable trust in the correctness of the policies of the party."¹⁶⁹

An important theme that emerged from these incidents and others across East Germany was the growing disquiet within the party and government institutions. The *Sputnik* episode frustrated many party loyalists, who saw the ban as a dangerous and terrible mistake. However, rather than listen to the concerns emerging from within the party, the party instead demanded inter-party conformity and discipline, and relied on the traditional state-socialist strategies of enforcement. The party's inability to course-correct or profit from internal feedback only furthered the GDR's descent into dysfunction.

While these incidents within the MfS reveal how the party dealt with individual non-conformists, a similar strategy was engaged to address larger groups and non-party. One incident is particularly illustrative of the party's attempt—and ultimate failure—to persuade a group of individuals to renounce their dissent. A large number of DSF members within the Dresden computer factory, "Robotron," expressed concerns regarding the *Sputnik* ban and 35 members within the company had renounced their DSF membership in response to the ban. As a result, the

¹⁶⁹ Schindler, "Ergebnisse der Bearbeitung von Schreiben."

DSF scheduled a forum to address the ban and the rationale behind it. In fact, so many DSF members within Robotron signed up to attend the meeting that two forums were held to ensure there was enough capacity to handle the interest. Each forum was led by a DSF Instructor, a member of the DSF Central Board, and the First Secretary of the DSF District Board. Both forums were utter failures. Rather than convince members to renounce their positions and affirm their trust in party policy, the forums devolved into a platform for assembled members to voice their demands to the DSF and the Central Committee. The participants in the forums rejected the arguments presented by the DSF leadership, often heckling the DSF leaders, or responding in laughter to their proposed arguments. Of the party members in attendance, none spoke out in favor of the ban or party policy. The organizers noted that the *Sputnik* ban and the cancellation of the Soviet Films were not the true original concern of the assembled colleagues; rather, these incidents were used as an opportunity to address longer standing issues and grievances. The DSF leadership concluded that the forum was probably not the best medium to address dissent, since “provocative powers used it as a stage to demonstrate their positions.”¹⁷⁰ Finally, the local DSF chapter came to the conclusion that their organization was fundamentally unable to sufficiently address this problem and they needed additional support from the Central Board of the DSF.

These examples reveal the SED’s obstinate and consistent response to the ban and its failures. The SED through its party representatives and mass-organizations like the DSF, was so dogmatic in its defense of the ban, it failed to see the danger and flaws in its own policy. When faced with the wave of petitions, party and organization renunciations and public protests, the party refused to undergo its own process of self-reflection, and rather held fast to the traditional methods of party discipline and demanded self-criticism and allegiance from its dissenters.

¹⁷⁰ “Reaktionen von DSF-Gruppen.”

Regardless of any prior unease regarding the use of censorship, once the General Secretary made his decision, the party leadership and subordinate institutions fell into line, enforcing the ban and defending the rationale behind it. In his 1999 Memoir, Egon Krenz addressed the failure of the party leadership to address emerging problems. He recalled an October 1989 meeting with the “old-folks” [*die Alten*] within the party. He told them that they alone were to blame for the failures of the party, and he cited the *Sputnik* incident as a particular example of the party’s obstinacy: “None of us spoke out against [the *Sputnik* ban], even though we all knew that it was wrong.”¹⁷¹ Rather than address the concerns of a significant portion of the population, the party instead tried to enforce “unshakable trust in the correctness of the policies of the party.” As a result, the party systematically approached those who spoke out against it, and in hundreds of confrontations they demanded that these non-conformists renounce their dissent.¹⁷² In the January report by the Central Committee regarding the analysis of petitions, the working group assigned to the *Sputnik* petitions noted the success of individual discussions with petition writers stating, “Only a small number of petition writers remained unreasonable and persisted in their false and hostile positions.”¹⁷³ The only solution to the crisis was to eradicate the crisis by bringing the people back into line, and those who refused to renounce their dissent were either dismissed from the organization or subjected to a party proceeding within their local chapters. The problem, according to the SED, was not that the ban unleashed a number of deep-seated and unspoken tensions; the problem was the people did not have sufficient trust and faith in the party.

¹⁷¹ Krenz, *Herbst '89*, 234.

¹⁷² The January 12 report of incidents within the DSF cites 154 individual discussions with members regarding their petitions. See: “HA XX/1: Information über weitere Reaktionen.” The 12 January report by the Central Committee regarding the petitions advocated the use of personal discussions with petition writers as the correct strategy. See: Müller, “Abschlußinformation über die Bearbeitung,” 333.

¹⁷³ Müller, “Abschlußinformation über die Bearbeitung,” 334.

Through intimidation and persuasion, the party intended to reestablish its power and legitimacy. However, the primary result was a further erosion of party authority.

Conclusion: *Sputnik* and the Wende

The *Sputnik* scandal became the first clear chink in the armor that maintained the structure and power of the GDR establishment. The scandal exposed the many simmering tensions, revealed the state's inability to respond to widespread internal dissent, and served as a wake up call for many within the party that there were fundamental flaws with Honecker's leadership. While some may point to the *Sputnik* scandal as the first moment in the ensuing revolution that brought about the end of the GDR, historians like Martin Sabrow and Oliver Werner point out that the dynamics of the *Sputnik* scandal situate it within the pre-revolutionary period.¹⁷⁴ The tenor of the majority of petitions and varied responses to the cancellation of *Sputnik* and the Soviet Films did not question the existence of the socialist model of government; rather, many of the petitions targeted the implementation of the socialist media policy. The idea of a socialist German Democratic Republic remained inviolable.¹⁷⁵ However, while the *Sputnik*-scandal did not reach the tenor of the more fundamental and revolutionary scandals of the later months of 1989, it nevertheless symbolized the dysfunction within the last years of the Honecker administration and set the stage for the subsequent popular uprising.

The *Sputnik* scandal generated three important and lasting repercussions that had a tangible affect in setting the stage for the 1989 revolution. First, the scandal demonstrated the inadequacy of the East German media when compared to West German media. In silencing the East German media, the SED ceded the control of the flow of information to the West. The

¹⁷⁴ Sabrow, "Wiedergeburt des klassischen Skandals"; Werner, "Die 'Sputnik' - Krise in der SED 1988/89."

¹⁷⁵ Sabrow, "Wiedergeburt des klassischen Skandals," 254.

SED's insistence on success-propaganda and its silence and pedantry in times of crisis, only strengthened the reliance on West German media. MfS reports reveal that East German media professionals feared that the *Sputnik* crisis would only strengthen the East German public's demand on the West German broadcasters, yet there were no changes made to media policy.¹⁷⁶ As East Germans turned to West German broadcasts in greater numbers, the public's trust and reliance on the East German press dwindled. In the ensuing months, West German news programs broadcast information regarding the rising flood of East Germans fleeing to the West, the falsified election results in May of 1989, the terrifying events in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, and the growing protest movement in Leipzig. The East German media's continued silence in the light of Western news reporting eroded any remaining trust held by the East German public. By the fall of 1989, the East German journalistic profession suffered from a debilitating credibility and legitimacy crisis, a crisis that defined the profession's ensuing transformation during the *Wende* and Reunification. West German broadcasters not only supplanted the East German media in quality and credibility, but they also probably mobilized the East German population.¹⁷⁷ Opposition movements in East Germany were powered by the information broadcast by West German radio and television as East Germans around the country were told about the thousands of East Germans fleeing daily and the growing opposition and protest movements emerging in Leipzig. The West German media helped mobilize the East German population, drawing their attention to crises and developments across the country and the Socialist Bloc. Furthermore, through programs like "Radio Glasnost," West German broadcast media served as a platform for opposition movements and dissidents to communicate

¹⁷⁶ "HA XIX: Information über Reaktionen und Meinungsäußerungen," 27.

¹⁷⁷ These historians and their works will be discussed in Chapter 2.

their positions, demands, and concerns.¹⁷⁸ By remaining silent, the East German media were unable to present an East German perspective, ceding important ideological territory to West German media. As a result, the previously silenced and fractured East German opposition now had a way to communicate to more and more East Germans through the West German press.

A second lasting impact of the *Sputnik* crisis was the GDR's symbolic rejection of perestroika and glasnost. While Honecker's intention was to silence the historical revisionist articles in *Sputnik*, the cancellation communicated a much broader rejection of the Soviet reform project. The ban removed one of the few reliable sources within East Germany that reported on the ongoing reform process in Moscow. For any East German who held onto hopes of a Soviet style reform movement in East Germany, the *Sputnik* ban crushed any dream that one could emerge from under the leadership of Honecker. Nevertheless, many within the media industry feared that the ban only increased the interest in the magazine and the Soviet reforms.¹⁷⁹ In the ensuing months following the ban, Soviet officials hinted at their disappointment in the ban and the failure of the East German leadership to heed their warnings. In early November, following the announcement of the ban (but prior to the *Neues Deutschland* editorial), the Soviet Speaker for the Foreign Ministry, Gennadi Gerasimov, spoke to the Soviet reaction to the ban during an international press conference in Moscow. He revealed that the Soviet Union chose not to involve itself with the *Sputnik* affair, since the domestic distribution of any particular publication was "an internal concern." However, he stated that the RIA press agency and its employees were "astonished" and did not agree with the rationale behind the ban.¹⁸⁰ Later in the spring of 1989,

¹⁷⁸ Alfred Weinzierl, "7. Mai 1989 Amtlich Gefälscht," *Der Spiegel*, September 15, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-129211306.html>.

¹⁷⁹ "HA XIX: Information über Reaktionen und Meinungsäußerungen," 27.

¹⁸⁰ ADN-Information, "UdSSR-Sprecher zur Einstellung des Vertriebs der Zeitschrift 'Sputnik' in der DDR," November 23, 1988, MfS ZAIG 14922, 6, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen

another Soviet representative, Valentin Alexjewitsch Koptelzew spoke candidly about the Soviet reaction to the *Sputnik* ban with Jürgen Schwebke, a member of the Central Committee of East Germany's youth organization FDJ. Koptelzew intimated that he was disappointed in the ban, stating that while many in the GDR felt that "the truth should only be revealed in small doses, and not immediately," the fact of the matter was that you cannot prevent people from generating their own opinions, nor can you correct them.

Journalists, scholars are receiving more access to archival documents and western sources. The conclusions in *Sputnik* are perhaps premature. But when facts are clearly discovered, they must be revealed. Whatever questions emerge and lead to clarity, one has to acknowledge these.¹⁸¹

Koptelzew conceded partial Soviet responsibility for the debacle, stating that the magazine had a four-month lead-time, during which the Soviet leadership had plenty of time to intercede and halt the publication of the troubling articles; however, no such action was taken. He attributed part of the blame to the translators, claiming that the original articles in Russian did not "sound that bad." This comment was made in reference to one line in particular: "Stalin was Hitler's marionette." This line made international headlines, and was a specific target of the East German outcry.¹⁸² Koptelzew argued that the true translation should have stated: "The hand of Stalin was

des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1988-11-23_stellung.html;jsessionid=314AFAB1BAF2048D0AAD40C3C63B50F1.2_cid329?nn=2635460.

¹⁸¹ Zentralrat der FDJ, "Niederschrift über ein Gespräch mit dem Genossen Valentin Alexejwitsch Koptelzew, Sektorenleiter in der Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen im ZK der KPdSU, Sektor DDR, im Hause des ZK der KPdSU," Spring 1989, DY30/IV2/2/2.039/237, 216-223, Das Bundesarchiv.

¹⁸² See: "Stalin War Eine Marionette Hitlers," *Der Spiegel*, May 12, 1988, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13530547.html>.; Girard Steichen, "East Germany Launches Censorship Drive Against Soviet Reforms," *Associated Press*, December 8, 1988, AP News Archive, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1988/East-Germany-Launches-Censorship-Drive-Against-Soviet-Reforms/id-0611eafc9ceadcd2bbc93181311bea0d>.; He, "Gegen Die Entstellung Der Historischen Wahrheit."

directed by Hitler”¹⁸³ This translation error, in addition to other minor errors, presented the articles as more critical and inflammatory than originally intended. Koptelzew continued, that within Soviet circles there was a theory that the *Sputnik* ban had less to do with the actual content of the articles and was instead an opportunity to discipline the East German population, party members, and FDJ, in order to bring them back into line. Koptelzew acknowledged that that the SED might have taken such a drastic action in order to ensure domestic political stability; however, he expressed that in reality, the ban might have instead created more instability.¹⁸⁴ Koptelzew admitted that he had a great sympathy for “older Comrades” like Honecker and understood the East German’s concerns: “Every degradation of Stalin means an elevation of Hitler.” Koptelzew’s statements showed clearly the tension between the Soviet policy of glasnost and the East German media policies as well as the tension between the younger reform-minded Soviets and the “older Comrades” like Honecker. In the policy of glasnost, the Soviets understood that it was better to hold challenging and difficult conversations out in the open, rather than suppress and alienate public opinion. There was a momentum building behind these new revelations and reforms, one that the SED was powerless to impede.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Zentralrat der FDJ, “Niederschrift über ein Gespräch.” In researching this claim, I approached a Russian linguist with the original Russian sentence: Гитлер руководил действиями Сталина, who confirmed that the sentence implies that Hitler directed the hand of Stalin. The English edition of *Sputnik* confirms this with this translation of the phrase in question: “[Stalin’s] hand had been directed by Hitler.” The German translation was an illustrative interpretation of the original text, but also fit within the context of the implied meaning.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 219–220.

¹⁸⁵ There were also economic consequences resulting from the ban. In April of 1989 the Soviet Union announced that they would be reducing the import of East German publications by 130,000, in order to balance the trade relationship between the GDR and USSR. The result of this adjustment was a significant reduction in German language periodicals in the Soviet Union, impacting East German ex-pats and tourists in the Soviet Union. “Über die Reduzierung des Importes von Zeitungen und Zeitschriften aus der DDR durch die UdSSR” (Hauptabteilung XIX, April 5, 1989), MfS HA XIX 6935, 1-2, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU),

Finally, the lasting impact of the *Sputnik* ban was essentially symbolic. The ban came to signify, for many observers, the apex of dysfunction of the East German government. Many people who had tolerated or even supported the SED found the *Sputnik* ban to be a final straw. Many post-Wende remembrances cited this moment as an “awakening,” a point after which they would tolerate the party’s abuses and intransigence no more.¹⁸⁶ The *Sputnik* scandal proved to many that the SED was incapable and unwilling to adjust its course, even in the face of dynamic changes both within and outside of the GDR. With the introduction of the Wende under Egon Krenz, the *Sputnik* episode exemplified all of the problems that had plagued the GDR under Honecker: the ban became a wrong that needed to be righted. On October 20, the Union for Film and Television workers published a statement in the *Berliner Zeitung* demanding that the new Krenz government reverse the previous regime’s mistakes, specifically citing the *Sputnik* ban, so that the media might possibly re-earn the trust of the people.¹⁸⁷ The next day, less than a week after Honecker was removed from his position as General Secretary, Rudolf Schultze, the Minister for Post- and Telecommunication, announced that *Sputnik* would once again be available for import and distribution to East German readers.¹⁸⁸ Schultze’s clarification came

http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Vorabend-der-Revolution/1988_Sputnik-Verbot/Dokumente/1989-04-05_Reduzierung/_tabelle.html;jsessionid=314AFAB1BAF2048D0AAD40C3C63B50F1.2_cid329?nn=2635460.

¹⁸⁶ See: “DDR: Erinnerung an Montagsdemo Vom 2. Oktober 1989,” *Spiegel Online*, February 10, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/ddr-erinnerung-an-montagsdemo-vom-2-oktober-1989-a-994305.html>.; “Locker Geläutert,” *Der Spiegel*, November 7, 1994, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13691207.html>.; Weinzierl, “7. Mai 1989 Amtlich Gefälscht.”; Ariane Barth, “Es Rettet Uns Kein Gott,” *Der Spiegel*, November 12, 1989, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13497145.html>.

¹⁸⁷ ADN, “Verband der Film- und Fernsehschaffenden: Fehlentscheidungen jetzt rückgängig machen. Medien müssen das Vertrauen wiedergewinnen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, Oktober 1989, 247 edition, DDR-Presse ZEFYS.

¹⁸⁸ ADN, “‘Sputnik’ kommt wieder in den Zeitungsvertrieb,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 21, 1989, 248 edition.

nearly a year after the original *Sputnik* announcement, which had been falsely attributed to his office. The reinstatement was almost immediately received as a sign of the new Krenz government's improved relations with the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁹ During an international press conference in Moscow on November 2, Krenz discussed the reinstatement of *Sputnik*, calling the ban "an episode in the history of the Republic" and promised that that publications had the right to make decisions about their own content: "whoever does not agree with this, must take it up with the newspapers themselves." This, according to Krenz, was the only way forward.¹⁹⁰ In a speech a week later on November 9 (in the hours preceding the collapse of the wall), Krenz explained that the *Sputnik* ban was the result of "wait-and-see," "dismissive," "dogmatic," and "arrogant" tendencies on the part of the SED toward the developments in the Soviet Union, resulting in the incomprehension and protest of the East German public.¹⁹¹ Krenz was not alone in using the *Sputnik* episode as a vehicle for reflection and distancing from the past. The reinstatement of *Sputnik* provided some individuals and institutions with the opportunity to open up about their feelings toward the ban, feelings that had been heretofore silent and withheld. Post Minister Schultze made a public statement in *Berliner Zeitung*, clearing his name from any involvement in the ban, claiming that he only heard about the ban when he read the announcement in *Neues Deutschland*. The newspaper *Neues Deutschland* published a series of articles, revealing a more complicated process of reflection and transformation. On November 11, the author Gerd Prokot published an editorial taking umbrage with the article published by

¹⁸⁹ Hajo Herbell, "Gute Verbindung zwischen Berlin und Moskau," *Neues Deutschland*, October 24, 1989, 250 edition, DDR-Press ZEFYS.

¹⁹⁰ "DDR-Staatsoberhaupt: Völlige Einmütigkeit mit Gorbatschow. Internationale Pressekonferenz in Moskau," *Neue Zeit*, November 2, 1989, 258 edition, DDR-Press ZEFYS.

¹⁹¹ Egon Krenz, "In der DDR gesellschaftlicher Aufbruch zu einem erneuerten Sozialismus, Referat von Egon Krenz, Generalsekretär des ZK der SED," *Neues Deutschland*, November 9, 1989, 264 edition, DDR-Press ZEFYS.

Berliner Zeitung that stated that the Post Minister first heard about the ban from *Neues Deutschland*.¹⁹² Prokot claimed that this statement foisted the blame for the ban on his newspaper, writing “don’t beat the sack, when you intend to beat the donkey.” The blame for *Sputnik* lay with the party leadership, Prokot argued, not with the newspaper.¹⁹³ Prokot’s defensive denial of any blame struck some readers as disingenuous. One SED party member, Frieder Weiß wrote to the newspaper that for those party members who were intimidated and suffered party discipline, the newspaper’s silence and cooperation in implementing the ban required further reflection and clarification. In response to Weiß’ letter, the *Neues Deutschland* published a second editorial apologizing for its involvement in implementing the ban, as well as the newspapers attempt to justify its actions. The editorial then recounted the events leading up to the ban, revealing the role of Honecker in dictating the ban and his rejection of more moderate solutions. The editorial concluded with the statement, “That is the actual occurrence, which many citizens denounced as an expression of incapacitation and a serious impairment of the relationship with the Soviet Union.”¹⁹⁴ In symbolizing all that was wrong with the SED regime under Honecker, the *Sputnik* episode also served as a useful tool for individuals and institutions to demonstrate their separation from the past. The *Sputnik* ban was a public manifestation of the GDR’s dysfunction, and its reinstatement harbored the possibility of a reformed GDR.

¹⁹² ADN, “Postminister.”

¹⁹³ Gerd Prokot, “Wer schoß ‘Sputnik’ ab?,” *Neues Deutschland*, November 11, 1989, 266 edition, DDR-Presse ZEFYS.

¹⁹⁴ “Wie war es wirklich mit dem ‘Sputnik’ Verbot?,” *Neues Deutschland*, November 16, 1989, 270 edition, DDR-Presse ZEFYS.

CHAPTER TWO: Egon Krenz and the Media *Wende* (September 1989 – December 6, 1989)

Introduction

Shortly before 6pm on November 9 1989, Günter Schabowski entered a meeting of the Central Committee already in session. He walked up to Egon Krenz, the new General Secretary of the SED, and informed him that he was on his way to conduct an international press conference—the second such press conference in the history of the GDR—to discuss the latest of the new Politburo’s reforms. Krenz quickly handed Schabowski a draft copy of the new travel regulation that had just been read out loud and approved by the Central Committee. According to Schabowski, Krenz handed him the two pieces of paper and said, “Announce this. It will be a big hit for us.”¹ Short on time, Schabowski looked over the regulation in the car on his way to the press conference—which was scheduled to begin promptly at 6pm—and he slipped the documents in among his papers, making a note to mention the new regulation at some point during the press conference.

Günter Schabowski was the newly named Secretary for Information and Media policy, and the international press conference was part of a concerted effort by the new SED regime to evoke transparency for a party that was trying to separate itself from the rule of recently ousted General Secretary Erich Honecker. This new SED, under the leadership of Krenz, picked up the mantle of Gorbachev’s perestroika and hoped that through reform it could curb the flood of East

¹ Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, 306. Krenz’s account of this interaction differs slightly in tone and language. In his memoir Krenz recalled telling Schabowski, “You must inform them about the travel regulation. *That* is world news!” Krenz, *Herbst ’89*, 301.

Germans fleeing the country via the Czechoslovakian and Austrian-Hungarian borders.² The emigration crisis and growing demonstrations in Leipzig and cities across East Germany had forced the moribund government to take action. Yet, even after expelling Honecker, introducing a number of limited reforms, and dismissing and re-seating the Politburo, the tide of emigrants had not abated. Tensions were rising between Prague and East Berlin as the Czechoslovakian leadership grew frustrated with Krenz's abandonment of the SED's hardliner stance. As thousands of East Germans flocked to the West German embassy in Prague seeking asylum and a ticket to Bavaria, the General Secretary of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, Miloš Jakeš told Krenz in no uncertain terms, that if the East Germans did not deal with the situation, the Czechoslovakians would be forced to close their border to the GDR.³ On November 8, 1989 the Czechoslovakian Ambassador to the GDR relayed a request from Foreign Minister Sadovsky that the GDR take action to open the border and allow East Germans to cross directly into the Federal Republic.⁴

Krenz's solution to the growing domestic and international crisis hinged on the new travel regulation. The law would take effect at midnight between November 9 and 10, 1989, and would allow all East German citizens to legally obtain exit visas to travel to West Germany. Initially, Krenz planned to release the information to ADN, the East German news service, at 4am on November 10. By then, the border personnel and police would be in place and ready to help the hopefully orderly queues of East Germans hoping to cross the border. However, Krenz

² Krenz, *Herbst '89*, 296.

³ Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, 305.

⁴ "Information summary from the CPCz Central Committee to the various branches of the CPCz apparatus about the emigration of GDR citizens to the Federal Republic through the territory of the CSSR on November 1– 8, 1989.," November 8, 1989, ecorecord Group ÚV KSČ (CPCz CC), Documentation 1989 (unsorted). Teletext messages and letters of the CPCz Central Committee., National Archive, Prague, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB294/>.

was eager to publicize the new law and wanted the world to hear the news from the East Germans themselves. For once, the East Germans would be the first to announce the new and exciting developments within their country. So when Schabowski approached him and reminded him about the press conference, Krenz jumped at the chance to make world news.⁵

As Schabowski took his seat at the podium, facing the bevy of eager reporters and their equipment, he looked rightfully unseasoned and uneasy. This was the second time—in only two days—that the East Germans held an open press conference with the international media, and the consequences of a misstep were enormous. At some point deep into his planned announcements, Schabowski remembered the documents that Krenz had handed to him moments before. He fumbled through his papers, found Krenz’s copy of the law, and read it out loud. Krenz’s copy did not include any information about the midnight deadline, or the 4 a.m. announcement, so when he was asked when the law would take effect, Schabowski looked at the text of the regulation, which said that the law would take effect, “immediately.”⁶ The outcome of that night’s press conference is well known. With Schabowski’s announcement thousands of East

⁵ Krenz, *Herbst ’89*, 296–297. Earlier on the 9th of November, Krenz had met with the West German politician, Johannes Rau. Rau asked Krenz directly about the possibility of a new travel regulation, but Krenz remained evasive on the subject. He wanted there to be trust between the two governments, but knew that if he informed Rau about the soon to be announced travel law, the West Germans would yet again beat the East German media to the punch. Krenz wanted to make sure that this would be an East German announcement. The East German leader was tired of the West German media informing the East Germans about themselves. In withholding the information, Krenz wanted to make sure that he controlled the information and the narrative.

⁶ Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, 306–307. Schabowski is insistent on his versions of events. The popular narrative of the November 9 press conference was that Schabowski was handed a slip of paper with the announcement, and Schabowski mistakenly uttered the word “immediately.” Krenz in his memoir recounted that Schabowski misspoke during the press conference regarding the timing of the regulation. But Schabowski, in his memoir claimed that the version of the law handed to him by Krenz, included the word “immediately.” In fact the text of the regulation that Krenz read out loud to the Central Committee is as follows. “... 2. *Immediately* the following temporary interim regulation for travel and permanent emigration from the GDR abroad takes effect.” The word “temporary” was removed during the Central Committee meeting. Krenz, *Herbst ’89*, 299–300.

Germans rushed to the border checkpoints across the country, and amid the ensuing confusion the border guards stood aside and allowed the masses to peacefully flow over the border to West Germany.⁷

The date, November the ninth, has come to mark the symbolic death of the GDR. The Berlin Wall was so much a symbol of the repressive East German state and Cold War politics that popular understanding of the fate of the GDR and even Communism in Eastern Europe has become wrapped around that symbol's demise. However, the events of that night were the result of a long series of decisions, steps and missteps, all leading up to that bungled press conference. The collapse of the GDR did not immediately follow the opening of the border checkpoints; rather, it dragged out over the months to come.

If we return to the seminal moment of the collapse, the fall of the Berlin Wall, we see that the impetus for that powerful moment, of East Germans freely traversing the border for the first time in decades, centered on Schabowski's maladroit press conference. While there were clear geopolitical tensions shaping the actions of the East German leadership, this important event was also the direct result of fundamental changes to the structure of media and information policy in the GDR. That press conference and the events it unleashed were tied to the government's attempts and ultimate inability to address the country's growing dissatisfaction of the state run media. Decades of censorship and propaganda had eroded the public's trust in the media institutions of the GDR, especially in the face of the up-to-date and live reporting of the refugee

⁷ In his memoir, Krenz recalls that he had no idea about the press conference and the aftermath until late in the evening when he returned to his office. At 9pm, the head of the East German Ministry for State Security, Erich Mielke, called Krenz to fill him in on the situation on the streets. When asked how the State's security personnel should respond, Krenz knew that the situation could turn into a disaster at any moment. Mielke told Krenz that he needed to make a decision otherwise they were going to lose control of the situation. Krenz, after some deliberation, said, "Up with the toll bars." Krenz, *Herbst '89*, 302–303.

crisis and demonstrations coming in from Western broadcasts. Demonstrators placed freedom of the press, information and opinion at the center of their demands. In an attempt to fix the crisis, the SED turned to the media and tried to win back the public's trust through a more open and transparent media policy. However, these reforms, which Krenz called a "*Wende*," or 180-degree turn, were too limited, and the damage to the party's credibility too great for these partial reforms to stop the crisis. Once the border to the West was open, East German media institutions sought the help of Western firms to modernize their technology and practices, while West German firms seized the opportunity to expand into the Eastern media market. The reunification of Germany saw a wholesale expansion of the West German media model to the East, with all of its benefits and limitations.

This chapter will look at the final months of 1989 as Krenz and the Politburo attempted to respond to the growing domestic crisis. By investigating the *Wende* in media policy, and the responses of various media institutions, it is possible to isolate the fundamental flaws and limitations in the SED's strategy and understand the impact of the erosion of public trust in the Socialist Unity Party and its representatives. Krenz's *Wende* came too late, and his proposed reforms were too weak to re-establish the state's legitimacy and repair the social contract between the people and the state. The government and its media suffered from persisting and lingering problems from the Honecker era that were not easily brushed away. Krenz intended his *Wende* to be a 180-degree turn, but his state was too deeply entrenched in heavy and burdensome structures and practices for it to respond quickly enough to steer a new course. The inability of the media to divorce itself from the failing state bound the fate of the industry to that of its master. Krenz's reforms left the media in a state of arrested development, partially free but dependent and burdened by the party and its authority. This was the state of the media in 1990

when the borders were finally opened for the free exchange of media and information between West and East Germany and the East German markets were opened to the formidable West German media institutions.

Literature Review

During these short and dramatic months, the entire GDR society experienced a social and political revolution, and at the center of it all was the East German media, which contributed both to its failures and successes. This dynamic and fascinating period in Germany's recent history has become a popular subject for investigation for all of the social sciences, and the sheer volume of scholarship centered on the Wende and the collapse of the East German state is staggering. However, few historians have looked at the interplay between the shifting media landscape and the broader social dynamics of the Wende. Through close investigation of the fate of the East German media in the final months of 1989, it is possible to identify four major themes that are reflected in the broader historiography of the period.

First, we can see the powerful impact of popular pressure on government actions. While the East German government tried to ignore or distract from the public demonstrations and massive emigration wave, the mounting pressure from these popular movements eventually forced the government's hand. Many scholars have looked at the collapse of the GDR as the result of a popular and peaceful revolution, though they disagree on which elements of that revolution deserve the most credit. While the sociologist Detlef Pollack focused on the power of the emigration movement in fomenting public outrage and protests, other scholars have looked instead at the appeal of the West in popular imagination or the historical legacies of previous

uprisings and symbols.⁸ But, each of these scholars emphasized the role of the people in instigating reform and pressuring the government to move.⁹ Many scholars have debated the importance in the development of civil society within East Central Europe during the period of transformation and revolution.¹⁰ Looking specifically at the East German case, in comparison to its East Central European neighbors, it is clear that opposition and civil society developed relatively late in the GDR, and the movement was cut short by the adoption of West German structures and models through the unification.¹¹ In examining the history of the East German media during the winter months of 1989, we can see the government responding to specific demands made by an increasingly vocal public. As opposition grew and coalesced behind groups like the New Forum, the Krenz administration tried to adapt to demands while maintaining a hold on traditional state-socialist strategies of rule and control. Furthermore, a close investigation

⁸ See: Detlef Pollack, “Der Zusammenbruch der DDR als Verkettung getrennter Handlungslinien,” in *Weg in den Untergang: der innere Zerfall der DDR*, ed. Konrad Hugo Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999)., which emphasizes the role of the refugees in triggering protests and government reforms or Konrad Hugo Jarausch, Martin Sabrow, and Stefan Wolle, eds., “Der Traum vom Westen. Wahrnehmungen der bundesdeutschen Gesellschaft in der DDR,” in *Weg in den Untergang: der innere Zerfall der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999). Also see Hartmut Fehr, “Die Macht der Symbole, Osteuropäische Einwirkung auf den revolutionären Umbruch in der DDR,” in *Weg in den Untergang: der innere Zerfall der DDR*, ed. Konrad Hugo Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999)., as well as Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution--Central Europe 1989* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002). Also see: Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling down: The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)., for the role of the opposition groups throughout Eastern Europe on the collapse of communism in East Germany and abroad.

⁹ Pollack, “Zusammenbruch.”

¹⁰ Zbigniew Rau, *The Reemergence of Civil Society in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Paul G Lewis, and International Council for Soviet and East European Studies, eds., *Democracy and Civil Society in Eastern Europe: Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin’s Press, 1992); Matt Killingsworth, *Civil Society in Communist Eastern Europe: Opposition and Dissent in Totalitarian Regimes* (ECPR Press, 2012).

¹¹ Michael Bernhard, “Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe,” *Political Science Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (July 1, 1993): 307–26, doi:10.2307/2152014.

of internal government documents reveals that pressure on the government also came internally, through less visible channels.

A second narrative of the collapse of the GDR in November of 1989 points to an ineffectual illegitimate state, which lost its grip on power due to poor choices, made too late, without any real chance of recovery. In Hans-Hermann Hertle's detailed account of the events that led up to the state's demise, he strung together a narrative of individual choices and actions that led to unintended and fatal consequences for the ruling party.¹² Similarly, a close investigation of Krenz's media Wende policies and the debates occurring behind the scenes both within the government and within the media institutions illustrates shows the haphazard and improvisational nature of the government's attempt to react and address the crisis. The old slow-moving socialist structures were unable to maneuver and adapt to the rapid pace of change, and it was only after the media institutions were able to sever their ties to the state that they were able to respond and adjust to the shifting social and political environment.

Other historians have emphasized a third theme, the SED party's loss of legitimacy and the state's inability to hold up its end of the tacit bargain made with the public.¹³ The state's legitimacy problems were intrinsically linked to the credibility vacuum in the state run media. When the state finally did respond to public demands for reform, it turned to the media to attempt to regain the public's trust. The state's use and misuse of the media during this period

¹² Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Der Fall der Mauer: die unbeabsichtigte Selbstaflösung des SED-Staates* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996).

¹³ See Martin Sabrow, "Der Konkurs der Konsensdiktatur, Überlegungen zum inneren Zerfall der DDR aus kulturgeschichtlicher Perspektive," in *Weg in den Untergang: der innere Zerfall der DDR*, ed. Konrad Hugo Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999). Sabrow emphasizes the role of the GDR as a consensus-dictatorship, which legitimized itself through the people. Also see: Andre Steiner, "Zwischen Konsumversprechen und Innovationszwang," in *Weg in den Untergang: der innere Zerfall der DDR*, ed. Konrad Hugo Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

provides a useful lens to evaluate the extent of the state's legitimacy problems and why the Krenz reforms failed to ameliorate the crisis. The government was on the defensive, responding to public pressures and taking small steps to put their finger in the dike, but ultimately failing to stop the flood. Each action resulted in increasing the pressure on the government to change. In describing perestroika in his book *Postwar*, Tony Judt stated: "Once the sustaining supports of censorship, control and repression were removed, everything of consequence in the Soviet system – the planned economy, the public rhetoric, the monopoly of the party – just collapsed."¹⁴ The same is true of events in the GDR. Krenz's reforms not only failed in re-legitimizing the state, but they also eroded public support for the party even further. The Wende was a belated and insufficient attempt to introduce an East German perestroika and glasnost. While Krenz described the government's reform movement in the late months of 1989 as a Wende, we can see that, especially in media policy, these reforms were limited in scope, and that there were larger structural barriers preventing a full media revolution. Change did come, but it was not overnight. The foundations of state-socialism were critically damaged, although, the full erosion of the state took time.

Finally, many scholars have emphasized the complicated relationship between East and West Germany and the role of the West in determining the fate of the East German state.¹⁵ This perspective dominates the historiography of the East German media during this period. Media scholars have emphasized the important role of the Federal Republic's camera teams and journalists in disseminating information to East German citizens. Some have even argued that it was the presence of West German television camera crews that lured the East Germans to the

¹⁴ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 603.

¹⁵ See for example: Werner Weidenfeld, *Außenpolitik für die deutsche Einheit: die Entscheidungsjahre 1989/90* (Stuttgart: Dt. Verl.-Anst., 1998)., which focuses on Kohl's policies and the impact of the 10 points plan.

checkpoints on the night of November 9. The proponents of this narrative saw the collapse of the GDR as a “Television Revolution” (*Fernsehrevolution*), but they overstate the impact of the West German media and this argument distracts from the agency of individual East Germans who took to the streets.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is impossible to imagine the specific history of the collapse of the GDR without the complicated relationship between the two German states, and the analysis of the East German media institutions during this period reveals important elements of this shared history. West German media broadcasts served as the foundation for the credibility crisis in the state run media, and West German media institutions and products served as a foil for their East German counterpoints in terms of quality, style, and function.

This chapter weaves together all of these narratives and places at its center the interplay between external and internal pressures on the one side and the ability and willingness of the Krenz administration and the East German media institutions to adapt and respond on the other. In this regard, the media provides a lens that sheds light on some of the persistent and lingering problems that limited the potential scope of reform in the fall and winter of 1989/90. This chapter will begin with an investigation of Krenz’s media policies, their origins, rationale, and impact. This will be followed by a close study of how various media institutions and organizations responded to the changing political and social environment. This will reveal certain persisting problems and structures that remained in place from the Honecker era that hobbled the media’s ability to reinvent itself in its own terms. By embedding the history of the media within a larger historical context, and focusing on the events of this relatively short period, this chapter will show just how difficult it was for the East German media institutions to detach

¹⁶ For an overview of the idea of the “Television Revolution” and the limitations of that designation see, Rainer Bohn, Knut Hickethier, and Eggo Müller, *Mauer-Show: das Ende der DDR, die deutsche Einheit und die Medien* (Berlin: Ed. Sigma, 1992), 7–16.

themselves from the party and the East German state. The East German media institutions, the media profession, and the journalists themselves struggled throughout the 1990s to fully grapple with and move on from the legacy of the SED and the propagandistic origins of the profession. The goal of this chapter is to better understand and reveal the structural, political, and professional factors that shaped and determined the pace and direction of the profession's transformation during this period, which set the stage for the impending reunification with the West.

Pressure and Reform: Honecker's departure and Krenz's Media *Wende*

The Sputnik crisis, as illustrated in the previous chapter, revealed the growing frustration among the East German citizenry toward the state and its media policies. However, Honecker refused to budge amid the growing internal pressure for reform and the external pressure coming from Eastern European reformer countries. As glasnost and perestroika opened the countries of Hungary and Poland to reform, the GDR maintained its hard-line alongside Czechoslovakia and Romania. In the months following the Sputnik scandal, citizen groups within the GDR were able to capitalize on the growing public frustration and took to the streets in small numbers in early September 1989 to challenge the authority of the state and make demands. When the government responded in its traditional fashion, through clashes with police and other repressive measures, the movement only intensified. However, the state was not willing to give into the demands of a "fifth column."¹⁷ Honecker's stance toward the fleeing refugees was made clear on October 2, when the East German media broadcast a commentary from ADN regarding the refugee crisis. When it came to the East Germans who were fleeing to the West via the embassy in Prague,

¹⁷ For an account of the origins of the protest movement see Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 15–52., and Pollack, "Zusammenbruch."

“they have all, through their actions, proven their moral values with their feet, and taken themselves out of our society, therefore one should not shed a tear for them.”¹⁸ Honecker had edited the commentary himself, penciling in the line about the lack of tears.¹⁹

Even as late as October 1989 the government was still implementing its old practices of spin or silence to attempt to control the situation. Heinz Geggel, the head of the Agitation Department sent a memo to Joachim Herrmann on October 2, 1989, titled: “Suggestions on How to Handle the BRD Smear Campaign.” The memo detailed Geggel’s strategy for combating the problem of the refugee crisis. The memo echoed the traditional tactics and mindset of the media leadership. Geggel shifted the blame of the current crisis onto the GDR’s perpetual enemy, West Germany. According to the memo, the East German media should vilify the refugees as traitors, place the blame for the crisis on the West German diplomats, and recast the idea of the West as a corrupt, unequal, inhumane, false fantasy.²⁰ Geggel’s suggestions were nothing new, a simple extension of the well-established propagandist strategy of the West as the perpetual enemy and the source of all of the GDR’s woes.

After the outbreak of protests in Dresden on the night of October 4-5, the deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Television, Klaus Raddatz, proposed that the GDR broadcast a report titled, “Where is the border/limit?” (*Wo ist die Grenze?*). The report would show the damage from the protests and show how the police remained peaceful in the face of violent protest from provocateurs. Video and images would highlight the massive damage inflicted by young and rowdy protestors. Special attention would be paid to a young officer by

¹⁸ “Sich selbst aus unserer Gesellschaft ausgegrenzt,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 2, 1989, ZEFYS.

¹⁹ Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, 235.

²⁰ “Vorschläge zur Behandlung der BRD-Hetzkampagne,” October 2, 1989, DY30/ IV 2/037/17, Das Bundesarchiv.

the name of Baumhäckel, who was injured while he was fulfilling his national duty that night. The report would close with images of the train station as the daily life returned to normal in the GDR.²¹ It is unclear from the archives if Raddatz's suggested report made it on to the air, but it was illustrative of how the media tried to frame the internal crisis, place blame on the protestors, and scare the ordinary East German away from participating in the protests.

While on the surface the party under Honecker adhered to the status quo, within the ranks of the East German leadership, there grew a movement to push the party in the direction of reform. In his memoir, Günter Schabowski described the evening of October 7, 1989. As Honecker raised a glass to toast the long and glorious history of the German Democratic Republic during the 40th anniversary celebration, Günter Schabowski stole away to watch as hundreds of East Germans made their way past the Palace of the Republic as they marched toward a monthly protest at Alexanderplatz. In Schabowski's recollection, he could hear two syllables rise above the din of the crowd as the people shouted, "Gor-bi, Gor-bi, Gor-bi." Schabowski called Egon Krenz to his side as they watched the protestors stream by.²² Within days, these two men would be in charge of giving the people what they wanted, Gorbachev style reform.

On October 11, the Politburo published an announcement detailing the steps it was planning to take to re-route the country toward a more attractive socialism. According to Egon Krenz, in his memoir *Herbst '89*, this announcement was part of an initial step to steer the party away from the increasingly ineffective leadership of Honecker. Krenz drafted the announcement, gathered support, and pushed through its inclusion into the Politburo's proceedings, against

²¹ "Sendevorschlag Zu Den Ereignissen Auf Dem Dresdener Hauptbahnhof In Der Nacht Vom 04. Zum 05.10.1990," October 5, 1990, DY 30/25745, 107-109, Das Bundesarchiv.

²² Schabowski, *Der Absturz*, 244–245.

objections and threats from Honecker.²³ The announcement, while radical compared to the standing party platform, was not a break with the past, but rather an adjustment of course. The Politburo still decried the imperialist “hate filled” propaganda campaign being waged against the East German people by its West German neighbor, while at the same time vowing to fashion a more responsive socialism that would address the concerns and needs of the public, including more travel possibilities and a “media close-to-life” (*lebensverbundene Medien*).²⁴ This hybrid response paid lip service to the demands arising out of the protest movements, but still continued to deflect responsibility for the crisis onto the shoulders of the ever-present imperialist threat. In the face of reports coming over the broadcast waves, the East German media seemed more out of touch and impotent. By declaring the development of a new type of media, “close-to-life,” the government tacitly acknowledged that the old media strategy was no longer sufficient, and the Politburo hoped to assuage the public’s growing dissatisfaction. However, this minor shift was not enough. The next day, reports from the various districts showed East German citizens demanding more than a “media close-to-life.” The proposed changes needed to happen immediately; citizens were tired of relying on the West German media for information about developments in East Germany.²⁵ Krenz pushed forward with his plan to seize control of the party. Egon Krenz instigated an internal coup, and on October 17, 1989 the Central Committee moved to release Erich Honecker from his position as General Secretary, a position he had held

²³ Krenz, *Herbst '89*, 121–144. In his memoir Krenz details the conversations and backroom agreements he undertook to build a consensus for this announcement and against Honecker. Initially Honecker rejected the announcement, saying that it was announcing the GDR’s surrender. Krenz claims that Honecker pressured him and threatened his position in attempts to prevent the inclusion of the document into the proceedings of the Politburo, but eventually Honecker succumbed to the rising pressure against him within the leadership of the party.

²⁴ “Erklärung des Politbüros des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 12, 1989, ZEFYS.

²⁵ “Weitere Auszüge aus Berichten zur Lage vom 12. 10. 1989,” October 12, 1989, DY 30/IV 2/2.037/17 130-132, Das Bundesarchiv.

for nearly two decades.²⁶ Two days later, Honecker publically announced his resignation, citing health issues and failing strength and energy to properly serve the people and their party.²⁷

When Krenz announced his “Wende” in the press on October 19, he spoke directly to his vision for the new media.

Dear Comrades, our reflective discussions in our mass media will be of great importance in the preparation of the XII Party Congress. We promise many specialized proposals for the resolution of the developmental problems in our society, but also– I would say –[we promise] stronger and more public debates with elements that challenge the essence of socialism and our politics. To that end we encourage the editorial staffs. Our republic has talented competent Journalists who enjoy their work and the political fight, and who have ideas and imagination. They have pushed to be able to engage in an exchange of ideas with their readers, listeners, and viewers, to advance our society as a constructive community of politically enlightened, politically active, and politically responsible people. Naturally, this means for each journalist to be able to see the danger in this responsibility. Our press cannot become a grandstand for directionless, anarchic speech. It certainly must not become a stomping ground for demagogues, and they must – like the politicians – see that complicated circumstantial questions not be watered down with nimble and simple answers. It is good that the press, already in the previous weeks, has identified the benchmarks for how journalists can effectively live up [not only] to their social responsibility but also their opportunity.²⁸

Krenz continued to see the media as a partner in the socialist project. Through a more open East German press, but also a press that was aware of its moral and social responsibility, the GDR could follow in the spirit of perestroika and save itself before losing itself. Krenz hoped to strengthen the domestic press, so that it could counter the persistent meddling influence of the West German media, which he saw as challenging the sovereignty of the GDR.²⁹ However,

²⁶ In his Memoir, Egon Krenz detailed how he was able to quietly gather support among reform minded members of the SED leadership, and carefully oust Honecker from power. Within the ranks of the SED leadership, there was growing frustration with Honecker’s hardliner policies and Krenz seized the opportunity to push Honecker aside and hopefully initiate reform before it was too late. Krenz, *Herbst ’89*, 120–168.

²⁷ Honecker, Erich, “Erklärung des Genossen Erich Honecker,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 19, 1989, ZEFYS.

²⁸ “Rede des Genossen Egon Krenz, General Sekretär des Zentralkomitees der SED,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 19, 1989.

²⁹ *Ibid.* In his speech, Krenz declared, “Our socialist German republic is and will remain a sovereign land. We will solve our own problems. I am voicing a number of protests and demands

while Krenz's SED lengthened the leash of the media, he was not yet ready to release it completely, for fear of "stomping grounds" and "demagogues."

Honecker's departure marked an important turning point for GDR media. Along with Honecker, a number of high-ranking party functionaries were removed from their positions, including Joachim Herrmann, the Central Committee's Secretary for Agitation and Propaganda. Herrmann was Honecker's right hand when it came to media policy, so when Herrmann fell, so did the institutional apparatus that had controlled and censored the broadcast and print media for decades. With Herrmann's departure also came an end to the much-hated weekly *Argu* meeting.³⁰ During his last *Argu* on October 19, 1989, Herrmann's deputy Heinz Geggel acknowledged the repressive nature of his department's policies, and he declared that the government would no longer interfere with the individual news organizations. Geggel declared, "The situation is serious and complicated, things must change."³¹ He admitted that the East German media had failed in the face of Western news reporting, which had become the more reliable source of news. However, even with this admission and the promise of independence for the media, the break with party control was not complete. Later in that same meeting, Geggel attempted to spin upcoming events to the party's advantage, even suggesting that the editors try to convince fellow party members to abstain from the upcoming demonstrations for media freedom, claiming that they may even be able to get the event canceled if no one showed up to participate.³²

that have come in the previous days and months from GDR-citizens, when I demand that Bonn and the media directed from there, stop interfering in the internal matters of the GDR."

³⁰ For more on the *Argu*, and the structures of media control in the GDR please re-visit Chapter

1.

³¹ Geggel and Bürger, *Das sagen wir natürlich so nicht!*, 227.

³² *Ibid.*, 229–232.

While the abolition of the weekly *Argu* removed one pillar of the government censorship of the media, more concrete forms of censorship fell away over the course of the fall and winter months. In some cases, the government took official steps, responding to public pressure, to counteract some of the more brazen acts of censorship taken in the previous year. In late October, the Minister for Post and Telecommunications was able to announce that the Soviet magazine *Sputnik* would soon be available again for purchase and subscription.³³ The magazine's disappearance had triggered a massive public outcry and became a symbol of the SED's censorship abuses. Days later, on November 2, the Culture Minister announced that five Soviet films that had been banned the previous fall would resume showing in East German movie theaters.³⁴ This walking back of the previous regimes more brazen censorship overreaches signaled a shift away from the old media controls, an improvement in the relationship between Berlin and Moscow, and the state's allowance of historical re-investigation especially concerning abuses during the Stalin era.³⁵

The Central Committee was not the only government branch with an eye on the new media. The Ministry for State Security (known by the abbreviation MfS or more colloquially as the Stasi) also had to grapple with the new face of the old media and tried to use this new tool to their advantage. In a November 1 internal memo titled "Regarding the Media Policy" (*Zur Medienpolitik*), the surveillance organization noted that East Germany's media, which "had suddenly become so interesting," still had room to improve. The party press had the power to tap into the emotions of their readers, viewers, and listeners, but only if it was the first to report on

³³ ADN, "Sputnik kommt wieder."

³⁴ "Sehenswert: Askoldows „Die Kommissarin", " *Neues Deutschland*, November 2, 1989, ZEFYS.

³⁵ Jewgeni Worobjow, "Weiße Flecken tilgen APN-Gespräch mit dem Chefredakteur der sowjetischen Zeitschrift, Jewgeni Worobjow," *Neues Deutschland*, November 1, 1989, ZEFYS.

events. This was particularly true for those events that had emotional resonance with the public. For the MfS, the party press needed to serve as a role model in matters of “media responsibility” for all other media, which included the overcoming of Stalinism and the completion of the transformation process.³⁶ In the eyes of the Ministry, the party press could still be used as a tool, not to manipulate the facts, but to demonstrate that the government and its institutions were dedicated to transparency and reform. Eyeing an opportunity to improve the Ministry’s reputation, the leadership of the department *Grundorganisation IX*, drafted a resolution suggesting that the MfS turn to the media to regain the trust of the public, which would aid them in the renewal of Socialism. By opening up about the Ministry’s past in an honest and self-critical fashion and making the necessary structural and personnel changes, the MfS hoped that it could show that it was a part of the *Volk*, that it represented the people’s interests, and that it could potentially gain back the trust of the public.³⁷ These ideas were put into practice as representatives of the Ministry sat for interviews with the *Freie Presse* on November 4 and the *Berliner Zeitung* on November 9. Both of these interviews showed the tension between freedom and constraint during the media Wende. While the representatives of the MfS turned to the media in a symbolic act of open dialog, the interviews themselves were not overly critical or challenging, and in the case of the *Berliner Zeitung* interview, the questions were provided in advance and the answers were drafted and approved internally to ensure proper messaging.³⁸ So

³⁶ “Zur Medienpolitik,” November 1, 1989, 104, BtSU, MfS, HA IX, Nr 198397, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

³⁷ Grundorganisation IX, “Beschuß der Leitung der Grundorganisation IX,” November 3, 1989, BStU, MfS, HA IX, Nr. 20525, 2., Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

³⁸ “Correspondence between Bezirksverwaltung Berlin MfS Gen. Strathmeier and the Berliner Zeitung,” November 9, 1989, BStU, MfS, BV Berlin, BV Leitung Nr. 63, Bundesbeauftragte für

while the MfS spoke of a need for openness and the strengthening trust with the public, the journalists and editors of the *Freie Presse* and *Berliner Zeitung* were either unable or unwilling to push too hard against the government's most infamous control apparatus. In fact, the *Freie Presse* interview was circulated internally within the MfS as examples of how the ministry should reach out to the public using the press.³⁹

In response to the protesters' demands for a new media law that guaranteed freedoms of the press and opinion, the Central Committee under Krenz issued a draft resolution on November 1 that promised a new Media law by March of 1990. The resolution called for the formation of a committee by November 15 that would be comprised of representatives from the ministries, parties, mass organizations, unions, publishers, editors, and media scholars. This committee would be responsible for drafting a new law that would provide the constitutional foundation for the freedom of the press, and it would also create the position of government speaker, who would be required to hold regular press conferences to inform the domestic and foreign press about the ongoing work of the government.⁴⁰ The call for the government speaker and regular press conferences came from the Journalists Union (VDJ), which placed importance on government transparency and access. Only one week later, during the 10th Conference of the Central Committee, Krenz's government took a number of drastic steps to stave off the tide of dissent.

die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

³⁹ Siegfried Gehlert, "Freie Presse Seite 2: Zum Thema 'Stasi in Die Produktion' FP Interview Mit Dem Leiter Der Bezirksverwaltung Karl Marx Stadt Des Ministeriums Für Staatsicherheit, Generalleutnant Dr. Siegfried Gehlert," November 4, 1989, MfS HA IX Nr. 10789, 76-77; Fister, "Letter to Abteilungen Leiter," November 6, 1989, MfS HA IX Nr. 10789, 71., Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

⁴⁰ "Beschlüßentwurf über Maßnahmen Zur Ausgestaltung Der Verfassungsmäßigen Grundlagen Und Erneuerung Der Tätigkeit Der Massenmedien Vom ...," November 1, 1989, DC9/1051, Das Bundesarchiv.

On November 8, the day before the episode presented at the outset of this chapter, Günter Schabowski held the very first press conference in the history of the GDR.⁴¹ In a room packed 300 foreign and domestic journalists, Schabowski delivered the historic announcement that the entire Politburo had stepped down, and he listed a number of institutional and political reforms taken by the party on the first day of the Central Committee Congress. Included among these measures was the creation of the very institution that Schabowski now represented. The Ministry for Agitation and Propaganda had been disbanded and replaced with the Ministry for Information and Media Policy with Schabowski at its head.⁴² The press conference itself was a new innovation, a response to the demands for more access and transparency in governance. The press conferences were a concrete implementation of Krenz's stated goal of engaging in an open dialog with the public through the media. Schabowski fielded on-the-spot questions from the press-corps, something that would have seemed impossible only months if not weeks earlier. This direct access between the party leaders and the international press was unprecedented in the history of the GDR. Never before had the SED made itself so directly and immediately available to representatives of the foreign and domestic press.

Schabowski's now-famous November 9 press conference triggered the cascade of dominos that would finally topple the Berlin Wall and the border between socialist East and capitalist West. This event revealed the tenuous nature of the new relationship between the media and the government. It is clear that neither Schabowski nor his party leadership were fully prepared or experienced to handle an open dialog with the press. The idea to hold press conferences was not an orchestrated move by the government to control the flow of information

⁴¹ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 38.

⁴² Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 226–227. See: Hertle, *Der Fall der Mauer*, 163–240. for a detailed account of events leading up to and following the November 9 Press Conference.

but rather a stopgap measure to appease the demands of an increasingly vocal and organized public. Krenz lunged at the opportunity to make such a public announcement of the new travel regulations because he wanted the East Germans for once to break the news of events happening within their own country. His impulsive decision to hand Schabowski the draft regulation resulted in the chaotic events throughout the night of November 9. While it is clear that the government did intend to introduce the new travel freedoms, it was uncertain how to do so on its own terms. Schabowski and his colleagues were used to controlling the media, not engaging with it. The party was clearly uncomfortable when not in the driver's seat. For forty years the media had been the "sharpest weapon of the party," and now the party was unsure of how to operate without it being firmly in its grasp.⁴³

With the wall open, increasing stories of corruption, privilege, and misuse of power were reported in the West and East German media, and the SED quickly lost its control of the government. Hans Modrow, who had served in the Agitation Department in the early 1970s, was elected to replace Willi Stoph as Prime Minister and took office on November 18. That month, the bloc parties, who had never challenged the ruling SED, purged their leaderships and formed a democratic opposition within the Volkskammer.⁴⁴ On December 1, they were able to institute a constitutional amendment removing the protections that secured the SED's monopoly of power. On December 6, Krenz was forced to resign and was replaced by Manfred Gerlach a member of

⁴³ The idea of the media as the "sharpest weapon of the party" came from Lenin's concept for the socialist press, which formed the basis for the East German media model. See Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*.

⁴⁴ The bloc parties of the GDR (the Christian Democratic Union, CDU; Liberal Democratic Party of Germany, LDPD; National Democratic Party of Germany, NDPD; and the Democratic Farmer's Party of Germany, DBD) were auxiliary parties within the East German political spectrum. They were nominally separate from the SED, but throughout the history of the GDR they voted and acted in accordance with the political line set by the ruling party. Only during the Wende period, did the parties begin to break away and challenge the SED.

the Liberal Democratic Party. With Krenz gone, Modrow introduced non-communists into the cabinet and focused the energy of the government on implementing democratic reforms.

Impact of the *Wende* on Media Institutions

Throughout the months from September to December 1989, we can see the chaotic interplay between public demands and the government's response as the East German people and their government hurtled and jerked forward. The SED tried desperately to maintain control of the situation, responding to demands and introducing reforms following the example of the Soviet Union and its socialist neighbors. However, not only did these reforms come too late, they also only increased the pressure on the government. At the center of all of this was the media, pressed in between a demanding public and a domineering state. While Krenz's *Wende* gave the media some freedoms, many of the structures and mechanisms for control remained in place. As a result there was no revolution in the structure and practice of journalism in the winter months of 1989, but individuals and organizations were able to test their new freedom and respond to the changing social and political environment.

The Transformation of the Journalist's Union (VDJ)

While the public made demands from below and the government teetered at the top trying to reform and remain in control, there were a number of institutions and organizations within the government structure that wavered in their roles between maintaining order and pressuring for change. One such organization was the East German Journalists Union (*Verband der Journalisten*, VDJ). Nearly 90% of all journalists working in the GDR held VDJ membership, and the organization served a number of organizational functions. The VDJ coordinated with the university in Leipzig and the technical colleges and oversaw journalistic training and certification. The union also held regular conferences and events in East Germany and abroad,

and kept the journalists in communication with one another and other socialist journalists around the world. Although nearly every journalist in the GDR was a card-carrying member of the VDJ, and paid their dues, the organization had little impact on the daily work lives of the journalists.⁴⁵ Throughout most of its history, the VDJ was a pervasive but inconsequential element of the broader structural apparatus of media control. During the fall and winter months of 1989, however, the role of the VDJ would undergo a dramatic change.

Much like the SED and its leadership, the VDJ was at first slow to reform, even in the face of public pressure. In a September 18 speech given in conjunction with the 40th anniversary celebrations, the president of the VDJ, Eberhard Heinrich, echoed the claims from the SED leadership, declaring that the West German press was orchestrating a smear campaign against the East Germans. He called for the East German press to respond by being decisive and faster in delivering aggressive and convincing reports defending the socialist worldview. He stated, that over the last 40 years, journalists had helped build and defend the GDR and they fought for its socialist development.⁴⁶ In Heinrich's view, the proper response to the refugee crisis and the growing opposition movement within the GDR was to circle the wagons and defend socialism and the government from what he felt were unfair and unwarranted attacks. This was the proper position for the socialist media as agitator, organizer and propagandist for the state, and his rhetoric was a familiar drumbeat that had been heard by media producers and consumers for decades.

⁴⁵ In the interviews conducted for Chapter 5, I asked each of the journalists what role the VDJ played in their daily work life. The answer was conclusive; the VDJ played a minimal role if any in the lives of the journalists. Journalists paid their dues, and occasionally received an accommodation, but that was about the extent of its impact.

⁴⁶ "VDJ Und 40. Jahrestag Der Republik Rede Auf Der Erweiterten Tagung Des Präsidiums Des Zentralvorstandes Am 18. September 1989," September 18, 1989, DY10/399, 88-105, Das Bundesarchiv.

On October 19, after the departure of Honecker and Herrmann, Heinrich now advocated on behalf of the new media that was taking shape. In a press release the VDJ announced that journalists should try to overcome old and outdated working and thinking practices and he demanded that the government institute a government speaker (*Regierungssprecher*) who would inform the press about the meetings and actions of the Ministerrat.⁴⁷ For many within the media institutions and organizations, Honecker and Herrmann's ouster was a signal from the party leadership that the old repressive model was gone. Heinrich's October 19 statement can be seen as a step toward independence. While his rhetoric still matched that of the party leadership and followed the lines set by Krenz's political *Wende*, he did push a step further and make a concrete demand, the creation of a government speaker.⁴⁸

Krenz's *Wende* gave the VDJ the freedom to begin to serve as an interest group for the East German journalists. That same day (October 19), the VDJ issued a request to its Executive Committee (*Präsidium*) to share their ideas about the new direction of the union and the media. The editors and publishers who served on the committee responded in a number of ways. Harald Freuenberg of the publishing house, Verlag Neues Deutschland, claimed that there was now a need for honest reporting, even when the truth was unpleasant, "truth must remain truth" (*Wahrheit muss Wahrheit bleiben*). He advocated a new style of reporting. Rather than look at events in terms of their successes, which was the practice under the old model, journalists needed to develop problem statements and take a more critical tone.⁴⁹ Most members of the committee pointed to the fact that the public image of journalists was in dire need of improvement. They

⁴⁷ Verband der Journalisten, "Pressemitteilung über die Sitzung des VDJ-Präsidiums vom 19. Oktober 1989," Oktober 1989, DY 10/844, 3, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "Überlegungen Zur VDJ-Präsidiumssitzung," October 19, 1989, DY10/339, 148, Das Bundesarchiv.

feared that they had lost the trust of the public and they suggested a number of ways to regain that trust: an open dialog with the public, a need for new ideas and engagement among journalists, and the development of a more critical and faster journalistic process. Within the committee, there was also resounding support for the development of a new media law and policy that protected the freedoms of the press. While some members like Brigitte Zimmermann, the editor of *Wochenpost*, stated that the journalists alone were responsible for their own situation and they should be honest about the fact that they had made mistakes, others like Hans Brand of the *Schweriner Volkszeitung* warned against defaming the entire profession. He claimed that journalists were engaged in a learning process and only through openness and honesty without any placement of blame could they re-earn the trust of the public.⁵⁰ The notes from this discussion reveal the self-conscious and shifting professional consciousness of journalists in the early days of the Wende. The journalists were aware that they were agents of their own history, and they carried the responsibility for their current compromised position, but Krenz opened the door, if only slightly for the journalists to experiment with greater freedom and independence. Once given permission to do so, the Union reinvented itself as an advocate for the interests of its members as the profession struggled to define itself within its new freer environment.

In an interview on October 24, a representative of the VDJ defended the East German journalistic profession, claiming that until recently journalists had been placed in a difficult position. Journalists had been forced to work under conditions that contradicted their experiences and training. They had been told that only by presenting a positive image were they able to protect and defend socialism. As a result, they were not able to report on real events. This was why the journalists had embraced the government's Wende, and the need for a Wende for the

⁵⁰ "Gedanken Und Vorschläge Aus Der Diskussion Der Präsidiumssitzung Vom 19. Oktober 1989," October 19, 1989, DY10/339, 141-143, Das Bundesarchiv.

media as well. He claimed that journalists were striving to become the transmitters of information, intermediaries who would serve as the connection between the public and their representatives in government.⁵¹ The VDJ was defining for itself, based on the feedback from its members, what the role of the new socialist journalist would be. It is clear that while they embraced ideals such as freedom and openness, the VDJ was not advocating for a wholesale importation of journalism on what they saw as the Western model. Rather we see the representatives of a profession feeling their way in a new set of circumstances. The East Germans did not want a completely independent and commercial media system that paid homage to advertisers and profit, rather they wanted to be a neutral venue for communication between the government and the public. The goal remained to build and maintain a democratic but socialist society. In an October 26 letter to General Müller of the Ministry of Agitation and Propaganda, the head of the VDJ advocated for greater governmental transparency stating that the socialist citizen needed access to current and truthful information in order to fulfill his or her civic duties. Misinformation only weakened the socialist citizen and therefore the state.⁵² Heinrich advocated for a new form of socialist media, one that provided accurate and current information, with the goal of fostering an educated socialist public.

Throughout the month of October, the VDJ pressed the government through interviews and public statements with concrete demands.⁵³ These demands included the creation of a government speaker, the development of a government information policy and the drafting of a new media law. On October 31, the VDJ joined hands with the Union for Film and Television to

⁵¹ “Fragen Für VDJ-Interview,” October 24, 1989, DY10/844, 4-7, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁵² Müller, “Für Agitation,” October 26, 1989, DY10/844, 10, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁵³ “VDJ unterbreitet weitere Vorschläge, Brief an Ministerratsvorsitzenden Frage nach Mediengesetz aufgeworfen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 26, 1989, ZEFYS; “Medienkonferenz und Pressegesetz befürwortet,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 28, 1989, ZEFYS.

form a working group dedicated to the formulation of basic principles for the new media law.⁵⁴ These pressures paid off. On November 1, the government issued a resolution that laid down the framework for a new media law, and on November 8, Schabowski held his afore-mentioned first press conference. The Union had found its role as a successful interest group pressing the government on behalf of its members. The VDJ's transformation was impressive and quick. Nearly from one instant to the next, the organization seemingly switched its allegiance from supporting the state to supporting its members. However, like most East German media institutions, the transformation occurred only with the consent of Krenz and the party leadership. The VDJ only took up the mantle of reform when Krenz opened the door for them to do so. And the transformation was not instantaneous. Even as the union put pressure on the government to liberalize the media, the union was still able to exert pressure in the other direction and worked to keep its journalists in line.

Impact of the Wende on East German Broadcast Institutions

During the months between September and December 1989, the East German broadcast media went from an unreliable mouthpiece for the party and target of the protesters scorn to a dependable source for information and a venue for open discussion and debate. Due to the fact that West German broadcast media were able to transmit their programs over the walls and armed borders of the GDR, the East German broadcast media faced a unique challenge in the late months of 1989. As West German television and radio programs broadcast stories of the plight of the East German refugees and their circuitous route to the West, the East German media was instructed to practice the traditional strategy of silence and spin. This was not a new problem for East German television and radio programs, but compounding the problem even further was the

⁵⁴ "Entwurf eines Mediengesetzes wird ausgearbeitet," *Neues Deutschland*, November 1, 1989, ZEFYS.

fact that decades of strict ideological regimentation and the suppression and distortion of facts had cost the East German television news and information programs their credibility with the majority of their viewers.⁵⁵ By the fall of 1989, this credibility crisis had reached critical proportions.

GDR Television

On October 5, 1989, GDR Television aired a special program titled, “The German Country of Peace” (*Der Deutsche Friedensstaat*) in honor of the upcoming 40th Anniversary of the GDR. During the live broadcast, viewers were encouraged to call in with questions for a panel of scholars and television personalities. Shortly before the broadcast, a representative from the Central Committee’s Agitation warned the moderator of the program, Lutz Renner, not to respond to critical questions. When several callers posed difficult and challenging questions, the pretense of the open live discussion was quickly revealed to be false and the segment was cut short.⁵⁶ Some scholars have pointed to the fact that, especially within the broadcast media, major changes were only made after Honecker stepped down.⁵⁷ The broadcast journalists and editors were either unwilling or unable to challenge the status quo under the old regime and served in their role protecting and upholding the will and ideology of the party until the party signaled that change and reform would be tolerated. The departures of Honecker and Herrmann released the media from their obligations as the “sharpest weapon of the party.” Throughout the months of September and October, the more ideological of the East German television programs held

⁵⁵ Hickethier, Knut, “Das Zerschlagen Der Einrichtung: Der Weg Vom Staatsfernsehen Der DDR Zum Rundfunkföderalismus in Den Neuen Bundesländern,” in *Mauer-Show: Das Ende Der DDR, Die Deutsche Einheit Und Die Medien*, ed. Bohn, Rainer, Hickethier, Knut, and Eggo Müller (Berlin: Ed. Sigma, 1992), 71.

⁵⁶ Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 208–209.

⁵⁷ See for example: Anneliese Holzschuh, “Die Medien Proben Die Pressefreiheit: Rundfunk Und Fernsehen Der DDR Im Herbst 1989,” *Deutschland Archiv*, January 31, 1990, 231–36.

tightly to old models and practices of broadcasting, even in the face of sweeping political and societal changes.

One program in particular, *Schwarze Kanal*, became a symbol for the failures of the East German broadcast media. The intro to the Monday evening program opened with the image of antennas perched on the rooftops of East German apartment houses. Around the antennas swirled the logos of the West German broadcasting stations, growing ever larger, before a large German eagle emblazoned with the pre-WWI German imperial flag appeared on the screen and perched atop the antennas. The show, hosted by Karl Eduard von Schnitzler, aired clips from West German television programs and provided anti-Western socialist ideological commentary in an attempt to discredit and undermine the subversive power of the Western programming. As the protest movement gathered steam, the protesters took aim at the program's moderator Karl Eduard von Schnitzler, who had sat in the moderator's chair since the show's debut in 1960. Signs and banners with anti-Schnitzler slogans demanding that Schnitzler be cast to the slagheap were carried during the Monday demonstrations, which coincided with his weekly broadcasts but Schnitzler refused to resign.⁵⁸ During his October 14 broadcast of *Schwarze Kanal*, Schnitzler responded to his detractors by signing off with the statement: "Goodbye, until next Monday" (*Aufwiedersehen, bis Montag*).⁵⁹ However, Schnitzler could not hold on to his job much longer. In the face of mounting opposition to the program, a decline in viewership, and the *Wende* in media policy that came along with Honecker's departure, *Schwarze Kanal* was cancelled in favor of a new program *AK-Zwo*, a new style of news program with features like an editor in-studio, live interviews, and on-air telephone calls with correspondents who would report live from the

⁵⁸ Hoff, "'Continuity and Change': Television in the GDR from Autumn 1989 to Summer 1990," 16.

⁵⁹ Holzschuh, "Die Medien Proben Die Pressefreiheit: Rundfunk Und Fernsehen Der DDR Im Herbst 1989," 231.

scene of breaking events.⁶⁰ In his last broadcast, which aired on October 30 for only five minutes, Schnitzler stated that the fight against Capitalism had become outdated; there was no longer room for or interest in Schnitzler's perspective in the new media model.⁶¹ Schnitzler's send-off only garnered 9-14% of the television viewing audience.⁶² The next week, on AK-Zwo's initial broadcast, they gave the following declaration,

We allowed our medium to be abused by dirigiste interventions. As a consequence, our viewer's trust, and countless employees' trust in East German Television has been destroyed. For that, we beg the citizens for forgiveness.⁶³

With Schnitzler gone, the station made a public and clear break with the old practices.

While the *Schwarze Kanal* shows the path of those old-media programs that were unable to make the necessary reforms to remain relevant, there were other programs that were able to adapt more quickly to the changing environment. One program, titled *Elf 99*, was best suited to respond to the changing tides. The limitations of the East German television programming were well known to the party leadership and the party functionaries in the Agitation and Propaganda department. In order to win the appeal of young viewers, who were turning to Western television channels like *SAT 1* in greater numbers, the FDJ spearheaded a project in early 1989 to develop a new program targeted specifically at the 11-17 year old demographic. The FDJ and the SED allocated 3.5 Million Mark to build a new studio and fill it with new western technology and equipment. The editorial staff was made up of young editors and reporters under the age of 30 who were cherry-picked from other GDR television programs. The program, named after the postal code of the new studio in Berlin and modeled on the private West German stations *SAT1* and *RTL plus*, combined music videos, movie clips, daily news, fashion tips, and advice for daily problems

⁶⁰ Ibid., 232.

⁶¹ Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 220.

⁶² Holzschuh, "Die Medien Proben Die Pressefreiheit: Rundfunk Und Fernsehen Der DDR Im Herbst 1989," 232.

⁶³ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 127.

from a socialist perspective.⁶⁴ After nearly a year of planning, *Elf 99* went on the air on September 1, 1989. The two hour long program included music videos, clips from the movie *Dirty Dancing*, and special guests Karl Eduard von Schnitzler of *Schwarze Kanal*, and Erich Hahn, the head of the institute for Marxist-Leninist philosophy.⁶⁵

The program continued with this model for only a handful of episodes. However, after the departures of Honecker and Herrmann, the program was able to pivot quickly to changing circumstances. On October 22, only four days into the Krenz regime, *Elf 99* sent reporters with cameras and microphones out to question an armed Stasi guard regiment who had been dispatched to secure an area across the street from the TV studio. When questioned, the guards spoke on camera in favor of a non-violent resolution to the political crisis in the GDR. On the first day the wall was open, November 10, the program sent a reporter to one of the checkpoints to conduct interviews with border guards and border crossers on either side of the wall. The reporter filmed over two-and-a-half hours of material that were then edited together for a half-hour segment that aired that evening. The segment included an interview with a border guard who gave his account of the events the preceding evening: “There was no [official] order, the people were simply there.”⁶⁶ The reporter also gathered the first impressions of East Germans as they stood for the first time outside the “*Beate Uhse*” sex shop in West Berlin. Both of these segments would not have been possible under the Honecker regime, and they reveal how quickly the staff of *Elf 99* was able to take advantage and utilize the new freedoms granted by the Krenz regime.

⁶⁴ Hoff, “‘Continuity and Change’: Television in the GDR from Autumn 1989 to Summer 1990.”

⁶⁵ Holzschuh, “Die Medien Proben Die Pressefreiheit: Rundfunk Und Fernsehen Der DDR Im Herbst 1989,” 233.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

For a number of reasons, *Elf 99* had been placed in a prime position to adapt to the *Wende*. First, the program had only broadcast four or five episodes before Honecker's departure in October. Therefore, the show and its staff did not have a long history that could be associated with the old regime, and as a result the show did not carry the same stigma of other programs that had been on the air for years. Secondly, the staff and the program were young and therefore more willing to take professional risks and challenge the constraints that had bound reporters and editors of the old regime. Finally the structure of the show itself was flexible enough to allow for the introduction of new segments with man-on-the-street style interviews and live segments. By the end of the year, *Elf 99* had won the Burda Verlag "*Bambi Aktualität*" prize in honor of the program's "courageous, critical, and late-breaking news coverage of events in the GDR."⁶⁷

One can look at *Schwarze Kanal* and *Elf 99* and their fates in the winter of 1989 as tied to their respective generations.⁶⁸ *Schwarze Kanal*, a relic of the post-war and Cold War world order was unable and unwilling to adapt to the changing environment. *Elf 99*, on the other hand, represented the voice of the youth, and was willing to follow and eventually lead the new course set by the demonstrators and the new regime. The program's editors and staff were willing and eager to adapt to the new political and social environment and the demands of their audience. However, *Elf 99* is not the only success story. The long-standing GDR news program, *Aktuelle Kamera* suffered from many of the same ills as *Schwarze Kanal*, but like *Elf 99*, the program was able to take the necessary risks and make changes that won back the viewers' trust.

Anneliese Holzschuh, writing in an article published in January of 1990, wrote that on the first day of the Krenz era, the program *Aktuelle Kamera* switched from a medium of official

⁶⁷ Ibid., 234.

⁶⁸ The relationship of generations to historical events and memory has been discussed in Chapter One, and there will be an additional discussion of the subject in Chapter Five.

statements to a medium of information [*Verlautbarungsmedium* vs. *Informationsmedium*].⁶⁹ She wrote that it was as though the editors and journalists of the program had secretly been studying their western media colleagues; it was as if they were poised and ready to change when the right conditions presented themselves.⁷⁰

Aktuelle Kamera, the GDR's primary news program, was nearly as old as *Schwarze Kanal* and as much a symbol of GDR television programming. The thirty-minute daily news broadcast had been on the air since the 1950s and delivered the news within the parameters of the party ideology. The show, which consisted primarily of a moderator reading news and party bulletins, was not popular in the GDR, and some have even estimated its viewership ratings at around 1% before the *Wende*.⁷¹ In 1991, the editor of *Aktuelle Kamera*, Manfred Pohl, recounted just how difficult it was for the program to introduce change. He recalled the evening of the 9th of October. He had a team to take pictures of the demonstrations in Leipzig, but he was given orders not to broadcast the images, and Pohl complied.⁷² Instead, for the actual broadcast the moderators dismissed the 70,000 protesters as hooligans and avoided any substantive coverage of the events.⁷³ The next night, the editors again tried to push for the inclusion of an interview with the commander of a paramilitary *Kampfgruppe* (combat group), who said, "I and my comrades were out with the demonstrators on the Karl-Marx-Platz yesterday, and the problems, the troubles, the needs of these people are our problems, our troubles." Although the authorities tried again to pressure the editor to cut out the interview, this time Pohl resisted, and included the

⁶⁹ Holzschuh, "Die Medien Proben Die Pressefreiheit: Rundfunk Und Fernsehen Der DDR Im Herbst 1989," 232.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 130.

⁷² Tana Wollen, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, and British Film Institute, eds., "The Falling Wall: Transcript of a Discussion," in *After the Wall: Broadcasting in Germany* (London: British Film Institute, 1991), 11–26.

⁷³ Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 210.

clip against direct orders.⁷⁴ Things went back and forth for the rest of the week as the program followed but also disobeyed orders. On Saturday the crew met and decided, “never again to accept orders or regulations contrary to our political and journalistic judgment.”⁷⁵ Luckily, within a week, Krenz took office, and the program felt the freedom to air a twenty-minute segment on the demands of the opposition groups and parties. The new editor of the program, Klaus Schickhelm stated that the night of Honecker’s departure was the first time in the history of broadcast news reporting in the GDR that the editors and journalists could work freely without a diktat from the party.⁷⁶

The shift from Honecker to Krenz marked a clear line between the old regime where change and reform were deemed threatening and punishable to the new regime where change and reform were the only way to protect the future of socialism. With the new regime came the opportunity and need for a new face for the old media. It is true that *Aktuelle Kamera* followed the signals of the party and took the departure of Honecker as an opportunity to test the boundaries of the freedoms promised by the new regime. However, this whole process was not as quick or simple as the flip of a switch. The editors and journalists at the program had begun to test the waters days before the shift in regimes. On October 16, *Aktuelle Kamera* began giving up-to-date reports on the Monday demonstrations (prior to this, the television journalists had steered clear of the protests), and the next day, Schickhelm suggested a new concept for news program.⁷⁷ While these changes seem minor, it is clear that by mid October the editors and journalists at *Aktuelle Kamera* were ready for change to come. The speed at which the program

⁷⁴ Wollen, Nowell-Smith, and British Film Institute, “The Falling Wall: Transcript of a Discussion.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁶ *Fernsehfunk im Wandel Aufzeichnungen über das Fernsehen Berlin-Adlershof in der Zeit von September 1989 bis Mai 1990* ([Berlin: DFF, Historisches Archiv, 1990), 19.

⁷⁷ Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 212–213.

was able to reinvent itself is surprising. By November, viewership of the program had jumped from 9-16% to 40%, and on the night of November 8, as *Aktuelle Kamera* reported the resignation of the Politburo live, viewership reached a high of 53.8%, meaning that the majority of viewers chose the reporting of *Aktuelle Kamera* over the western broadcasts they could receive via their antennas.⁷⁸

East Germany's television news programming in the late months of 1989 became a symbol for the problems of the SED regime. Adherence to ideology and dogma and the refusal to reform in the face of public demands had discredited the regime as well as the broadcast media. Under the conditions of the Honecker regime, the hands of the media were tied so closely to the party that editors and journalists were unable or unwilling to undertake the risk of professional suicide to make the changes on their own to respond to the demands of the people. Even a program like *Elf 99*, which was designed to push boundaries and be the voice of a generation that was now rising up against the state only changed when the party signaled that change was possible.

Journalists were educated and trained to be functionaries of the socialist party, and their job as agitator, propagandist and organizer as defined by Lenin himself was to protect and nurture socialism. And as a result, even though there were those within the media institutions who advocated for change and there were some programs that pushed the margins of what was acceptable, for the most part the television journalists followed the lead of the party in responding to the public's demand for change. However, once the party accepted the possibility

⁷⁸ These statistics come from Holzschuh, "Die Medien Proben Die Pressefreiheit: Rundfunk Und Fernsehen Der DDR Im Herbst 1989," 238. Another scholar Irene Streul claims that viewership reached as high as 64% in November of 1989 in Streul, "Die Umgestaltung Des Mediensystems in Ostdeutschland: Strukturwandel Und Medienpolitische Neuorientierung in Rundfunk Und Presse Seit 1989."

of reform, most journalists relished their new freedoms and television became a medium for political change.⁷⁹ In late November 1989, a DEFA documentary filmmaker said of the new media climate,

Now, there is nothing at all that one cannot discuss. This unleashes creativity, and surely one's loquaciousness as well. We are all finding ourselves in a completely new situation. But in television it has been doubly as freeing, because television was organized much more militaristically than the film division.⁸⁰

Not only did the government begin to utilize the media as a tool to open up to the public, but the media also became platforms for multiple voices and opinions and were no longer beholden to the SED alone.

GDR Radio

As a whole, East German radio was slow to take advantage of the new freedoms under Egon Krenz. In her 1993 essay, Edith Spielhagen argued that since the leadership structures within radio remained firmly intact during Krenz's tenure, there were few discernable changes to East Germany's radio programming until Hans Modrow installed Manfred Klein as the new General Manager of Radio on December 1, 1989.⁸¹ Under the old leadership structures, East German radio personnel were hesitant to stray too far from the party line. During a meeting of the State-Committee for Broadcasting on October 26, the Committee Chairman Achim Becker interpreted the new freedoms under Krenz as an opportunity to make radio, "the fastest mass medium of the party."⁸² The new open dialogue promised by Krenz did not result in any major

⁷⁹ For more on the individual reactions to the *Wende*, see the interviews in Chapter 5 and the Appendix

⁸⁰ Holzschuh, "Die Medien Proben Die Pressefreiheit: Rundfunk Und Fernsehen Der DDR Im Herbst 1989," 231.

⁸¹ Spielhagen, Edith, "Rundfunk in Transit," in *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR: vom Ende der Ära Honecker bis zu den Volkskammerwahlen im März 1990*, by Arnulf Kutsch (Bochum: N. Brockmeyer, 1990), 37–55.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 39.

shift in tone or subject matter when it came to the bulk of radio broadcasting. Oppositional groups, and the emigration crisis remained essentially taboo.⁸³ However, within the vast radio apparatus, there were a few stations and programs that tried, to varying degrees, to tinker with the party's designated margins.

By early October, in the last days and weeks of Honecker's tenure, Leipzig had become the center of the growing protest and oppositional movement. On October 9, the local radio station, *Radio Leipzig*, broadcast an appeal of the so-called "Leipzig Six" that called for open and peaceful dialogue between the people and the government. On behalf of himself and five prominent local figures, Kurt Masur, the *Kapellmeister* of the Leipzig Orchestra beseeched the people,

Our common troubles and responsibility have brought us here together today. We are concerned about the development in our city, and we seek a solution. We all need a free exchange of ideas about the continuation of socialism in our country. For that reason today the named individuals promise all citizens, that they will apply all of their strength and authority so that this dialogue can continue not only within the district of Leipzig but also with our government. We urgently ask for calm, so that peaceful dialogue can be possible.⁸⁴

No other station followed the example set by *Radio Leipzig*, so the appeal of the Leipzig Six was not heard outside the district of Leipzig. Although there was limited movement within radio, one station in particular was able to push a little farther than its fellow broadcasters.

Jugendradio DT 64 was the radio station sponsored by the mass youth organization the FDJ, and as such the channel was designed to attract young listeners away from Western broadcasts with informative, provocative, and entertaining programming. Alongside popular music and moderated magazine-style programs, the station included short news broadcasts, all delivered

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ The audio of the "Appeal of the Leipzig six" is available through the website of the city of Leipzig, "Der 9. Oktober 89 - Stadt Leipzig," accessed October 24, 2015, <http://www.leipzig.de/buergerservice-und-verwaltung/unsere-stadt/herbst-89/der-9-oktober-89/>.

with more of an edgy tone than was permitted on other channels. *Radio DT 64* was given more leeway to handle controversial topics like AIDS, homosexuality, and relationship problems as a means to attract and hold the attention of the teenage listener. With their hands a little freer than others, the journalists at *DT 64* were able to push the envelope earlier and farther than others in the broadcast media. On October 9, when the newspaper of the FDJ published an open letter by Hermann Kant, the president of the Writers Union, which lamented the level of censorship in the GDR's media, the letter was read over *Jugendradio DT 64* the next day.⁸⁵ The journalists of *DT 64* were also some of the first East Germans to report live from the Monday demonstrations and were proud of that fact. On October 17, the Moderator Hanno Hanisch of the *DT 64* program *direkt* stated on the air:

Last night in the *RAIS* News: East media present and reporting for the first time at the Leipzig demonstrations. False: Already last week *Jugendradio* reported extensively, and yesterday evening Ingolf Rackwitz and I reported live from in front of the Nikolai Church, airtime 5:30pm.⁸⁶

Once Krenz was in office, the journalists of *DT 64* were given even greater freedom and delivered live and up-to-the-minute reports on events as they unfolded. One of the moderators of *direkt* even referred to his program as “Radio Glasnost,” a name not only associated with Gorbachev but also with an underground dissident radio program. On November 8, the staff of the station held a meeting and officially declared their mistrust in the station leadership. The entire senior staff – which had been installed under Honecker – from Editor-in-Chief down to

⁸⁵ “Ein Riß Durch Die Partei,” *Der Spiegel*, October 16, 1989, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13497940.html>.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Holzschuh, “Die Medien Proben Die Pressefreiheit: Rundfunk Und Fernsehen Der DDR Im Herbst 1989,” 234. Originally quoted from *Direkt* (*Jugendradio DT64*, October 17, 1989).

station manager were relieved of their positions.⁸⁷ The journalists and editors of *DT 64* were able to challenge the old model of broadcasting more than any other station, but nevertheless the space for reform was limited under Honecker. With Krenz, the station felt greater freedom to change, but it was only under the Modrow administration that real change was possible.

Internal Reactions to the Wende within ADN, the East German News Service

The *Allgemeine Deutscher Nachrichtendienst* (ADN) was East Germany's news wire service and supplied news content to the newspapers and broadcasters of the GDR. As the only news wire service available to the East German press, the administration of ADN was tied directly to the party leadership. Within East German media, ADN served as a safe and reliable source. If there was ever a question about the particular politics of a story, the safest route for an East German journalist was to simply quote an ADN report verbatim. This would ensure that there would be no trouble from the party leadership.⁸⁸ Much like the broadcast media institutions, reform to ADN came primarily with the change in regime under Krenz. However, a number of Stasi reports on the internal discussions of ADN employees reveal the extent to which reform was discussed within the institution, and the staff of ADN pushed for reform in small ways before change was officially sanctioned by the regime.

In the months leading up to and following the change in regimes and the fall of the wall, the Ministry for State Security was more focused on protecting its own institutions, employees and informants than it was concerned with reporting of suspicious events in East German society. This is why the number of informant and officer reports dropped in the winter months of 1989. The Ministry devoted its resources toward protecting itself from exposure and collapse

⁸⁷ Holzschuh, "Die Medien Proben Die Pressefreiheit: Rundfunk Und Fernsehen Der DDR Im Herbst 1989."

⁸⁸ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 37.

rather than encouraging informant reports. However, informants within the MfS did issue two reports in the month of October on the political situation among employees within the ADN. On October 8, an unnamed informant submitted a report on the, “Opinions of the journalists of ADN regarding the internal political situation of the GDR.”⁸⁹ The informant noted that there was growing unrest among the ADN journalists. The informant claimed that a majority of journalists within ADN felt that the only way to stabilize the current political crisis was for the government and party leadership to make changes but that these changes were impossible under the current Honecker regime. In the absence of changes or reform, the journalists felt that the people had lost any trust they had held in the government. As a possible solution, they proposed that the government could utilize the media to engage in an open dialogue with the public about the internal political problems in the GDR alongside political and ideological measures. In doing so, the party would demonstrate that they trusted the public with the truth, which would go a long way to rebuild a positive relationship with the people. These measures, however, would require major changes to the GDR’s media policy, an option that seemed impossible under the current leadership, and the journalists pointed to previous failed attempts at change as evidence of this fact. At the end of the report, the informant assured his superiors that although the journalists were critical, they were ready to support the politics of the SED as long as those policies dealt more openly and comprehensively with the problems within socialist society.⁹⁰

The October 8 report reveals an important tension between the public face of the media and the internal debate going on behind the scenes. While the news agency continued to

⁸⁹ “Information: Aktion ‘Jubiläum 40’ Zu Meinungen von Journalisten Des ADN Zur Innenpolitischen Situation Der DDR,” October 8, 1989, MFS HAXX Nr. 2109, 18-19, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

distribute news content along party lines, the journalists within the organization were engaging in debates about the role of the media in the political process and the ways in which reform could impact the current political situation.⁹¹ Furthermore, the report points to one reason why these reforms were not implemented. It was clear to the players involved that major reform was not possible under the current leadership, both of ADN and the leadership in the party. As the informant noted, previous attempts at change had failed and it was clear that the government was not budging in the face of increasing public pressure. The bureaucratic infrastructure of ADN was tied directly to the party leadership, and the administration of ADN answered directly to the Politburo. For any of the proposed reforms to have a chance, change needed to start at the top.

For the journalists within ADN, it was clear that it would take a major shift in the political environment for any serious reforms to have a chance, but this does not mean that they did not take any action. On October 12, West German news agencies reported that ADN journalists had threatened to withhold from distribution any reports that referred to peaceful protesters in Leipzig and elsewhere as “hooligans.”⁹² This was a firm push back against a common ideological spin tactic that was encouraged by the government to discredit the protesters. This fact is substantiated by a second Stasi report on the state of political opinion among ADN journalists.

The second report, filed on October 13, was issued in response to the events surrounding the 40th Anniversary celebrations on 7 October.⁹³ The informant within ADN reported that in

⁹¹ In journalist’s recollections about their professional lives in the GDR, this tension between what they knew and what they were allowed to say publically was particularly important and frustrating. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

⁹² Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 211.

⁹³ “Zu Reaktionen im ADN auf die Ereignisse um den 7. Oktober 1989 (Einschätzung vom 11.10.1989),” October 11, 1989, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik

response to the current political crisis there were two factions developing within the staff of ADN. One group, comprised mostly of older journalists, held “complete” trust with the government and advocated for calmness and patience. This group held faith that the current political situation could be resolved during the upcoming Party Congress, and in the spirit of solidarity they argued for all party members to present a unified front. The other group, however, had become “embittered” with the party’s long held policies of silence and intractability, and they demanded that the party engage more openly and honestly with the entire society. This second group emphasized that the party’s manipulation of the press was bordering on illegality. Both groups agreed that in the face of the emigration crisis there needed to be reforms to the travel policies for all citizens and that these policies were long over due. The journalists had taken notice of the increasing demonstrations and as a result were now resisting the dismissal of all protesters as hooligans and “rowdies.” The informant also noted that for the first time the journalists of the ADN had become targets of the growing unrest. Many journalists were surprised that the reputation of the organization had become so damaged. One journalist noted problems in booking interviews and others had either been insulted or threatened, or overheard people criticizing the ADN in public. Finally, the informant pointed out that Hermann Kant’s open letter that was published in *Junge Welt* and read on *DT 64* was met with great satisfaction among the journalists, who felt that Kant’s contribution was the climax of a number of recent statements made by politicians who were speaking openly and critically about the current problems in GDR society.⁹⁴

(BStU).ZOTERO: MFS HAXX Nr. 2109, Zu Reaktionen im ADN auf die Ereignisse um den 7. Oktober 1989 (Einschätzung vom 11.10.1989)

⁹⁴ Ibid.

This second Stasi report on the journalists of ADN shows how quickly the political mood among the journalists was intensifying. Within the span of a week, a general frustration had developed into unified demands for reform and active steps of resistance against ideological measures. While the news wire service maintained its public support of the regime, the journalists behind the scene demonstrated their unease and challenged the old norms and regime. While it is impossible to tell from this report how long these sentiments and frustrations had been brewing among the journalists, this report reveals that by early October there was open discussion taking place within the walls of ADN about the need for major reforms in the government and in the institution itself.⁹⁵ These reports can also be seen as a form of internal pressure placed on the regime as the debates and discussions of journalists were being communicated via the MfS to the party leadership. It is unclear what measures were taken, but the presence of this report shows that these internal discussions among journalists were being collected and evaluated by the government. This information, along with numerous other internal reports from other organizations, painted a picture of growing unrest not only in the public at large but also within factions of the government's own bureaucracy. Within a week, the Honecker regime would fall, clearing the path for very reforms suggested by the journalists at ADN.

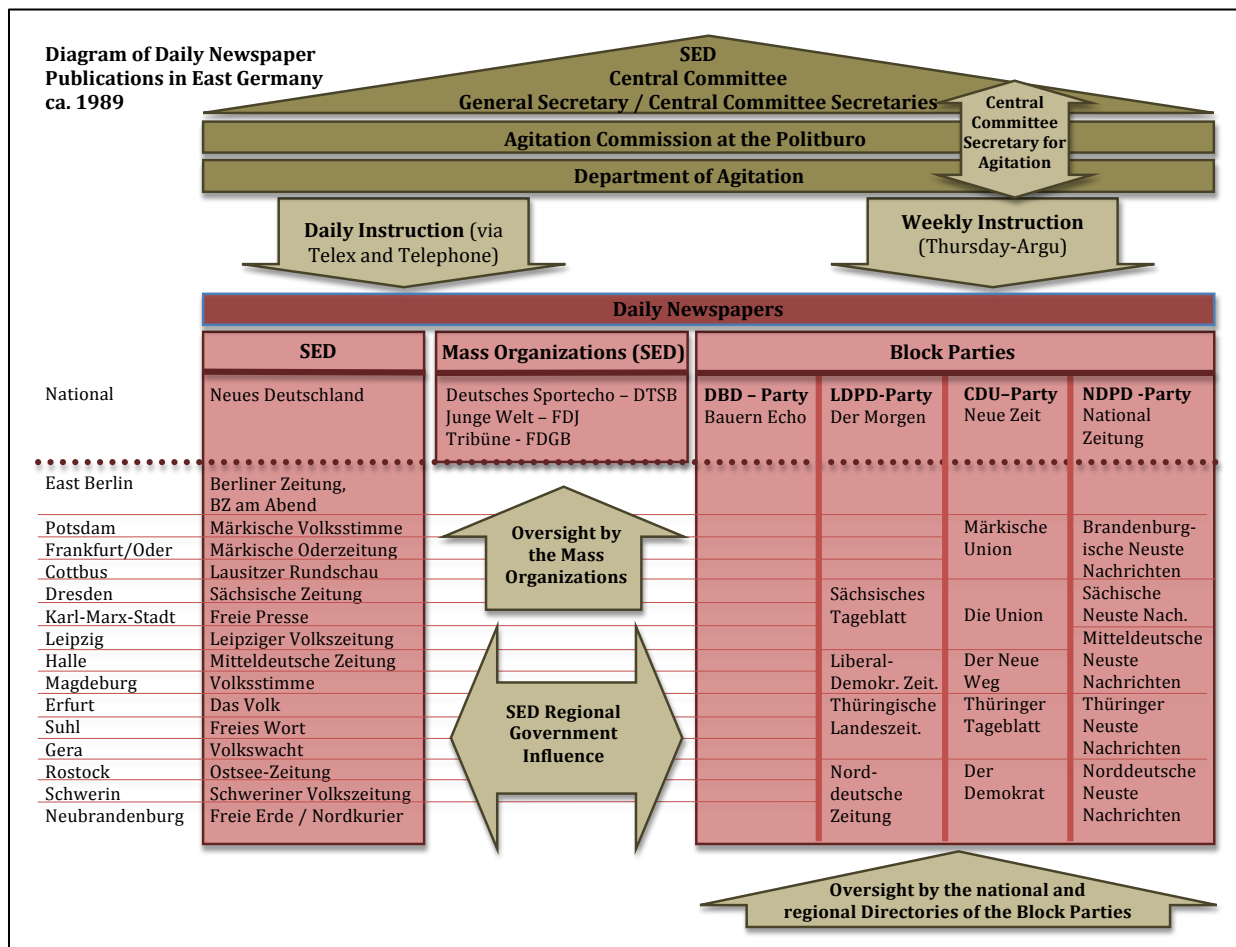
East German Print Media responds to the Wende

The daily press in East Germany was divided both by locality and political affiliation. Every newspaper, either national or local, was published through a political party or organization. The SED published one national newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, and fifteen

⁹⁵ The interviews that are included in chapter 5 confirm that these discussions were common during the final months of 1989, and the journalists were very concerned with the direction of their country and profession.

regional newspapers. The four bloc parties also published national and regional papers, with the exception of the Democratic Farmer's Party of Germany (DBD), which only published one national paper the *Bauern Echo*. In addition, three national newspapers were published by the GDR's largest mass organizations: the youth organization, FDJ published, *Junge Welt*, the organization responsible for sports, (DTSB) published *Deutsches Sportecho*, and the Free German Trade Union Federation (FDGB) published *Tribüne*. Each paper answered directly to their party or organization, and all of the newspapers fell under the supervision of the Central Committee and the department for Agitation and Propaganda.

Figure 2: Diagram of Daily Newspaper Publications in East Germany, ca. 1989⁹⁶



While each newspaper was tailored to its specific audience, none was able to escape the watchful eye of the SED and the Agitation department. As a result, with only minor exceptions, the news reporting of the individual newspapers did not stray far from the centrally approved party line. However, in the fall of 1989 as the bloc parties began to exert their independence, their newspapers followed suit, publishing increasingly critical commentaries and statements on behalf of their party leadership.

⁹⁶ Chart is an expansion of a chart that appears in Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 17.

Bloc Party Press

As the political situation within the GDR intensified in September and October of 1989, the leader of the Liberal Democratic party (LDPD), Manfred Gerlach, and the chairman of the Christian Democrats (CDU), Gerald Götting, distanced themselves from the SED.⁹⁷ Both in public statements and published commentaries in their newspapers, each leader advocated reform. On September 20, the LDPD's national newspaper *Der Morgen* published a speech made by Gerlach in honor of the GDR's 40th anniversary. In the speech, Gerlach stated that information was a civil liberty and a state responsibility. He argued that disagreement should not be considered opposition and that personal opinions on political decisions were not evidence of *bürgerlich* ideology, but rather they supported the educational and political goals of socialism. The newspaper, *Der Morgen*, was one of first to publish calls for reforms; however, as Kristen Vogel pointed out in her chapter "Publizistische Begleitung der ‚Revolution des Volkes‘: *Der Morgen* in der Endphase der DDR," the newspaper only went as far as its leader Manfred Gerlach was willing to go.⁹⁸ The journalists of the bloc party press were still confined within the parameters of party ideology, but it was the ideology of the bloc parties. As the bloc parties distanced themselves from the SED and responded to the public's calls for reform, the newspapers and journalists were able to lead the charge for changes in the practice of journalism in the GDR. As such, it was a regional newspaper of the National Democratic Party, the NDPD, which was the first paper to publish the Program Catalogue of Neues Forum on November 7, 1989, two days before the opposition group was granted official recognition by the state.

⁹⁷ For more on how Gerlach tried to instigate internal debate and discussion within his party, see Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

⁹⁸ Kristen Vogel, "Publizistische Begleitung der ‚Revolution des Volkes‘: *Der Morgen* in der Endphase der DDR," in *Fiktionen für das Volk: DDR-Zeitungen als PR-Instrument: Fallstudien zu den Zentralorganen Neues Deutschland, Junge Welt, Neue Zeit und Der Morgen*, ed. Anke Vogel and Michael Meyen (Berlin: Lit, 2011), 295–320.

As with the broadcast media, the situation for print journalists and institutions improved dramatically with the change in party leadership. With the dissolution of the Agitation Commission, editors and journalists were granted theretofore-unimaginable freedoms in terms of journalistic practice and content. However, it is important to note that while Krenz's regime was willing to open up the press to certain freedoms, the state still held an interest in maintaining order. Once again the Stasi files reveal important insight into the interplay between journalists, editors, and the party leadership.

On October 19, *Der Morgen* published an open letter that expressed concern over the current situation in the GDR and supported the upcoming demonstrations for freedoms of the press. The letter was discussed and approved by the staff of *Der Morgan* and signed by 44 employees. The letter was then given to Manfred Gerlach, for approval. According to a report by the Stasi compiled on October 21, Gerlach approved the letter with the caveat that a single phrase "to demonstrate publically for freedom of the press" (*für Pressefreiheit öffentlich zu demonstrieren*) be removed, since it did not correspond with the LDPD's official party platform. Nevertheless, the letter was published in its entirety. As a result, the paper and its leadership were reprimanded both by the Ministry for State Security and even by the Journalists Union. The editor responsible for the incident insisted that the letter was published by mistake and attributed the mistake to a technical error. The editor and the initiators of the letter were all called in for questioning, all of whom distanced themselves from the call for public demonstrations. The report concluded with a plan to investigate the motivations of the initiators of the letter.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ "Information: über die Veröffentlichung eines Briefes von Mitarbeitern der Redaktion 'Der Morgen' an den Verband der Journalisten," October 21, 1989, MFS HAXX Nr. 7749, 24-25, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

This Stasi report is quite revealing and shows the limitations of freedom under the new regime. The letter was published in *Der Morgen* on the day that Honecker stepped down, but the MfS continued to operate under the old model, with the Journalists Union following suit. While one was permitted to speak openly in favor of press freedoms, publishing a call to demonstrate publicly stepped over the line. During the transition between regimes, fears of open rebellion trumped the desire for a more free and open press. However, the report does reveal a coordinated attempt on the part of the journalists to push the boundaries of what was acceptable. Whether the letter was published in open defiance or by mistake is unclear, but it does reveal journalists advocating for their rights and challenging the limits of their freedom.

The Daily SED Press

As the SED's official national newspaper, it is not surprising that *Neues Deutschland* showed the greatest resistance to political reform. Throughout the fall, *Neues Deutschland* clung tightly to the party line that the protesters were hooligans and the demonstrations and mass emigration wave were part of a propaganda smear campaign organized by the West German media. With the introduction of the Krenz regime, and the dissolution of the Agitation Commission, other newspapers were allowed to distance themselves from the party and its ideology; however, *Neues Deutschland* remained an organ of the party and state. In notes from a November 15 Central Committee meeting, it is clear that the state continued to determine the content and tenor of the articles published in *Neues Deutschland*. Generals Schabowski and Spickermann were given the action item of ensuring that there were daily reports on the government's reform measures published in *Neues Deutschland*.¹⁰⁰ Less than two weeks later, the two generals were given the order to ensure that *Neues Deutschland* publish articles and

¹⁰⁰ "Protokoll Nr. 120 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des ZK am 15.11.1989," November 15, 1989, DY30/JIV 2/3 4462, 1-4, Das Bundesarchiv.

commentaries on the “smear campaign” against former party functionaries and the appearance of neo-Nazism, racism, and anti-Semitism.¹⁰¹ While the party conceded to the demands for a more free press, they still saw the party newspapers as a propaganda tool to influence public opinion, and *Neues Deutschland* became the primary venue for this strategy. However, the regional SED-party newspapers were granted a much longer leash.

One regional newspaper in particular used the new freedoms granted by the government to its advantage. On the day of Honecker’s departure, the new Editor-in-Chief of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (LVZ), Wolfgang Tiedke, published an article that the journalism of the GDR was no longer capable of representing the democratic needs of the people. Therefore, he promised to use all public opportunities to engage in an open dialogue with the public.¹⁰² The changes at the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* generated results. By November 8 the paper had to triple its non-subscription sales in order to keep up with demand.¹⁰³ On December 5, the newspaper went a step further and removed the slogan that had graced the masthead for four decades. The newspaper was no longer an “Institution of the Socialist Unity Party’s Regional Leadership of Leipzig” and was now an “Institution for the Interests of All Working Peoples.” The name change was the result of a special staff meeting and was implemented against the will of the paper’s publisher (namely the SED itself). In redefining itself, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* reached back into its history and chose the masthead slogan that had adorned the first edition of

¹⁰¹ “Protokoll Nr. 123 Der Sitzung Des Sekretariats Des ZK Am 21. 11. 1989,” November 21, 1989, DY 30/ J IV 2/3 4465, Das Bundesarchiv.

BArch, DY30/JIV2/3 4465.

¹⁰² Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 215.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 227.

the newspaper in 1894.¹⁰⁴ This break from the party was not only a symbolic turn away from the paper's recent and problematic past, but also an indication of the paper's self-proclaimed independence from single party loyalty.

When Krenz took office on October 19 and the SED dissolved the Agitation Commission, the party claimed that there would be a new media policy and the days of controlling the daily operations of the press were over. However, this break with censorship and enforcement was not a clean flip of the switch. Even as late as December 1989, the party still controlled 16 of the GDR's 39 daily newspapers, which meant that the Central Committee had to approve all changes to the paper's leadership and the party still served as official publisher. While the papers were granted new freedoms, the transition away from a state-run media model was a slow and confusing process. While the bloc party newspapers were able to make a cleaner break from SED control, there remained avenues of coercion and control through institutions like the MfS and the Journalists Union as shown in the case of *Der Morgen*. While major changes were taking place in the political and social environment, there were many lingering problems from the Honecker era that limited the scope of the possible transformation under Krenz. In a diary entry dated October 15, a journalist for the *Berliner Zeitung* detailed his internal thoughts after he attended an in-house party meeting at work.¹⁰⁵ The meeting was called to discuss the current crisis and was at times quite heated. He wrote:

Frequently the media has become mere receivers of official commands [Befehlsempfängern], from whom the most important information has been withheld. Autocratic interventions in articles, tabooization of socially important topics were daily occurrences, and they still are. ... We have had to find out about our own mental state

¹⁰⁴ Wolfgang Tiedke, "Was wir wollten," in *Presse Ost, Presse West: Journalismus im vereinten Deutschland*, ed. Michael Haller, Klaus Puder, and Jochen Schlevoigt (Berlin: Vistas, 1995), 263.

¹⁰⁵ Torsten H is one of the journalists who were interviewed for this dissertation. His full interview is included in the Appendix, and is presented and analyzed in Chapter 5.

from Western media. Others state the truth that *we* should be stating if we want to be open about our problems and if the party wants to regain its claim to leadership [*Führungsanspruch*]. The party leadership and the newspapers have alienated themselves from the masses. . . . This party discipline – which is naturally grounded in Leninist party theory without adhering to any other Leninist principles – can inflict damage and was defended by comrades at our meeting. They said: “We make the newspaper for the *leadership* of the Party.” Even without information we are servants of the party. Certainly this is correct, since the head of the party must make the decisions. But, when something is wrong, one must speak up, and not hold one’s tongue out of false discipline and service [*Dienerei*].¹⁰⁶

Later in his entry for the evening, he detailed the group’s demands for the party, which they hoped would quickly find their way to the party leadership and influence the decisions being made. They wanted the party to make a consequential break with the past and acknowledge that the previous methods of “success-propaganda” (*Erfolgspropaganda*) were a mistake. The media needed to break with long lasting practices and thoughts and find its way to “realism.” There needed to be a completely new relationship created between the publisher and government institutions to end the “mania of revisions” and “condemnable self-importance of the ruling comrades.”¹⁰⁷ More specifically, the group demanded that there be a legal codification of the rights and duties of the press, a reporting requirement for state entities, a prohibition on interference into journalistic articles, abolition of taboos (including: questions of supply, defects, and environmental data), a creation of a system of continuous information for the press on all levels, and an immediate convocation of a conference on issues facing the media. Furthermore, they demanded that there be an investigation into the causes for the long-standing paralysis of the party and the creation of a statute that restricted the powers of the Secretaries and General Secretary of the SED during election cycles. Their final wish, according to this journalist, was that they not wait for days and weeks to begin to speak openly on behalf of socialism, but rather

¹⁰⁶ H., Torsten, “Diary Entry 15 October 1989,” October 15, 1990. Emphasis is his.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

that they begin to change the way they worked immediately. This however would require the participation of all departments.

This one journalist's diary entry highlights the complicated relationship that party journalists faced in the last days of the Honecker regime. The political crisis and the crisis within the profession demanded action, but the party discipline that shaped the professional ethos required restraint. Nevertheless, his diary also illustrates that while the public face of the media remained loyal to the party leadership, a group of journalists of the *Berliner Zeitung* turned their energy inward and tried to induce change and reform from within. The emotions and demands of this man and his colleagues echo those of the journalists at ADN and show that the journalists were engaging in debates and discussions within the walls of their institutions and wanted to communicate these demands to the leadership. They also reveal the power of the administrative, professional, and institutional structures in preventing any real change from occurring against the will of the party. However, this internal pressure added to the public pressure of the thousands of East Germans on the streets, and within days of this diary entry Honecker would fall. Later entries detailed the increasing politicization of the journalists at *Berliner Zeitung*, and the exuberance this journalist felt as he marched with his colleagues for constitutional rights like freedom of speech and freedom of the press on November 4 during the massive protests at Alexanderplatz in Berlin. However as the winter progressed, his diary entries turned to the frustration he felt at the lack of changes within the newspaper organization. Articles he wrote on student meetings and other current events never made it into the printed editions. While the journalists began to imagine and demand a more democratic socialist media, actual change in the practice of journalism at the newspaper came slowly.

Persistent Problems

Within the span of one year, the people of East Germany went from living in a single party, socialist, centrally controlled state to joining the democratic Federal Republic with its free-market, consumerism, and civil liberties. We look at the dramatic events of November 9, and it seems that when the wall came down and East Germans and West Germans embraced in freedom for the first time in four decades, the unification of Germany was complete. However, the path from Honecker to Kohl was neither obvious nor foreseen, and in the late months of 1989, the future for the East Germans was anything but clear. When Krenz took office and introduced the *Wende*, the result was not a sharp break with the past but rather an uneasy shift in the face of mounting internal and external pressure. While many new freedoms were introduced, old institutions and problems persisted, affecting the ability of the state and its institutions and people to truly change. Standing in the way of a full transformation of the East German media landscape were a still present and repressive secret police force, old forms of censorship that remained in place, failing infrastructure and resources, and a centrally planned economy that favored the party over everything else.

The Ministry for State Security and the Police

The Ministry for State Security was not dissolved when Krenz took office and still operated in service of the party throughout the fall and winter months of 1989. While the MfS surveillance of the media was not as comprehensive as other branches of East German society – due to the fact that the media were considered part of the political apparatus of the party itself and not a potential outside threat – various media institutions still fell under the Ministry's

watchful eye.¹⁰⁸ Informants worked within media organizations like ADN as well as within individual newspaper and publishing firms. In fact, the *Berliner Zeitung* came under fire in 2008 after it was revealed that the newspaper still employed a number of former MfS informants.¹⁰⁹ The informants within these organizations submitted reports to their handlers at the MfS as late as mid October. On October 17, 1989, an informant at the Berliner Verlag, the publisher of *Berliner Zeitung* and other titles like *Für Dich*, submitted a report on the political mood among the journalists. This report was in response to the fact that many journalists within the organization had recently revoked their party membership.¹¹⁰ For the most part, reports like this and the ADN report served to provide information about the political climate within these organizations. In both reports, no further measures or courses of action were recommended. However, the Ministry's response to *Der Morgen's* open call for protests shows that the MfS still played an enforcement role.

Informants were only one means of surveillance and control. The MfS also deployed security officers to the protests under the pretense of protecting order. During the October 7 demonstration in Berlin a number of East German photojournalists were assaulted by MfS officers. On October 23, the chairman of the regional Berlin branch of the Journalists Union submitted a complaint to the Attorney General detailing multiple instances of abuse during the

¹⁰⁸ Although there were Stasi informants within ADN and some of the larger media and publishing institutions, the media sector was relatively shielded from interventions from the MfS. According to Günter Schabowski, the MfS was responsible for more technical questions within the printers and publishers than overseeing journalists, this directive came from Honecker himself. Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ For more information see: "Stasi-Skandal Bei 'Berliner Zeitung,'" and "Der Ehrenrat hat gesprochen."

¹¹⁰ Strobel, "Operative Information Zu Stimmungen Und Meinungen von Mitarbeitern Einiger Massenmedien Der DDR," October 17, 1989, MFS HAXX Nr. 2109, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

journalists' coverage of the protests. The letter alleged that members of the East German media were targeted and cited instances where journalists from *Für Dich*, *ADN*, *Freie Welt*, and *Junge Welt* were either obstructed or attacked as they covered the peaceful protest. Both plain-clothed and uniformed officers threatened journalists, confiscated film and equipment, and one journalist was trampled by members of law enforcement and landed in the hospital with a shattered ankle and bruised skull.¹¹¹ The actions of the police and officers of the MfS during the October 7 demonstrations underline the level of repression still present in GDR society in the fall of 1989. Even though the protests themselves rarely turned violent, the security forces of the state used both passive and aggressive means to control coverage of the events in the GDR press.¹¹²

By November, the situation was beginning to change. Internal memos from the MfS demonstrate an understanding that the way forward for the Ministry required a break from the past and a new allegiance to openness and transparency. A number of internal memos displayed this attempt on the part of the Ministry to redefine itself, not as a repressive enforcer, but as a protector of socialism. A November 24 memo from Deputy Minister for State Security, Gerhard Neiber's office, states that the MfS needed to distance itself from secrecy and the practice of shielding itself from public view. Instead, the Ministry needed to become more transparent, since openness creates trust.¹¹³ When West and East German news sources reported that guards at the

¹¹¹ "Aktentotiz über Die Behinderung Der Bildlichen Darstellung Der Demonstration in Den Abendsunden Des 7.10.1989," October 23, 1989, MfS HAIX Nr. 19551, 67-73, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

¹¹² The one exception in this case was the demonstrations across the GDR on October 7, 1989 (the same date of the cited abuses against the photo journalists in Berlin). These protests coincided with the 40th anniversary celebrations and the police forces clashed with demonstrators. Around 1,000 protestors were arrested across Germany.

¹¹³ "Wovon Müssen Wir Uns Trennen," November 24, 1989, MfS Sekr. Neiber Nr.194 28-29, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

regional office of the MfS in Hohenschönhausen were destroying potentially revealing files, the Ministry held a press conference and admitted wrongdoing. The MfS representative declared that the Ministry would undertake measures to assure that these actions ceased, and he invited members of the press to tour the building to see for themselves. This form of public damage control was new to the MfS and illustrates an adherence to the new principles of transparency. However, the public face of a new more open and honest Stasi was naturally limited in reality, and covert repressive tactics were still in practice. As Neiber's office professed the need for transparency, it also internally sought ways to keep the informant program active. While the office publicly denounced the destruction of files, it issued internal memos demanding the removal of any evidence that linked the MfS to old practices or that incriminated informants.¹¹⁴

Censorship and Limited Access to the Media

One of the primary demands of the protesters was freedom for the press, and with Krenz's political Wende, formal censorship in the form of the Agitation Commission was supposed to cease. Meanwhile, other structural forms of censorship remained in place. For example, the opposition group Neues Forum applied for official recognition as an association on September 22. This application was swiftly rejected. Even when Krenz took office in mid October, the organization's status remained illegitimate. Without official recognition, the group had little protection and no legitimate platform through which to distribute its ideas. It was only after the Politburo resigned on November 9 that the organization's application was finally approved. However, even with formal recognition by the state, the group was still unable to print its own paper, since strict paper quotas and licensing rules limited access to physical paper and

¹¹⁴ "Zur Lage in Der Partei," November 22, 1989, BStU, MfS, Sek. Neiber, Nr 194, 30-35, Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU).

printing capabilities. It was only through the offers of newspapers *Neue Zeit*, *Der Morgen* and *Mitteldeutsche Neuste Nachrichten*, which devoted some of their own pages to the organization, that the Neues Forum could distribute its message through the press. So even in the new age of freer media in East Germany, it was difficult for new voices to enter the media market. Without official party sponsors or publishers, it was difficult not only for opposition groups to gain access to the media, but also for those who wanted to create new publications with a different perspective. There was little room within the media infrastructure in East Germany for new titles and new ideas.

Failing Resources, Infrastructure, and Technology

One of the major hurdles that East German print media had faced for years was the paper shortage. Since the beginning of the 1980s, problems with allocation and production meant that there was a limited supply of paper available to the press. This supply had to be divided among the different daily and weekly newspapers along with magazines and church and factory newspapers. To correct for the shortage, the SED implemented “blocks” [*Sperrzeichen*], limiting the print-runs of the majority of the daily and weekly newspapers. Popular titles, like the *Berliner Zeitung* or *FF-Dabei* (a weekly television magazine) were inaccessible to a growing number of East Germans, who were unable to secure one of the limited subscriptions or find the coveted titles at their local newspaper kiosks due to the publications’ limited print quantities. Of course, the print quotas did not affect all newspapers equally. Three papers were exempted from the quotas, *Neues Deutschland*, *Junge Welt*, and *BZA*, ensuring that all East German citizens had access to the most loyal of the party’s press.¹¹⁵ Paper allocation, therefore, was another way in which the government controlled the public’s access to information and the press. Readers were

¹¹⁵ “Zu Materiell-Technischen Fragen Der Massenmedien,” 1988, DY30/25751, 100-109, Das Bundesarchiv.

diverted to the more doctrinaire publications by default due to the limited availability of alternative publications. Although nearly half of the official daily newspapers answered to the Bloc Parties (18 of 39), the print quotas ensured that by 1989 the Bloc Parties controlled only 8.5% of the planned circulation volume of the East German daily newspapers. (See Table Below)¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Table is based on data from the Abteilung Agitation: "Abteilung Agitation Statistics," n.d., DY30/25751 and DC9/1047, Das Bundesarchiv.

Table 1: East German Newspaper Allocation, 1989

Newspaper Affiliation	Planned Circulation Totals for 1989	% of Total	Actual Circulation Totals as of December 1989	% of Total
SED Newspapers (Qty: 18)	6,890,400	70.16%	6,900,100	69.82%
SED - National/Berlin (Qty:4)	1,742,400	17.74%	1,727,500	17.48%
SED - Regional Newspapers (Qty: 14)	5,148,000	52.42%	5,172,600	52.34%
Mass Organizations/Other (Qty: 4)	2,095,100	21.33%	2,170,200	21.96%
Bloc Party Newspapers	834,850	8.50%	812,700	8.22%
DBD Newspapers (Qty: 1)	94,200	0.96%	94,700	0.96%
LDPD Newspapers (Qty: 5)	274,950	2.80%	280,000	2.83%
CDU Newspapers (Qty: 6)	267,200	2.72%	275,100	2.78%
NDPD Newspapers (Qty: 6)	198,500	2.02%	162,900	1.65%
Total Circulation:	9,820,350	100.00%	9,883,000	100.00%

In March of 1988, an exasperated Deputy Minister for Post and Telecommunications sent a letter to the Chairman of the Ministerrat Willi Stoph.¹¹⁷ In his letter, Deputy Minister Schulze detailed his frustration with the decade long paper crisis. Due to the subscription quotas, his office had been unable to fulfill ca. 500,000 subscriptions, and he estimated that many citizens who desired certain titles were aware of the problem and never even bothered applying for a subscription,

¹¹⁷ Schulze, "Letter from the Deputy Chairman and Minister for Post and Telecommunications to Willi Stoph, Member of the Politbüro of the Central Committee of the SED and Chairman of the Ministerrat," March 7, 1988, DY30/25751, 118-134, Das Bundesarchiv.

bringing the total of unrealized subscriptions closer to one million.¹¹⁸ Of particular concern were the growing number of petitions being submitted to the government and his agency regarding the situation. In 1979, East German citizens had submitted a total of 670 petitions addressing their concerns regarding the paper crisis. This number had increased tenfold by 1986 to 6,867 petitions, and nearly doubled again in one year to a total of 11,507 petitions complaining about the current paper crisis in 1987. The Deputy Minister pointed out that these petitions revealed a troublesome political and social unease developing among the citizenry. Petition writers increasingly pointed to the discrepancy between the government's purported claims of the strength and health of the national economy and the reality of the ballooning newspaper shortage. Many petition writers pointed to the political implications of the shortage, citing access to newspapers as a fundamental constitutional basic requirement. One petition writer argued that if you wanted a new car, at least you knew you had to wait 10 or 15 years, whereas the Post was incapable of giving you any indication of when you might secure a newspaper subscription. Many petitioners provocatively pointed out the contradiction of a socialist country that valued education and intellectual advancement but was incapable of fulfilling the informational needs of its citizenry.¹¹⁹ Deputy Minister Schultze claimed that he had submitted multiple reports regarding the problem and implored his superiors to apprise Honecker of the severity of the situation.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 119.

¹¹⁹ This instrumental use of the state's own propaganda against itself occurs frequently in the petitions, as individuals borrow and echo the language of the state to express their frustrations. This instrumental use of propaganda is highlighted in: Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 34.

¹²⁰ Schulze, "Letter from the Deputy Chairman and Minister for Post and Telecommunications to Willi Stoph, Member of the Politbüro of the Central Committee of the SED and Chairman of the Ministerrat," 124.

The political *Wende* was meant to open access to the media, but this did nothing to address the problems in paper supply and press infrastructure. On October 30, 1989 the head of the Press Office, Kurt Blecha, wrote to the Chairman of the Ministerrat, Willi Stoph, about the continuing problems in paper supply. He stated that multiple newspapers had been putting pressure on him to increase the supply of paper but that the government was resisting doing so. There were no paper reserves, so the only way for one paper to increase production was to take away from the supply of another. He pleaded with Stoph to find a way to increase the supply of paper.¹²¹ While the paper shortage continued to plague the print media in the winter months of 1989, the problem would have greater consequences for the East German press in the early months of 1990 as they tried to compete with the new titles coming in from the West.¹²²

Problems in newspaper printing and allocation were only compounded further by the East German newspaper distribution system. The East German Post Office controlled the distribution of all newspapers in the GDR and did so through the traditional mail infrastructure and limited kiosk sales. This posed a number of limitations on existing and potential newspaper institutions. The fact that the distribution of the press was organized centrally formed an additional barrier to the East German media market. When the magazine *Sputnik* was banned in East Germany in 1988, the mechanism of that censorship came via the East German Post's distribution list. By controlling access to the only means of legal distribution in the GDR, the Post served as gatekeeper between the press and the public. Furthermore, the distribution model of the East German Post posed challenges for the approved newspaper titles. Delivery of the news via the Post was unreliable and often came in the afternoon, which was a natural hurdle to delivering

¹²¹ "Letter from Blecha to Stoph Regarding the Abonnementssperre," October 30, 1990, DC9/1049, Das Bundesarchiv.

¹²² This will be discussed in the next chapter.

current and up-to-date reporting on events. By the time the newspapers reached the mailboxes, the news was already out-of-date. As the pace of events escalated in the final months of 1989, the bloc party papers found it nearly impossible to keep up with breaking news. In January, the newspaper *Morgen* printed a letter from an angry reader, who complained that even after the Wende she still needed to get her information from West German sources, since her access to the East German press was still limited by paper quotas and distribution problems.¹²³

Printing and distribution problems were not the only infrastructure issues facing the East German news media. In addition to outdated printing technology and equipment, the communications infrastructure of the GDR was severely limited. Decades of isolation from the West meant that when the wall opened in November of 1989, there were limited telephone connections to West Germany and West Berlin. On November 10, the day after the wall opened, the Ministry for Post and Telecommunications announced that there were not enough telephone connections to West Berlin to meet demand and that in light of recent events and increased telephone traffic to the Federal Republic and West Berlin, the problem was getting worse.¹²⁴ Even in December of 1989, a member of the staff of *Junge Welt* wrote to the Ministry for Media Policy to complain that three fifths of the editors at the paper did not have access to a private telephone at home, which severely limited their ability to conduct their jobs.¹²⁵ A private telephone line was still a luxury in December of 1989. On December 12, the Post Minister declared that they were making advances in improving the communication network between East and West Berlin. The Minister hoped that an additional 188 inter-German telephone lines would

¹²³ Klaus Gerber, "Kein Blatt vorm Mund," *journalist* 1/90 (January 1990): 24–27.

¹²⁴ Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 227.

¹²⁵ "Einrichtung von Fernsprechan schlüssen Bei Der Redaktion "Junge Welt," January 18, 1990, DC9/1057, Das Bundesarchiv.

go live by December 20. These additional lines would more than double the 120 inter-German telephone lines currently in operation.¹²⁶

While the communications, printing, and distribution infrastructures were outdated and limited, the structure of the East German economy provided a number a vexing problems for newspapers as they tried to open themselves up to the West. Most of these problems stemmed from the GDR's dirigiste economy, which allowed the government to control the allocation of resources. As we have seen with the paper shortage, the plans favored the SED-party newspapers at the expense of other papers. Second, since the economy did not have to respond to market demands, the government heavily subsidized the production of newspapers. In 1989, for example, the SED subsidized their 18 party papers by 332 Million Mark.¹²⁷ As a result the price that the East German consumer paid for his or her newspaper had no relation to the actual production cost. Prices were held at post-war levels, and there was little income generated from ad revenue. It is estimated that an East German newspaper with a circulation of 500,000 required subsidies to cover 1/3 of its production costs.¹²⁸ This was not a problem as long as the government continued to subsidize newspaper production. However, as papers sought to sever ties with the party this became a serious problem, especially for the bloc party newspapers. Thirdly, the East German economy was structured in a way as to isolate the domestic economy from foreign currency. As a result, all economic interaction with foreign actors had to be handled

¹²⁶ Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 244.

¹²⁷ Estimating the value of the GDR Mark is difficult because there was no formal exchange rate for East German currency. A common conversion rate calculated 4 East German Marks to be equivalent to 1 DM, and making a East German mark worth around \$0.13. (This conversion rate was used in Paul Gleye, *Behind the Wall: An American in East Germany, 1988-89* (SIU Press, 1991).) Therefore we can estimate that 332 Million East German Marks were worth around 43 Million 1989 US dollars, which with inflation would come to between 82 and 84 Million dollars in 2015.

¹²⁸ Albrecht Nürnberger, "Pressemarkt Der DDR – Dezember 1989 Bis Juli 1990," August 10, 1990, 3–4, DY9/1050, 5, Das Bundesarchiv.

by the East German government. Therefore, by law, all international advertising proposals were funneled through one organization: Interwerbung. Prior to the opening of the wall in November of 1989, Interwerbung had rejected 90% of all advertising proposals coming from the non-socialist West. Interwerbung saw itself as a protector of the East German consumer. Its primary criteria for rejecting the western advertising proposals was a fear that such ads could awaken unrealizable import demands for the East German consumer. A second criterion for exclusion was simply “political reasons.” Even with these restrictions in place Interwerbung brought in 1.1 Million Volksmark of revenue in 1988.¹²⁹

When the wall opened, West German advertisers jumped at the opportunity to reach the untapped East German market. East German newspapers were flooded with advertising offers that by law had to be re-routed through Interwerbung. This cumbersome process vexed both the western advertisers and the East German publishers who were eager for the extra revenue. Some newspapers ignored the law and sold advertising space to western advertisers directly, but Interwerbung fought to hold on to its authority. In a December 4 letter to the Prime Minister’s office, the deputy director of Interwerbung, Dr. Schäfer argued that the East German newspaper companies had no commercial experience. This lack of experience when compared to the more competent western advertising agencies would result in poor economic decisions, which would drive ad prices down. Interwerbung was the experienced actor in this situation and the institution should remain in place to protect the inexperienced newspaper organizations from themselves.¹³⁰

Letters from West German advertisers and East German newspaper companies show great

¹²⁹ Interwerbung, “Zur weiteren Verfahrensweise auf dem Gebiet ‘Werbung ausländischer Firmen, insbesondere aus dem NSW’ in der DDR,” December 4, 1989, DC 9/1050, Das Bundesarchiv.

¹³⁰ Schäfer, “Zur Weiteren Verfahrensweise Auf Dem Gebiet ‘Werbung Ausländischer Firmen, Insbesondere Aus Dem NSW’ in Der DDR,” December 4, 1989, DC 9/1050, Das Bundesarchiv.

frustration with Interwerbung and the hurdles it presented. As newspapers tried to see a future without dependence on party subsidies, access to international ad revenue became all the more important.

Conclusion

The crisis in the fall of 1989 was the result of a culmination of years of governmental abuse and inaction as well as a failing economy. This gave rise to a growing frustration among the public. By September, the public's frustration had reached a breaking point. As thousands of East Germans fled to the West by way of the GDR's neighbors, thousands more gathered in the streets and demanded reform. The government responded in its traditional fashion and attempted to discredit the protesters and emigrants through media propaganda campaigns. The state-controlled media denounced the protesters as hooligans and portrayed East German emigrants as victims of a BRD propaganda campaign. However, these measures only discredited the state and the state-run media further. In the midst of the political crisis, journalists did struggle with their professional identities, wrestling with the past and debating possible futures for the profession, but these debates remained in the hallways and meeting rooms of the individual news organizations. The public face of the media in the GDR remained strikingly loyal to Honecker's administration and stubbornly silent on the events unfolding in the city squares across the republic. By October, the government and its media faced a credibility crisis with the public. When the party called for a "close-to-life" media in mid October, it was too late to save his regime. Krenz maneuvered himself into office and promised a new more democratic socialism in the GDR. Media would be freed from ideological control, and the government promised to re-earn the trust of the public through honesty and transparency. In spite of the promises of reform, many of the old structures remained in place. Krenz abolished the department of Agitation and

Propaganda, but the SED still controlled the broadcast media, and the vast majority of the printed press. These remaining structures limited access to the medium, reduced the opportunities for oppositional voices, and prevented fundamental changes to the media landscape in the later months of 1989. The changes seen during these months—live and more reliable reporting, the posing of more critical questions, and the open challenges to government practices and party ideology—were important, but they came late and only after the state granted the profession explicit permission. Journalists were not in the vanguard of the revolution, and the reasons why and the implications of that delay are the source of much debate.¹³¹ The goal of this work is not to investigate the morality or democratic convictions of an entire profession, but rather to provide historical context to a very complex and challenging period in modern German history.

Journalists and journalism students were clearly concerned about the events unfolding across Eastern Europe, China, and within the cities of East Germany. These concerns are reflected in numerous personal accounts, internal documents and surveillance reports. However, these concerns only resulted in minor challenges to the status quo. Years of external and internal censorship, a professional ethos that valued party loyalty, and a retributive administrative

¹³¹ There have been a number of works addressing the complicit role of East German journalists in supporting the authoritarian and repressive SED state. Holzweissig finds similarities between East German journalists and those of the Nazi period in Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei.*, and many media scholars have looked at the East German journalists' ability or inability to come to terms with their own past as a sign of a democratic moral compass. See Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, and Gunter Holzweissig's contribution to the Enquete Kommission's report on the historical legacies of the GDR: Holzweissig, Gunter, "Die Medien in Der DDR Während Der Zeit Der Wende Und Im Alltag Der Neuen Bundesländer Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung Der Tageszeitungen," in *Materialien Der Enquete-Kommission "Überwindung Der Folgen Der SED-Diktatur Im Prozeß Der Deutschen Einheit" (13. Wahlperiode Des Deutschen Bundestages)*, vol. Band IV/2 (Baden-Baden und Frankfurt am Main: Deutschen Bundestag, 1999), 1745–83. As well as the chapter "Opfer, Täter und Mitläufer Zugleich" in, Holzweissig, *Zensur Ohne Zensor*.

See also Roman Grafe, *Die Schuld der Mitläufer Anpassen oder Widerstehen in der DDR* (München: Pantheon, 2009). This is not to mention the vast array of scholarship devoted to perpetrators and guilt associated with the SED regime.

infrastructure that was directly subordinate to party leadership, heightened the risk of individual and institutional action. The professional and personal risk taken by those individuals who had the courage to speak out and demonstrate is not to be underestimated. For decades, public dissent had been stifled and silenced through repressive measures by the Ministry for State Security and other government agencies. Nevertheless, hundreds, then thousands, of East Germans took the risk. The journalistic profession, however, was tied too tightly to the state apparatus to break free. Krenz's reforms began to release that bond. Change came slowly, but over the coming months the media of the GDR would construct new identities, more democratic and independent, all the while competing for survival in the changing economic market.

CHAPTER THREE: The “Third Way” that Never Was (*December 7, 1989 – March 18, 1990*)

Introduction

Egon Krenz and the leadership of the Socialist Unity Party hoped that their political *Wende* would stave off the tide of revolution and opposition within the German Democratic Republic, but these reforms were too shallow and came too late to steer the GDR away from the brink of collapse. The political crisis only worsened under their watch, and by December it was clear to the party that there needed to be another bold move to ensure the future of a socialist German Democratic Republic. This change in political reality has been called the “Turn within the Turn” (*Wende in der Wende*), and marks a shift not only for the SED, but also the bloc parties, and public opinion.¹ Krenz was forced to resign, and the Prime Minister, Hans Modrow, assumed leadership of the government. The Modrow administration devoted itself to deeper reforms in the vein of Gorbachev’s perestroika in the hopes of revitalizing the party, which rebranded itself under the new name SED-PDS (Socialist Unity Party – Party of Democratic Socialism). In addition to fundamental economic and political reforms, the government introduced a number of new policies and resolutions to protect and nurture the developing independent media. In late January, the Modrow government sanctioned the import of West German publications through mail and travel, thus opening the East German media market to the Western world. In February, the much-awaited new media law came into effect. As a result of these changes, these early months of 1990 saw an explosion of new newspaper titles and publishers. By the spring of 1990, there were nearly 100 new newspaper publications on the East

¹ Jaraus, *The Rush to German Unity*, 87.

German market. New voices, oppositional and independent, provided an alternative to the established party press, and East German and West German journalists and publishers came together to form new publications that tried to unite the disparate East and West perspectives and address the German population as a whole. Most of the remaining party press publications reinvented themselves with new names and mastheads that reflected their more independent character. The broadcast media institutions and the East German news service, ADN, also began their structural and professional transformations as independent public entities.

The early months of 1990 marked a period of greater freedom for the East German media professionals and institutions, and granted space for journalists to test their new freedoms and develop ideas for a new vision of socialist journalism. However, during these same months the course was laid for German Reunification. Just as Modrow and the rebranded SED-PDS as well as many of the opposition groups were trying to clear the path for a more democratic and free socialism, the momentum in public sentiment and international politics overpowered any possibility for a future revitalized GDR. In January, the demonstrators, who still gathered by the thousands in city squares across the GDR, changed their banners and chants from “We are the people” (*Wir sind das Volk*) to “We are one people” (*Wir sind ein Volk*).² Furthermore, the governmental reforms had no impact on thousands of East Germans refugees who were still fleeing to the West. Over 70,000 East Germans migrated to West Germany in the month of January alone. The once hesitant international community realized the growing popular support for reunification within East Germany and began to plan how such an event could take place. On

² The importance of this moment and linguistic shift is highlighted in, Fred L Casmir, “‘Wir Sind Ein Volk’: Illusions and Reality of German Unification,” in *Communication in Eastern Europe: The Role of History, Culture, and Media in Contemporary Conflicts* (Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1995), 43–47. Casmir highlights the cultural importance of the concept of the “*Volk*” as a unifying idea for Germans.

February 13, representatives of the two German governments met with representatives of the four former WWII allies (the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France) and developed a framework for negotiations on the unification of the two German states, thus initiating what would become known as the 2 + 4 talks. One week later, the Federal Republic and the GDR began the process of establishing a German monetary union. The resounding victory for the Christian Democrats in the *Volkskammer* elections on March 18, 1990 pushed the unification of the Federal Republic and the GDR from the hypothetical to the inevitable. With that, any dreams of a new socialist press within a revitalized German Democratic Republic were shattered.

This chapter focuses on this brief interval within the transformation of East Germany. During this period from December 1989 to March 1990, a small window emerged where reform minded socialists and dissidents within East Germany imagined a possible third way for the future of the GDR. This alternative path, neither a continuation of the old discredited model of socialism employed for decades by the SED, nor a full embrace of market conditions and western democratic structures, foresaw a future for a socialist East German republic, with greater freedoms and commitment to democracy, while maintaining an adherence to certain core socialist values. During this period dissidents and reformers worked to build and implement the infrastructure for this alternative GDR, including a legal and professional framework for a new type of East German media. The ideas and visions of the politicians and professionals during this period have much to reveal about the relationship and understanding of East German journalists and their profession. By analyzing the debates, discussions, and plans for the future of the socialist media, this chapter reveals the way that journalists understood their role both within the old regime and the possibilities for their personal and professional transformations.

One of the challenges of investigating the history of socialism, is understanding the genuine voice of the individual within a system of oppression and system of communication that valued obedience and the parroting of propagandistic language over original thought. Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery identified a number of issues pertaining to the investigation of the history of socialist and authoritarian regimes in their book on the collectivization of the Romanian Peasantry.³ They point out that archival sources from the socialist era were written within the bounds and structures of party discipline. The ubiquitous propaganda permeated all dialog between the public and the state and the state's own internal dialog. When individuals engaged in a dialog with the state, they both consciously and unconsciously echoed the state's own language back to itself. The use of language in state documents can be both instrumental and subliminal at the same time, thus complicating the reading of archival sources.⁴ Furthermore, documents are constructed within the confines of an authoritarian system with serious consequences for disobedience and challenges to the status quo. On the other hand, post-Wende reflections and memoirs are by nature teleological, constructed with the knowledge of the system's collapse and ultimate disgrace. These narratives and texts are written within a context that values distance and rejection of one's socialist past or former ideological beliefs.⁵ It is for these reasons that this period is particularly intriguing. During these months the authoritarian structures were rapidly crumbling away, and the future of the GDR was left open to the imagination. The period sources for this chapter (mainly archival documents and period publications) provide a unique glimpse into the self-fashioning of East German media

³ Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28. Here Kligman and Verdery underscore the work of Luisa Passerini on memory and totalitarianism. Passerini, in her early work on the Soviet Union, points to the problem many faced in recounting their soviet pasts during in the early 1990s, that many feel a need to justify their biography and actions under socialism.

professionals, how they understood their role, their frustrations, their goals, and their profession during a period of unprecedented freedom as well as an uncertain and open future. This chapter uncovers these narratives, and investigates the reasons why this alternative path resulted in a dead end.

Literature Review

The months following the fall of the Berlin Wall and leading up to the March 18 elections do not contain the same dramatic imagery of citizens peacefully forcing their way through the border checkpoints to embrace their long lost family members and country-men for the first time in decades. For many, this period simply covers the final months of a moribund state. While some scholars of the reunification focus on the international negotiations between the former World War II allies as determining the fate of the East German citizens during this period,⁶ others see the unwavering momentum of East German public opinion for Helmut Kohl and the *Deutschmark*.⁷ However, for those individuals who were living in Berlin and the cities across East Germany during this period, the looming fate of the East German state and the inevitable unification with the West were unknown. The citizens groups that fought so hard to catalyze public opinion and bring the people out onto the streets now had a seat at the negotiating table and were working along side the government to implement reforms to save the GDR from years of corruption, abuse, and mismanagement.

Some scholars have turned their attention to these dissidents and reformers, whose action and leadership galvanized public sentiment and brought down the authoritarian regime, but who

⁶ See Wilfried Loth, "Die Sowjetunion und das Ende der DDR," in *Weg in den Untergang: der innere Zerfall der DDR*, ed. Konrad Hugo Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

⁷ See Franz Josef Jung, *Die letzten Tage der Teilung: wie die deutsche Einheit gelang* (Freiburg; Basel; Wien: Herder, 2010).

failed to implement a functional socialist alternative. Christian Joppke argued that the East German dissidents were unique in Eastern Europe for their adherence to the socialist cause.⁸ Dissidents in the other Leninist states of Europe fought for the end of Communism rather than the revitalization of socialism. However, West Germany provided an easy outlet for most of East Germany's anti-communist dissidents, who either emigrated or were expelled by the government of the GDR. Therefore, the intellectuals who remained in the East shared a vision for a socialist alternative to the West.⁹ Joppke argued that as a result, the opposition that stayed behind in East Germany was devoted to reform rather than the complete overthrow of the government in the fall of 1989. This movement, which was so popular and powerful in the fall of 1989, was unable to leverage that early support into electoral success. While Joppke focused on the internal weaknesses of the dissident movement, other scholars, like Dirk Philipsen have identified external factors that led to the opposition's failure, such as the intervening West German politicians, the impact of finances (namely the opposition's lack thereof), and the SPD's choice to side with their Western counterpart rather than the East German opposition.

In his detailed account of the collapse of the East German state titled *The Rush to German Unity*, Konrad Jarausch cited these early months of 1990 as the period of "The Implosion of the GDR." The East German state could not stand up to the social and political pressures placed against it. Although the government reached out to the dissident groups through the Round Table and power sharing agreements, the "Third Way" that they hoped to implement never had a chance. Once the full extent of the state's abuses and bankrupt economy were

⁸ Christian Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989: Social Movement in a Leninist Regime* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1995).

⁹ Joppke argues that the true dissidents in the GDR emigrated to the West, and that "there was no 'dissidence' proper in East Germany." *Ibid.*, xiii.

realized and acknowledged, there was no firm ground on which to build a new democratic socialist state. The public had lost its patience and coveted the opportunities and living standards of the Federal Republic. Jarausch's work detailed the many conditions that determined the implosion of the GDR, but he also pointed out that the results of the election, which would determine the GDR's fate, were neither predictable nor foreseen. Jarausch emphasized that the polls and surveys that preceded the election predicted a victory for the SPD, and analysts forecasted a "switch to a milder, democratic form of socialism more plausible than its total repudiation."¹⁰

In his 2006 chapter titled "Intellectuals, the 'Third Way', and German Unification," Brett Wheeler took on the assumption that the East German intellectuals failed in their implementation of the "Third Way." Wheeler countered these assertions by framing the philosophy of the third way as a utopian alternative to the existing political structures. This alternative was grounded in a longer history in German intellectual thought, with antecedents in the post-war *Sonderweg* debates in West Germany. He argued that while the implementation of the third way political project objectively failed, the intellectuals who posited a utopian alternative could not have "failed." Rather, it is the role of intellectuals to posit alternatives to existing political reality. The work of intellectuals is in words and not in action.¹¹

Due to the fact that the majority of East German journalists were politically aligned to the left, the call for an alternative third way naturally resonated. As such, many of the central themes and ideas at the center of this alternative were incorporated into the media professionals' proposals for the future of democratic socialist journalism. But, as journalists and media

¹⁰ Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, 116.

¹¹ Wheeler, Brett R., "Chapter One: Intellectuals, the 'Third Way' and German Unification," in *Transformations of the New Germany*, ed. Ruth A Starkman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

professionals discussed and debated these ideas, the political and economic reality shifted beneath their feet. The very measures that created a space for journalists and politicians to imagine a new East German press precluded that future from happening. Many journalists and media observers in both East and West Germany felt that a free media market and the free flow of information was essential for a free and democratic socialist press, and they fought hard to ensure that the barriers to the exchange of ideas and information were abolished.¹² However, the old institutions of the newly liberated socialist press carried the economic burdens of the past. As a result, insolvent media companies could not compete in the open market. As the political environment accepted the inevitability of the Reunification, journalists and media overseers instead turned to protecting the interests of East German journalists and media institutions as they made their way toward German reunification.

New Legal, Political, and Media Landscape

The political climate in the GDR during the early months of 1990 was changing on a daily basis. The opposition groups like Democracy Now, Democratic Awakening, and New Forum, which had been so powerful in catalyzing public interest and support for the Leipzig and Berlin demonstrations in the winter months of 1989, finally had a seat at the negotiating table with the East German government. The first meeting of the Central Round Table, a forum where the leaders of the opposition groups could meet on equal footing with representatives from the East German government, took place on December 7, 1989. The opposition parties and citizen's groups formed this collaborative institution in an attempt to stabilize the unraveling political crisis by engaging in an open dialogue with the government to pressure the state to provide

¹² See for example Kohl and Modrow's joint statement vowing to open the East German market to West German press products: "Gemeinsame Erklärung," February 8, 1990, DC9/1052, Das Bundesarchiv.

greater transparency and accountability.¹³ As Joppke emphasized, the opposition groups in the GDR were not interested in rejecting Communism and founded their political platforms on a new more democratic socialism that rejected the old authoritarian methods. These groups utilized the Round Table to work with the Volkskammer and the SED to implement the reforms they hoped could transform the GDR into a more democratic state.

As the opposition groups gained political power, the SED underwent its own transformation. By the end of 1989, the SED party struggled not only with escalating domestic political crises but also with crises within the party itself. After undergoing multiple changes in leadership between October and November, the SED tried to make a clean break with the past in December 1989. The party ousted Krenz and under the leadership of the new party chairman Gregor Gysi and Prime Minister Hans Modrow, the party signaled this regeneration by changing its name, from SED to SED-PDS.¹⁴ In addition to the name change, the party agreed to engage in free and open elections in May of 1990. By the end of January, the party was forced to move up the elections to the middle of March, an indication of the speed of the changing political environment.¹⁵ As public momentum grew toward a unified German state, the government continued its commitment to a separate reformed East German state. On January 11, Modrow declared that unification with West Germany was “not on the agenda.”¹⁶ The SED-PDS included comprehensive media reform as a central component of the new party platform. During the special congress that implemented the name change, the new Chairmen of the SED-PDS, Gregor

¹³ “Auftakt zum Runden Tisch,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 8, 1989, ZEFYS.

¹⁴ “Parteitag der SED-PDS setzte klare Zeichen Wir stellen uns der Pflicht, für dieses Land Verantwortung zu tragen,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 18, 1989, ZEFYS.

¹⁵ “15. Tagung der Volkskammer Debatte über die zugespitzte Lage im Lande und den Wahltermin im März,” *Neues Deutschland*, January 30, 1990, ZEFYS.

¹⁶ “‘Wir alle besitzen gemeinsam die Kraft, uns Problemen zu stellen’: Ministerratsvorsitzender Hans Modrow gab Erklärung der Koalitionsregierung ab,” *Neues Deutschland*, January 12, 1990, ZEFYS.

Gysi, stated, “For us, the modern mass media is the most important organ of the cultural liberation and the representative of the new and many-voiced public.”¹⁷ As the political parties and opposition groups prepared for the upcoming elections, the government with the aid of the Volkskammer and the Round Table enacted a number of reforms to media policy to address some of the systemic and lingering issues from the Honecker era. On January 1, the government rescinded the restrictive quotas on newspaper subscriptions, allowing newspapers to expand their circulation numbers both through increased subscriptions and individual sales.¹⁸ Later that month, the Council of Ministers formed a working group to ensure an increase in paper production, and the GDR customs authority cleared the way for the legal import of West German news publications either through the East German post office or through individual transport.¹⁹ The SED-PDS framed these reforms as part of its program to foster a democratic renewal of socialism, to establish a democratic socialist alternative within an independent German Democratic Republic.

The Left and the Third Way

On December 9, 1989, Gregor Gysi presented a new party platform for the SED-PDS. He announced,

The crisis of administrative-centralist socialism in our country can only be solved, if the GDR goes along a third way, beyond the Stalinist socialism and the authority of transnational monopoly. In this we feel particularly duty bound to the social interests of the people of our land; [duty bound] to the solidarity founded in individual freedom and basic liberties [and] the development of equal conditions for individual self-realization and the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the people. These are our core values. With them we should introduce a new program and democratic statute into the development of the GDR. ...

¹⁷ Nölte, “Chronik medienpolitischer Ereignisse in der DDR,” 17–20.

¹⁸ “„Neue Zeit“ ab sofort überall bestellbar,” *Neue Zeit*, December 30, 1989, ZEFYS. Also referenced in Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 251.

¹⁹ Nürnberger, “Pressemarkt Der DDR – Dezember 1989 Bis Juli 1990.”

This sought after third way of socialist influence is characterized by radical democracy and constitutionality, humanism, social justice, environmental protection, enforcement of the emancipation and equal rights of women. This orientation for a third way exposes the democratic and humanistic sources and contents of our traditions in the German and international workers movement and incorporates them. This requires particularly social-democratic, socialist, non-Stalinist-communist, antifascist, and pacifist traditions. This is not about new wallpaper.²⁰ We want a new party.²¹

The idea of the third way was not original with Gysi and the SED-PDS. Rather the party incorporated the call for a more democratic socialist path from the East German opposition. From the outset the oppositional groups advocated a new form of socialism for the GDR. The democratic movement called for “a socialist alternative to the consumption society of the Federal Republic,” that “wanted to equally leave behind Stalinism and Thatcherism.”²² The vision brought forth by the oppositional groups like the New Forum and Democratic Awakening was a revitalization of a long history of Marxist and socialist reformers harkening back to the Prague Spring and Andrei Shatrov’s call for a convergence of socialism and capitalism.²³ It was also an extension of the 1980s Soviet reform movement.

The East German opposition was resolutely pacifist, so rather than attempt to overthrow the SED, they hoped to implement the third way through democratic, egalitarian, and pluralistic structures like the Round Table, which gave dissidents a platform to encourage democratic

²⁰ Gysi’s reference to wallpaper was an allusion to Kurt Hager’s April 10, 1987 comment regarding the East German implementation of Gorbachev style reforms. “Would you, by the way, feel obligated to redo the wallpaper in your apartment just because your neighbor redid his?” See Chapter One.

²¹ Gysi, Gregor, “Wenn Wir Alle Für Die Neue Partei Streiten, Wird Sie Stark Bleiben!,” *Neues Deutschland*, December 9, 1989.

²² Sabrow, Martin, “Der Vergessene ‘Dritte Weg,’” *Aus Politik Und Zeitgeschichte* 2010, no. 11 (March 15, 2010): 6–12.

²³ Zubok, Vladislav, “Soviet Society in the 1960s,” in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, by Stefan Karner and Peter Ruggenthaler (Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

reforms through an open and equal dialogue with the ruling party.²⁴ Although the public desperately wanted the opposition to propose a clear alternative to the SED, the opposition did not have an alternative proposal at the ready and simply advocated for dialogue and discussion between the public and the state to help find the way forward.²⁵ Similarly, Wolfgang Spickermann the editor-in-chief of *Neues Deutschland* argued that the answer to the future of the GDR could not come as a dictate from above; rather, it required debate, discussion and consensus.²⁶

The SED's incorporation of the third way into the party platform in December of 1989 can be seen as part of the turn away from the failed policies of Krenz and Honecker and an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of the mass movements. The SED-PDS and the opposition groups incorporated what they saw as the best and most important elements of the socialist ideology in an attempt to revitalize and rehabilitate the socialist project. For example, anti-fascism was central to the socialist identity, it grounded the ideology in its historical experience and it was accepted by many socialists as an internal commitment.²⁷ As proponents of the third way looked forward, they brought along with them a commitment to continue to fight the fascist threat. In this, the third way was more of a reinterpretation of socialism than a new alternative economic and political structure. As the oppositional groups and the SED-PDS converged in utopian visions for the future of the GDR, the idea of the "Third Way" became shorthand for egalitarian, pluralistic, and grassroots democratic structures, as well as a rejection of monopolies and predatory capitalist practices. The core values listed by Gysi—anti-fascism, pacifism, humanism, environmental protection, emancipation and equality for women, and social justice—

²⁴ Sabrow, Martin, "Der Vergessene 'Dritte Weg.'"

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Wolfgang Spickermann, "Der Bruch," *Neues Deutschland*, December 11, 1989, ZEFYS.

²⁷ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 33.

reappeared in a number of proposals of the period. It is in these terms and structures that we can most clearly identify in the incorporation of the third way into the media's visions for its future.

Democratic Pluralistic Media

With the start of the new decade, the major East German media periodical, like its counterparts across the print media, underwent a makeover. The scholarly journal produced by the journalism program of the Karl-Marx-University changed its name from, *Theory and Practice of Socialist Journalism* to *Discourse, Leipzig Journal for Communications Research and Journalism*. In an editorial announcing the shift in name and tone, journalism professor Hans Poerschke stated that the name change was supposed to signify a “new beginning” for the journal, to begin the process of critical self reflection and to discover a new “fertile point of departure for ethical standards for humanistic scholarship.”²⁸ To kick off this discussion the journal published an article that argued for a new philosophical foundation for East German socialist media.²⁹ The author, Heidi Mühlenberg, argued that while the old principles needed revision, the answer might not be found in the “Habermasian civic philosophy” of West Germany.³⁰ She argued that while the plurality of opinion was a pretence of the media structure of “imperialist countries,” there was often a gulf between this ideal and media reality. She cited the problematic and scandal prone relationship between political parties and public broadcasting institutions in West Germany.³¹ The influence of political parties over public broadcasting institutions was a frequent concern cited by media observers who warned against the wholesale adoption of West German models and who instead argued for a re-imagining of public

²⁸ Poerschke, Hans, “Zum Geleit,” *Diskurs, Leipziger Hefte für Kommunikationsforschung und Journalistik* 1990, no. 1 (January 15, 1990): 1.

²⁹ Mühlenberg, Heidi, “Demokratischer Pluralismus als universeller Wert,” *Diskurs, Leipziger Hefte für Kommunikationsforschung und Journalistik* 1990, no. 1 (January 15, 1990): 2–5.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

broadcasting for both West and East Germany.³² Mühlenberg cited a recent Spiegel article that revealed that majority parties were consolidating power within regional broadcasting institutions.³³ Like many East German media observers and professionals, Mühlenberg was concerned about the emphasis on profit in Western media systems and feared that this drive would hinder the plurality of opinion. She argued that in a system with concentrated media capital, minority and alternative voices would struggle to find sure footing. Instead of relying on a capitalist system that favored elites, she advocated a thorough study of international media structures and adaptation and expansion of what they learned for the East German system.

Mühlenberg argued that the new East German landscape should include a number of features that protected minority voices, worker's rights, and social values. She thought that the new East German system could reduce commercialization through the introduction of subsidies for institutions that represented alternative and minority voices. She suggested the implementation of oversight councils with parliamentary structures and clear statutes for the press, radio and television branches that would both ensure that the editorial staff remained independent from publishers and protect the rights of the workers within the organizations. She also wanted to ensure that the media remained accountable to the public, requiring that finances be transparent and that recipients of media would have access to institutions through the legal codification of provisions for the selection and publication (or broadcast) of letters to the editor. She ended her article with the following challenges for the group responsible for drafting the new media law.

³² This subject will become central to the debates and struggles of the Media Control Council in the next chapter.

³³ Egid Braun, "Am Hofe von Byzanz," *Der Spiegel*, November 20, 1989, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13497975.html>.

Where is the fundamental consensus, upon which real democratic pluralistic participation will enable the process of opinion formation?

Which (necessarily differentiated and detailed) democratic instruments will step in to regulate in place of a mass medial social technology?

Which structures of the mass media system suit this democratic pluralistic requirement?

How will the law guarantee the democratic public the necessary control over pluralistic journalism?³⁴

Mühlenberg's proposal was supposed to initiate a discussion regarding the future shape and foundation of the new media landscape. Searching for a guiding principle that would steer the media and the society away from the authoritarian past, she favored democratic pluralism that protected the voice of minority and alternative groups. For the East German left, democratic pluralism provided both a protection against authoritarian control, as well as a framework that would allow for debate and consensus going forward. These principles and values were echoed by advocates for the third way, and they were central to the framers of the new media law.

Volkskammer Resolution Guaranteeing Freedom of Opinion, Information, and Media

In November 1989, the Krenz government, after pressure from groups like the Journalists Union, vowed to enact legislation that would ensure that the freedoms of opinion, information and media be protected in law and practice. A 60 member working group was formed in late December 1989 that included journalists, media scholars, independent experts, church representatives, and representatives from opposition groups, government organizations, and ministries.³⁵ This group set to work writing a law that could be implemented by March of 1990 and had completed a draft of the resolution by January 9, which they presented to the Round

³⁴ Mühlenberg, Heidi, "Demokratischer Pluralismus als universeller Wert."

³⁵ "Kommission für Mediengesetz gebildet," *Neues Deutschland*, December 21, 1989, ZEFYS. "Regierungskommission für Mediengesetz konstituiert," *Berliner Zeitung*, December 21, 1989, ZEFYS.

Table.³⁶ The Round Table unanimously endorsed all 17 provisions on January 15, and recommended that the Volkskammer approve the resolution.³⁷ When the resolution came up for debate eleven days later on the floor of the Volkskammer, it was clear that the government and the Round Table disagreed on two elements of the resolution: the future public status of ADN and the introduction of product advertising to the broadcast media institutions. The Council of Ministers had altered the resolution on these two points, seeking to keep open the future status of the East German news service and hastening the introduction of product advertising in order to generate much needed revenue for the insolvent television and radio institutions.³⁸ However, the debate surrounding these two issues was cut short by the escalating political crisis. At the time the Media Law was up for debate in the Volkskammer, Modrow and the Round Table introduced a proposal to pull up the date of the upcoming Volkskammer elections to March 18, arguing that this would usher in a phase of political responsibility and strengthen democracy during this time of sharpening political crisis.³⁹ Although the proposal was seen to be less than perfect, the Volkskammer passed the resolution with only minor alterations acknowledging the urgent need for at least a temporary legal framework.⁴⁰

The freedoms granted by the new law were founded in the long-standing international agreements to which the GDR had previously committed and subsequently ignored. The

³⁶ “Medienbeschluß vorbereitet Ergebnis konstruktiver Beratungen,” *Neue Zeit*, January 10, 1990, ZEFYS.

³⁷ “Runder Tisch: Vorlage Nr. 7: 7. Sitzung,” January 15, 1990, DA3/7, 32, Das Bundesarchiv.

³⁸ “Großer Konsens, Doch über ADN-Status Und Werbung Meinungsverschiedenheiten,” *Neues Deutschland*, January 30, 1990, ZEFYS.

³⁹ “15. Tagung der Volkskammer Debatte über die zugespitzte Lage im Lande und den Wahltermin im März”; “Wahlen zur Volkskammer für den 18. März vereinbart Kommunalwahlen am 6. Mai / Regierung der nationalen Verantwortung soll die Geschäfte führen,” *Neues Deutschland*, January 29, 1990, Berlin edition, ZEFYS.

⁴⁰ For a detailed account of the events and debates leading up to the passage of the resolution see: “Meinungs-, Informations-, und Medienfreiheit: Zum Volkskammer-Beschluß vom 5. Februar 1990,” in Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*.

preamble cited the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the 1975 Final Act of the Helsinki Accords, and 1978 UNESCO-Mass Media Declaration, which committed the GDR to the free exchange of information and international cooperation regarding information and communication.⁴¹ While the GDR had pledged to adhere to these international norms by joining the United Nations in 1973 and signing the Helsinki Accords, these freedoms were neither protected nor enforced under the Honecker regime.

The new media law embodied many of the core values of the third way. First, it was grounded in democratic principles. The new law formally declared that all East German citizens had the fundamental right to freedom of expression, which included spoken, written, and printed speech as well as artistic representation. Second, the law incorporated the values of pacifism and anti-fascism. It forbade the use of the media for warmongering, invoking violence or hate, or distributing militaristic, fascist, or revanchist propaganda. A number of provisions attempted to directly address the persistent authoritarian structures of the Honecker and Krenz eras. The law guaranteed the right of citizens to have access to truthful and multifaceted news, the rights of journalists to protect their sources (unless a judge intervened), the right of any citizen or legal person to publish a newspaper or magazine, the right for publishers to distribute their publications through the East German Post Office or through an independent distributor, and the right of refusal for journalists, meaning they could not be forced to publish anything that conflicted with their own personal opinions.

The law sought to enforce and protect these new rights in two ways. First, the law included a number of provisions that removed previous barriers to media freedom. The law

⁴¹ “Beschlüß der Volkskammer über die Gewährleistung der Meinungs-, Informations-, und Medienfreiheit vom 5 Februar 1990,” *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* 1990 Teil I, no. 7 (February 12, 1990): 39–40, doi:G.

forbade any form of censorship and replaced the licensing provision that had limited access to printed and broadcast media with a registration provision that would allow greater access. The law also addressed the paper shortage by directing more funds to the production of paper. The East German Post Office was now required to distribute any newspaper that had a circulation of over 500, and publishers now had the right to privately distribute their own publications. The law also took measures to release the broadcast media and ADN from state control. With the enactment of the law, East German radio, television and new service agencies became independent public institutions and were no longer “subordinate to the government.”⁴² Second, in order to ensure that these new rights and provisions were honored, the law, at the request of the Round Table, created a new watchdog institution, the Media Control Council (*Medienkontrollrat, MKR*), which was tasked with overseeing the implementation of the new Media Law.⁴³

The new media law had a dramatic effect on the developing shape of the media landscape. The goal of the resolution was to enshrine essential democratic protections into law and practice so that East German media and journalists could operate freely and according to international norms and agreements. The law went further than any previous measures in the GDR to allow greater access to the press and sever the close ties between the state and the media. The broadcast institutions and ADN were released from their subordination to the state, though the Prime Minister still retained the power to nominate the General Directors. However, the law had the greatest consequences for the East German print media. With the enactment of the resolution, many of the previous cumbersome barriers to publication and distribution were swept

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. Chapter Four of this dissertation focuses specifically on the Media Control Council, and uses this institution as a case study to examine forces and dynamics of change in the Media Landscape in Germany during the 1990s.

away, allowing for a surge of new domestic and imported western publications to enter the market. By the spring of 1990, over 100 new East German newspapers had entered the press market.⁴⁴ In addition to the opposition groups who had fought to gain access to the paper supply prior to the February law, new voices that were unassociated with established parties or publishers also emerged. While these groups and individuals added to the diversity of expression, many had no formal training in journalism or publishing, a direct consequence of the restricted access to the profession under the old regime. As a result, most of these publications struggled to keep apace with their more established competitors, and few managed to keep their doors open for the long-term.

With the sudden diversity of opinion came increased competition and a strain on East Germany's already limited paper supply. Furthermore, by abolishing the East German Post Office's monopoly on distribution, West German publishers now had the opportunity to come up with new and creative ways to bring their titles to the East German market. On February 20, at 7:30am two trucks carrying 15,900 copies of the *Tagesspiegel* crossed the border into East Berlin, and without any prior notice or advertising, the impromptu vendors sold all of their copies by the end of the day.⁴⁵ Suddenly, the former SED and bloc party newspapers had to compete not only with the new domestic titles, but also with the established and popular West German publications. The combination of the explosion in new titles and competition from the West was disastrous for the East German press market. By the upcoming spring, the East German print media market would collapse. By April, the national newspapers had lost nearly a

⁴⁴ Nürnberger, "Pressemarkt Der DDR – Dezember 1989 Bis Juli 1990."

⁴⁵ Adriano Coco, "Presse Der Wendejahre West-Zeitung Am Ost-Kiosk," *Spiegel Online*, February 24, 2010, sec. einestages, <http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/presse-der-wendejahre-a-950045.html>.

quarter of their subscribers.⁴⁶ In creating the Media Control Council, the drafters of the new media law hoped to establish an institution that was enshrined in the principles and values of the third way and that could oversee and protect the vulnerable media institutions from government intervention and foreign competition. However, the Council was given few tools to actually enforce its mandate. The Media Control Council was, in the words of its former head, Andreas Graf, “a watchdog without teeth.”⁴⁷ Not only was the actual authority of the institution limited, but also West German publishers were able to circumvent the authority of the Council through extralegal agreements and measures.⁴⁸

Opening the Border and the Battle for Distribution

As soon the Wall came down, the West German newspaper and magazine publishers tried desperately to enter the East German media market. In early December, two of the largest West German publishing companies, Springer and Gruner + Jahr, contacted the East German government with various distribution schemes.⁴⁹ These publishers were aware of the political and infrastructural hurdles in the way of importing and distributing West German publications in the GDR and hoped that they could facilitate the process utilizing their technological and professional expertise. Both proposals emphasized the potential economic revenue of such a joint venture, and it is clear that the Modrow government was interested in devising some kind of solution to the problem. Letters between Prime Minister Modrow and Wolfgang Meyer, the new head of East Germany’s Press Office, reveal the importance of the import and distribution

⁴⁶ Nürnberger, “Pressemarkt Der DDR – Dezember 1989 Bis Juli 1990.”

⁴⁷ Andreas Graf, “Media Publics in the GDR: Unification and the Transformation of the Media, 1989-1991,” in *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany*, ed. Michael Geyer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁴⁸ Chapter Four is framed around the Media Control Council and its attempt to protect the East German press as the country moved toward unification.

⁴⁹ These proposals are covered in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation: “Egon Krenz and the Media *Wende*.”

problem as part of the international political agenda. Meyer emphasized the fact that the GDR had signed the Final Act of the Helsinki Accords in Vienna on January 19, 1989, which included a provision for the free import and export of publications into and out of the non-socialist West.⁵⁰ The Final Act of the Helsinki Accords became the primary justification for the removal of the barriers to the free exchange of press between East and West Germany. In late November, Meyer suggested that the government place this important item on the agenda of Helmut Kohl's December 19 visit to the GDR, but he mused that three weeks might not be enough time to reach a political consensus on the import and distribution problem. Meyer vastly underestimated the political momentum behind this problem. During the two-day meeting in Dresden in December, Modrow and Kohl issued a joint statement agreeing to work toward the reciprocal exchange of newspapers and magazines as well as the proliferation of radio and television programming.⁵¹ With this agreement in place, all that was left was for the two sides to determine the exact method of distribution and how the matter would be funded.

Even before Kohl and Modrow met to agree on the exchange of publications between the two nations, the West German publishers developed a number of strategies to expand into the East. The motivations for this desire were surely multifaceted, but it is easy to dismiss this fervor for expansion as a simple financial calculation. There was an untapped potential market of over 16 million East Germans who were eager for Western goods, and the predicted revenue streams from advertising alone were enormous. However, the Western publishers framed the desire to enter the Eastern market in a commitment to the freedom of the press and the freedom of

⁵⁰ Wolfgang Meyer, "Letter from Wolfgang Meyer to Hans Modrow," November 29, 1989, DC9/1052, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁵¹ "Gemeinsame Erklärung." "Gemeinsame Mitteilung der Regierungschefs zum Arbeitstreffen," *Neue Zeit*, December 20, 1989, ZEFYS.

information. They argued that East German citizens had the right to gather news and information from diverse and reputable sources, a right that had been denied them for decades. Furthermore, East German publishers and newspapers desired the cooperation of Western firms to help them modernize and adapt to new technologies and practices now possible under the new political climate.⁵² Therefore, the momentum for inter-German cooperation came not only from the West, but also from the East German public (who wanted access to the Western titles), the East German news institutions (who needed help adapting to their new freedoms), and the East German government (who wanted to show that their commitment to reform was sincere).

Many Western publishers sought cooperation with East German firms. But, it was four of the largest West German publishing houses (Springer, Gruner + Jahr, Bauer, and Burda), which controlled nearly 70% of the West German media market, that were the most aggressive in establishing a foothold in the East German market. In January, the East German Post Office initiated behind-the-scenes exclusive negotiations with these four publishers to develop a modern and comprehensive distribution model for all West German publications.⁵³ The import of Western publications was a crucial component of the government's new commitment to the freedom of the press, but the East German Post's existing distribution model suffered from antiquated technology, poor infrastructure, and limited resources. The Post hoped that the experienced West German publishers could provide the much needed expertise and technology to truly ensure the free mobility of information. The agreement would create a joint venture firm

⁵² See for example the language in both Springer Verlag's and Gruner + Jahr's distribution network proposals: Peter Tamm, "Letter from Peter Tamm of the Spinger Verlag to Primer Minister Modrow," December 21, 1989, DC 9/1052, Das Bundesarchiv; "Konzept Zur Umfassenden Versorgung Der Bevölkerung Der DDR Mit in- Und Ausländischen Presseprodukten Zur Verwirklichung von Korb 3 Der KSZE-Schlußakte von Wien.," November 29, 1989, DC9/1052, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁵³ "Vertrieb von Presseerzeugnissen aus der BRD, Berlin (West) und dem übrigen Ausland in der DDR," January 26, 1990, DC 9/1050, Das Bundesarchiv.

with the East German Post. To ensure that the enterprise would retain its East German national integrity, the four publishers would comprise less than a 50% share. Imported newspapers would be purchased through funds generated from the introduction of advertising to East German television, and all profits would be reinvested in the enterprise.⁵⁴

When the plan was introduced in late January, small and medium West German publishers, led by the Jahres Zeiten Verlag and Spiegel Verlag denounced the project. In a January 30 press release, six West German publishers claimed that the East German Post Office had endangered the freedom of the press by entering into such a secret and exclusive agreement, which clearly benefited the large publishers at the expense of smaller publishing houses. They vowed to take up the matter with the Round Table and bring other West German publishers to their cause.⁵⁵ The outcry by the excluded publishers jettisoned the proposal and resulted in inquiries and discussions on either side of the border as to the nature and legality of the East German Post's negotiations with the four publishers.⁵⁶ Others sought to develop their own alternatives. In late February, an association of media wholesalers came together and founded the "Association for the Promotion of the Independent Distribution of Press Products in the GDR" (*Verein zur Förderung eines unabhängigen Vertriebs von Presseerzeugnisse in der DDR*) with the goal of creating an alternative midsize independent distribution system in the GDR. The newly founded association spoke out against what they saw as a "surprise attack" by the four publishers, who were engaging in a "monopolistic distribution chain."⁵⁷ As the merits of the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ "Die Post der DDR Spielt West Deutschen Grossverlagen Pressevertriebssystem in die Hände und Gefährdet damit die Pressefreiheit," January 30, 1990, DC 9/1052, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁵⁶ "Rechtswidrig: „Einstieg" von BRD-Medienriesen in der DDR," *Neues Deutschland*, February 8, 1990, ZEFYS.

⁵⁷ Werner Claus and Hans Bentzien, *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien?: Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90* (Berlin: Vistas, 1991), 71–72.

distribution system and its possible alternatives were being debated in Bonn and Berlin, the new East German media law came into effect, which ended the East German Post's monopoly on distribution. West German publishers who wanted to enter the East German market were now free to import and distribute their titles on their own. The West German publishers originally agreed to sell their publications at a 3:1 price ratio to protect the struggling East German institutions. However, this pretense was quickly abandoned, and West German titles were sold at 1:1 ratio, pricing many East German papers out of the market.⁵⁸

The controversy over the centralized distribution of imported newspapers and magazines reveals three important facets of the East German media landscape in the early months of 1990. First, subsequent inquiries into the negotiations between the East German Post and the four West German publishers reveal that it was the Post that sought the help of the publishers, and it was the Post that requested that the negotiations remain secret and exclusive.⁵⁹ Furthermore, these reports argued that the West German publishers acted in good faith to ensure that the conditions would be fair for all publishers and not unduly favor themselves. Much of the historiography of the transformation of the East German media landscape portrays the West German publishers as greedy and expansionist.⁶⁰ While the practices of these publishers was questioned by many observers during the spring and summer months of 1990, their initial foray into the East German market was done at the invitation of the East German government, and the Western parties tried

⁵⁸ Nürnberger, "Pressemarkt Der DDR – Dezember 1989 Bis Juli 1990," 6–7.

⁵⁹ Verband Deutscher Zeitschriftenverleger e.V., "Pressenotiz," February 8, 1990, DC 9/1052, Das Bundesarchiv. Medienkontrollrat der DDR, "Grundsätze zum Pressevertriebssystem," March 7, 1990, DC9/1050, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁶⁰ See for example: Graf, "Media Publics in the GDR: Unification and the Transformation of the Media, 1989-1991."

to ensure that there would be fair competition among the Western publishers.⁶¹ Inquiries by the Media Control Council, the West German Union of German Magazine Publishers, and both the West and East German governments later confirmed that the proposed distribution model was created in good faith and was not designed to stifle competition.⁶²

Second, the controversy reveals the importance of the import of Western titles to the political agendas of both German governments. Both governments argued that, in order to uphold the freedom of the press and information, East German citizens needed to have access to the West German press. With the failure of the initial distribution model, delegations from Bonn and Berlin met in Dresden on February 8 to discuss the problem, and both delegations agreed on the necessity of a quick and fair solution, especially in light of the upcoming Volkskammer elections in March.⁶³ On March 2, The West German Secretary of the Interior said of the necessity for a comprehensive import and distribution model: “A free and independent press is an indispensable prerequisite for democracy. The citizen must have the ability to form his or her opinion from multiple and diverse sources.”⁶⁴ This matter was of critical importance to both governments. The West German government, alongside any interest in protecting the financial interests of West German companies, wanted to protect the nascent democracy developing in the GDR and saw the export of West German news publications as a crucial component of that endeavor. The East German government, for its part, devoted much time and effort toward

⁶¹ “Rechtswidrig: „Einstieg“ von BRD-Medienriesen in der DDR.” And “Die Post der DDR Spielt West Deutschen Grossverlagen Pressevertriebssystem in die Hände und Gefährdet damit die Pressefreiheit.”

⁶² Medienkontrollrat der DDR, “Grundsätze zum Pressevertriebssystem”; Ralf Bachmann, “Letter from Ralf Bachmann to Dietrich Hübner, Bundesminister des Inneren,” March 30, 1990, DC 9/1052, Das Bundesarchiv; Verband Deutscher Zeitschriftenverleger e.V., “Pressenotiz.”

⁶³ “Gemeinsame Erklärung.”

⁶⁴ Schäuble, Wolfgang, “Bundesinnenminister Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble: “Das Neue Pressevertriebssystem in Der DDR Auf Eine Möglichst Breite Grundlage Stellen,” March 2, 1990, DC9/1050, Das Bundesarchiv.

devising a fair system, showing that they too felt that the East German citizen had the right to the unfettered access to information regardless of its national origin.

Finally, it is important to note that the distribution controversy had unforeseen and unintended consequences for the inevitable shape of the East German media landscape. The opponents of the East German Post's joint venture stalled the project, fearing that the proposed distribution system would unfairly benefit the large publishers to the detriment of other West German publishers and publications. In the ensuing months, the four large publishers were able to develop extralegal distribution schemes that had the same feared result of benefiting the large publishing houses, stifling competition between competing Western and Eastern publications.⁶⁵

Media Institutions Respond to the Changing Media Landscape

The rapid political changes under the Modrow administration placed the media institutions of the GDR on unsure footing. The freedoms that were now protected by the media law gave the journalists and editors the opportunity to re-conceive not only the structure and practice of their publications and institutions, but also the nature of the journalistic profession itself. However, with the entry of the West German firms, these evolving institutions and ideas were forced to compete with dominant and established adversaries. The result was a chaotic period where noble ideals were pitted against hard realities.

The East German News Service, ADN

While the February 5 media law formally released ADN from government oversight, the news service began to imagine the possibilities of an independent future, only weeks before the law was implemented. In January, the organization set up a working group to brainstorm possible

⁶⁵ The ensuing distribution crisis is covered in detail in the next chapter.

changes to the agency's statutes and status.⁶⁶ Operating without government interference also meant operating without government subsidies. So it was clear that if the agency wanted true independence, it would have to implement strategies to make the organization profitable and competitive with the established German speaking news agencies in the West. This was going to be a slow process, but ADN began instituting small changes, monetizing goods and services like translation and eliminating those services that were either politically or economically unsound.⁶⁷ Furthermore, now that the East German government vowed to honor the free distribution of information across international borders, the East German news agency was forced to reckon with its West German counterpart, the DPA (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur*). On February 6, the two news services revised their existing contracts with one another to allow media institutions from either country to subscribe to each of their services.⁶⁸ This would allow the East German press and broadcast media to access DPA's services via ADN's network and vice versa. Both agencies agreed to actively promote each other's services and they would split the proceeds 50:50.⁶⁹ In the ensuing months, this relationship between the two German language news services became an important factor in the debates surrounding the future status and structure of ADN.

In these early months of 1990, the organization faced a very difficult challenge. How was an organization supposed to plan for a future that was so unclear? On February 23, 1990, the leadership of ADN called an agency-wide meeting to discuss the current predicament.⁷⁰ The leadership presented three possible future scenarios for the economy of the GDR. The first was a

⁶⁶ "ADN 'Ideenberatung,'" January 16, 1990, DC 900/4215, AZ1100, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ A copy of the agreement is printed in: Michael Minholz and Uwe Stirnberg, *Der Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichtendienst (ADN): gute Nachrichten für die SED* (München; New Providence: Saur, 1995), 397–399.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ "Protokoll Der Belegschaftsversammlung Vom 23. 2. 1990," February 23, 1990, DC900/4215, AZ2150, Das Bundesarchiv.

continuation of the status quo: a state dominated, unviable economy. All agreed that this option was unlikely and unacceptable.⁷¹ That meant that either market conditions would take hold in the GDR or that East and West Germany would unify. While unification seemed like a possibility, the leadership at ADN reasoned, “There are an equal number of arguments that [reunification] will happen quickly or that this process could drag on for some time.”⁷² Therefore, the best option for ADN was to prepare for a market oriented GDR with some possibility of unification far down the line.⁷³ What did this mean for the structure and status of ADN? If the organization continued on its current path as a government controlled news transmission service, it risked illegitimacy, bankruptcy, and dissolution. Therefore, there needed to be fundamental changes to the organization’s financial structure as well as its professional mission. The goal was to transform the agency into an economically viable institution that could one day be fused with DPA. However, the editor-in-chief of ADN made it clear that an immediate union with their West German counterpart was not the present goal. During his speech to the assembled staff on February 23, he said of a merger with DPA: “I think that ADN in no way finds itself in the position that it is necessary for it to surrender itself so cheaply”⁷⁴ The goal was for ADN to transition into a financially independent German news service that could compete in its own right with Western agencies, while fulfilling its constitutional duty to provide news and information to the East German media institutions.

The leadership of ADN needed to come up with a way to utilize the agency’s comparative advantage, to leverage its existing structures and services so that it could compete in

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 3.

⁷³ “Protokoll Der Belegschaftsversammlung Vom 23. 2. 1990.”

⁷⁴ The exact quote in German: “*Ich bin aber der Auffassung, daß der ADN keineswegs sich in einer Position befindet, daß er es nötig hat, sich derartig billig aufzugeben.*” Found in: Ibid.

the free market. Since the administrative and professional infrastructure of ADN was still tied closely to the government, the leadership hoped that the agency could serve both the media and the government as an intermediary. The new media law required the government to be more transparent and provide the press with reports and information on government policies and actions. With political conditions changing quickly and the election on the horizon, the government could use an intermediary to provide information to the East German media. ADN could continue to operate between the government and the press. However, now it would do so not as an organ of the state but as an independent entity.

The transcripts and notes from this February 23 staff meeting provide insight into the realities of the media, economic, and political landscape prior to the March 18 elections.⁷⁵ First, the notes reveal the unpredictability of the GDR's economic and political future in the early months of 1990. While there were discussions about the potential for German unification, there was no consensus on a timeframe. Wirzberg told his assembled colleagues that the process of German unification was initiated but there were competing opinions as to how long this would take, and no one was capable of providing a definite prediction. While some argued that this would happen quickly, there were plenty of good arguments that the process could take a long time and that the GDR could continue to exist for quite a while under some form of confederation with the Federal Republic.⁷⁶ Without a clear future, Wirzberg and the leadership of ADN were forced to look at the present. What was needed and what could ADN offer? This was a problem that all East German firms faced in early 1990. As the economy shifted from central control to market conditions, each firm had to make decisions and predictions in a very volatile economic and political environment. And even in late February there was no consensus that

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

unification would happen as quickly as it did. Unable to see into the future, many firms like ADN hedged for the possibility of a long and protracted unification process and prepared for a slow transformation to the market economy. This bet would turn out poorly, and many firms like ADN that had decided to transition slowly were unable to compete with Western firms during and after the rapid reunification process.

Second, these notes reveal an alternative media landscape developing in the early months of 1990. The leadership at ADN knew that it eventually needed to become profitable and find a way to compete in the market but saw its role within the East German media landscape as somewhere between the state and the press. Rather than serve in a subservient position to the state, ADN saw its new role as more cooperative. The agency could “support” the government and the freedom of information, by assuming the role of a Government Press Service (*Regierungspresse*), thereby helping the state communicate to the press.⁷⁷ With the impending elections, the government needed a liaison to provide important information to the public via the media, and ADN had the infrastructure in place to do so.⁷⁸ These elections would be the first free democratic elections in the history of the GDR, and the pressure on the nascent democratic media and governmental institutions to provide accurate and important information to the public was great. ADN could help transmit this information to the media outlets, a role that it had played under the old regime, but now it would do so without direct government control and censorship. The leaders of ADN, in choosing this supportive role, still remained within the framework of the socialist model of journalism. The media served the public by providing communication between the public and the state. Rather than divorce itself from the state apparatus, ADN would instead re-establish their relationship on a more equal footing.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

The leadership of ADN continued to debate the possible future of the agency in the weeks leading up to the election, and as time went on the emphasis shifted from the status and role of the agency to the actual legal and financial logistics of remaining solvent. The agency had been heavily subsidized under the old regime, and the new measures aimed at increasing revenue were not sufficient to cover the gap. In light of the recent establishment of the Treuhand Institution (a trustee agency tasked with privatizing certain state institutions), ADN needed to seriously consider a path toward legal independence and financial solvency. To help find a solution, the leadership of ADN brought in an outside legal expert to explain the possible alternatives. He suggested that the agency consider converting itself into a limited liability company (GmbH) as soon as possible, given the current unstable political environment. This would not only grant the agency more legal capacity to act on its own behalf, but it would also generate opportunities to secure credit, which could be invested in much needed technological infrastructure. However, this credit would not be sufficient to fix the financial problems dogging the institution. The agency needed to consider a reduction in staffing.⁷⁹ Under the centralized and subsidized economy, staffing levels did not need to correspond to institutional profits, and as such many East German entities faced the problem of over-employment when forced to reckon with the market economy. In order to make up the budget deficits, many journalists, editors, and other employees at ADN were going to lose their jobs.

A New and Independent Media

As the old structures and restrictions that had bound the press to the power apparatus of the state fell aside in the winter of 1989/90, the journalists and news organizations experienced a period of unprecedented professional freedom. Free from the control and intervention of the

⁷⁹ “Protokoll Der Belegschaftsversammlung Vom 7. 3. 1990,” March 7, 1990, DC900/4215, Das Bundesarchiv.

party, the journalists introduced democratic reforms within their respective news organizations and ousted the old guard (editors and managers who had enforced party discipline and censorship).⁸⁰ The press and broadcast media began publishing stories and articles that would never have been cleared for publication under Honecker. Reports uncovering government corruption and privilege or detailing Khrushchev's secret speech now made headlines.⁸¹ From December to March, many of the former party newspapers rejected their party allegiances and codified their independence by changing their name or masthead. One example in particular exemplifies the chaotic spirit of independence and self-renewal. Within four months, the regional newspaper *Freiheit* changed its name and masthead four times. In December, the newspaper still operated under its original banner: *Freiheit: Proletarians of all Countries, Unite!*, followed by the phrase: "Organ of the SED of the Regional Leadership of Halle." The newspaper then dropped its affiliation both with the SED and the regional government (though keeping the clarion call for the world's proletariat), and called itself a "Socialist Daily Newspaper for the Region of Halle." Later the newspaper dropped the mention of the proletariat, and called itself an "Independent Daily Newspaper for Sachsen-Anhalt," and finally on March 17, the newspaper changed its name from *Freiheit* to *Mitteldeutschen Zeitung*, breaking the association with its old

⁸⁰ In October 1989, Wolfgang Tiedke was named the new editor-in-chief of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*; In November, the *Freie Presse* named Hannes Köhler their new editor in chief, Hans Joachim Koppe was named interim chief of *Neue Zeit*, and Klaus Peter Wattenbach was named head of *Volkswacht*. In December Wolfgang Nagorske was elected chief of the *Lausitzer Rundschau*, and the staff of *Tribüne* named Frank Käßner. In January 1990, Dieter Hausold was elected editor in chief of the *Volkswacht* replacing Wattenbach. Ulrich Erzigkeit subsequently replaced Hausold only weeks later, and the newspaper changed its name to *Ostthüringer Nachrichten*. Information pulled from: Kutsch, *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR*, 207–285.

⁸¹ "Krenz zu Korruption und Amtsmissbrauch," *Berliner Zeitung*, December 1, 1989, ZEFYS; Karl-Heinz Jakobs, "Das endlose Jahr," *Neue Zeit*, March 19, 1990, ZEFYS; "Harich, Steinberger, Hertwig von DDR-Gericht rehabilitiert," *Neue Zeit*, April 2, 1990, ZEFYS; Wolfgang Rex, "Stalins Katyn-Lüge nach fast 50 Jahren geplatzt," *Neues Deutschland*, March 24, 1990, Ze.

identity.⁸² With each name or slogan change came an attempt to express the shifting identity of the paper to its readers. For *Freiheit/Mitteldeutschen Zeitung* the break with the party was not as clean as with other newspapers that tried to distance their brands as far as possible from the former state-socialist identity. Rather, the process was more of a slow shifting endeavor as the newspaper searched for a new identity within a changing social and political landscape. Many newspapers addressed their readers directly as they broke away from the party leadership. In mid January, for example, the SED announced that it would no longer control their Berlin regional newspaper *Berliner Zeitung*. In the following issue the editor of the *Berliner Zeitung* addressed the readers:

The feeling of independence that we now feel and express in our work is an expression of our self-image: The *Berliner* has always been a mass-circulation newspaper [*Massenblatt*] for Berliners. It cannot and will not be a Party Newspaper, but rather grapple with the Party: for democracy, for the political and social rights of citizens, for anti-fascism. This includes the openness that we have fought for in recent weeks toward all democratic currents, groups and parties. . . . Much of this, we still have to learn. The “Scissors of the Mind,” that we have worked with for years, does not dissolve overnight. However, we are ready. How far each of us is capable of going, is up for our readers to decide.

...

Already, however, the journalists and workers of BZ profess the obligation, to create a good, independent (of the party), newspaper. We want this, because we know: Only in this way can we work in the spirit of our large and loyal readership.⁸³

The *Berliner Zeitung* editorial addressed both the spirit of independence and freedom felt by the journalists and editors in the first months of 1990 but also the challenges in breaking free from the past. The author did not ignore the challenges of years of party discipline and censorship that penetrated the profession but acknowledged those limitations and vowed to work to overcome

⁸² von Hobe, Bertram, “Lernprozess in einer Redaktion: Erfahrungen und Folgerungen am Beispiel der “Mitteldeutschen Zeitung,” in *Presse Ost, Presse West: Journalismus im vereinten Deutschland*, ed. Michael Haller, Klaus Puder, and Jochen Schlevoigt (Berlin: Vistas, 1995).

⁸³ “Ein Paar Worte in eigener Sache,” *Berliner Zeitung*, January 22, 1990, 18 edition, ZEFYS.

those hurdles. Neither the *Berliner Zeitung* nor *Freiheit/Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* were able to make a clean break from the past, but their paths reveal the transformation away from the state-socialist model of journalism as a series of steps and modifications, adjustments to new conditions, and the development of new ideas and identities.

As newspapers declared their independence, many journalists experienced an internal professional awakening. An editor at the once monthly, then weekly East German magazine *horizont* described the sentiment of this period in the following manner:

During this time period, the members of the editorial department, which also includes the personnel of the Graphic and Design Department as well as the Photo Department, were on the path to a new self-discovery as independent thinkers and agents. The change in thinking [*Umdenken*] in the whole society, the growing critical perspective on much of the past, and the search for new ways led to a constant exchange of opinion and an examination of what possibilities the individual could bring to the already initiated renewal of *horizont*.⁸⁴

These new freedoms did not only result in philosophical self-discovery, but they also changed the daily practice of the profession and the journalist's relationship to their institutions and leadership. Many newspapers introduced democratic administrative principles, allowing the staff to remove editors and managers. Journalists were also granted greater leeway in their assignments. If a journalist was ordered to write a story that violated his or her personal beliefs or did not stand up to established facts, the journalist now had the right to refuse the task. Without the dictates from the party leadership or fear of professional reprisals, the practice of journalism and news making became more collaborative as journalists and editors worked together to determine the future spirit and structure of the organization.

During this period, many news organizations tried to demonstrate their break from the old regime and their commitment to the new democratic process through penetrating investigations

⁸⁴ Gerhard Zazworka, "Woher Wir Kamen: Oder: Verstellter Weg Zu Neuen Horizonten," in *Zwischen "Mosaik" Und "Einheit": Zeitschriften in Der DDR*, ed. Simone Barck, Martina Langermann, and Siegfried Lokatis (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1999).

into abuses and violations of the past. These reports reflected a general trend during this period of uncovering the full extent of corruption and injustice perpetrated under Erich Honecker and his predecessor Walter Ulbricht. Of particular interest was the lavish compound for SED functionaries in Wandlitz, labeled “Volvograd” due to an excess of Swedish luxury vehicles among the East German political elite. As Konrad Jarausch pointed out in *Rush to German Unity*, these scandals of excess were particularly troubling to an East German public who saw the revelations as a hypocritical violation of the party’s supposed “moral authority.”⁸⁵ As the Volkskammer called former Party functionaries to testify on previous political and personal transgressions, individual institutions published reports on Joachim Herrmann’s and the Agitation and Propaganda Ministry’s illegal interventions into the daily practice of journalism as well as the various offences of the former party leadership.⁸⁶ In a January editorial, *Neues Deutschland* described the ways that Herrmann interceded into every detail of daily publication, from the positioning of images to the precise wording of headlines. Many journalists, according to the author, reacted to this daily interference by retreating into “cynicism, schizophrenia, or corrupted silence.”⁸⁷ Some journalists and media organizations looked into their own involvement with past abuses. In February, broadcast journalists from DDR-Television appeared in a documentary titled “*In eigener Sache*” and addressed their actions prior to October 1989. They revealed the conditions under which they worked and admitted complicity on the failed information policies of the GDR. These journalists argued that the best way to make up for the past was to engage in true-to-life reporting that reflected the reality and interests of their

⁸⁵ Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, 64.

⁸⁶ “Alte Medienpolitik verstieß gegen die Verfassung der DDR,” *Berliner Zeitung*, January 18, 1990, ZEFYS; “Joachim Herrmann gestand Verfassungsverletzung ein,” *Neues Deutschland*, January 18, 1990, ZEFYS.

⁸⁷ “In Eigener Sache,” *Neues Deutschland*, January 10, 1990.

viewers.⁸⁸ Many newspapers and programs engaged in these public revelations as a demonstration of their rejection of the old ways and an affirmation of the democratic process. However, some media scholars view these attempts as incomplete or insincere.

The prominent media scholar Gunter Holzweissig argued that these articles investigating previous abuses usually degenerated into superficial sensationalism with a willing avoidance of research or an examination of causal factors. In one example, he pointed to the television journalist Jan Carpentier, who in the months following the Wende broadcast a number of scandalous reports for *Elf99* on the excesses of party privilege and abuses of power. Holzweissig was suspicious of these reports and emphasized the fact that the government handpicked Carpentier to succeed Karl Eduard von Schnitzler as moderator for the infamous propaganda program “Black Channel” (*Schwarze Kanal*). For Holzweissig, Carpentier was an example of the “wrynecks” (*Wendehälse*), opportunists who were able to use their connections and knowledge to remain in a position of power while publicly professing an adherence to the new norms.⁸⁹ Holzweissig was not alone in his criticism of the journalists supposed rejection of the past. Joachim Nölte argued that while some journalists fought to prove themselves through hard work and honesty, others tried to explain their own failures by pushing the blame on others, searching for and finding a constant supply of new scapegoats.⁹⁰

Holzweissig and Nölte’s critical view of the legitimacy and sincerity of the professional and moral transformation of journalists is part of a broader scholarship on perpetrators, guilt, trauma, and the processing of the past that pervades the historiography of the collapse of the

⁸⁸ Nölte, “Chronik medienpolitischer Ereignisse in der DDR,” 66.

⁸⁹ Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*, 169–170.

⁹⁰ Nölte, “Chronik medienpolitischer Ereignisse in der DDR,” 19.

Communism in Eastern Europe.⁹¹ This theme has particular resonance in the study of East German journalism. Many scholars have viewed any continuity in the profession of journalism in the post-GDR eastern Germany as cause for concern, given the proximity of the profession to the exercise of authority under socialism and the crucial role played by journalists in a democratic society.⁹² It is true that even in this short period of unprecedented freedom, many journalists and media organizations failed to make a full break with the past, but this slow process of transformation reflects the historical reality of the moment. Many journalists still held faith in the socialist cause and while they rejected the authoritarian practices of the old-SED, they did not want to discredit all aspects and elements of their socialist backgrounds.⁹³ The media system in the GDR favored those journalists who were sympathetic to the party ideology, and as a result a large majority of journalists in the GDR were members of the SED.⁹⁴ Many journalists wanted to protect their unique East German voice, familiar to and desired by their particular audiences. Many politicians, activists, and journalists were still trying to find a path for the third way, even as the public turned toward the West. Second, as the *Berliner Zeitung* editorial points out, long standing practices and structures do not disappear over night, and what we see during these months is a series of steps and shifts in a new direction. The many name changes of *Freiheit/Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, reflect this ever-shifting identity. In light of these upheavals,

⁹¹ Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 33–37.

⁹² See for example: Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, and Dieter Stürzebecher, “Woher kommen sie, wie denken sie, was wollen sie?,” in *Presse Ost, Presse West: Journalismus im vereinten Deutschland*, ed. Michael Haller, Klaus Puder, and Jochen Schlevoigt (Berlin: Vistas, 1995), Armin Scholl, “Rollenselbstverständnis ost- und westdeutscher Journalisten,” in *Presse Ost, Presse West: Journalismus im vereinten Deutschland*, ed. Michael Haller, Klaus Puder, and Jochen Schlevoigt (Berlin: Vistas, 1995).

⁹³ See for example the interviews in the 5th Chapter of this dissertation. Particularly that of TH, FH, and SH and in the appendix.

⁹⁴ In 1988, 76.4% of the members of the Journalist’s Union were SED party members. Verband der Journalisten der DDR Büro des Sekretariats, “Erläuterungen Zur Mitgliederstatistik per 31.12.1988,” December 31, 1988, DY 10/822, 211, Das Bundesarchiv.

journalists in East Germany fought to codify certain legal and professional norms so that they could serve as a guideline during these uncertain times. The media law served to establish a legal framework, and the Journalists Union took up the project of devising the professional foundation.

New Role for the Journalist's Union (VDJ)

As shown in Chapter Two, the transformation of the Journalists Union during the fall and winter of 1989/90 is impressive. During these few short months, the union went from enforcing the party power structures to constructing a new professional identity based on the active input of its members. This new phase for the union originated with the push for media reforms and the codification of a media law under the Krenz administration. It was the union that took the initiative and pressured the government to reform its media policies, and it was the union that, along side the Union for Film and Television Professionals, laid much of the groundwork for the new media law. While the union fought for these changes on the national level, it became clear to the leadership and the members of the union that the fundamental changes taking place within the East German society required a thorough examination and reassessment at the professional level. The leadership called for a Special Congress to convene on 25 and 26 January, and solicited input from all of its members. Everything was on the table, and hundreds of letters came in suggesting a number of structural and professional reforms. When the Special Congress convened in late January, the nearly decade-long chairman of the union, Eberhard Heinrich, took to the podium. Heinrich acknowledged his role and the role of the Union in perpetuating the illegal and immoral disinformation policies of the SED and the deformation of the profession of journalism in the GDR. The Special Congress was convened to serve as a break with the past and

a rejection of the old ways. Heinrich took personal responsibility for the abuses that took place under his watch and abdicated his position as chairman in favor of new and younger leadership.⁹⁵

The Special Congress was more than a venue for the changing of the guard. In preparation for the event, a commission was formed to draft a discussion paper regarding the “Ethical Principals of the Journalistic Profession.” The commission based their paper on discussions and deliberations with journalism scholars and students at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, practicing journalists from national and regional newspapers, representatives from the union of evangelical churches, colleagues from ADN, television, radio, as well as experts from the Institute for International Studies, the Institution for International Relations, and the Institute for Politics and Economics. In searching for a legal and moral basis for a specific East German journalistic code of ethics, the commission turned to the core values of the third way. These included a commitment to antifascism, a prohibition against warmongering, and the protection of human rights.⁹⁶ From there they incorporated international journalistic professional norms from socialist and non-socialist countries as well as the principles of the Final Act of the Helsinki Accords, and UNESCO.

The ethical principles listed in the commission’s proposal shared many similarities to the West German journalists’ code of ethics, which was codified and overseen by the West German media oversight organization, the German Press Council.⁹⁷ These shared values included, respecting the privacy and dignity of individuals, ensuring the accuracy of reporting, honest and legal research methods, integrity in reporting and a separation between reporting and financial

⁹⁵ “Stenografisches Protokoll,” January 25, 1990, 7–29, DY 10/351, Das Bundesarchiv.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 48.12/1/15 1:12 PM

⁹⁷ “PUBLIZISTISCHE GRUNDSÄTZE (PRESSEKODEX)” (Deutschen Presserat, March 13, 2013), http://www.presserat.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads_Dateien/Pressekodex_bo_web_2015.pdf.

interests, the presumption of innocence for individuals accused of a crime, and the promise not to awaken any unrealistic hopes when reporting on medical research. However, there were a number of principles that reflected the hybrid-identity of the East German journalists. One precept, for example, stated that it was the duty of the journalist to provide the public with information from many different perspectives to encourage the development of new opinions and a more complex vision of the world, “so that the origins, nature, and the essence of events, processes and conditions, can be understood and realized as objectively as possible.”⁹⁸ This particular tenet calls on the journalist to do more than provide information. Rather, the journalist was like an educator or mentor, helping to foster and form public opinion. This pedagogical role can be traced to the old socialist model that looked to journalists as agitators and organizers, molding and forming public opinion on behalf of the public. In West Germany the idea of an “educational mandate” was ascribed to the public broadcast institutions, and required public broadcasters to provide sufficient information to ensure that viewers and listeners could actively participate in the political construction of knowledge. While the two understandings of the media are similar, the East German model developed by the journalists was less neutral and distanced and acknowledged a deeper duty of all journalists to play an active role in the social education of the public. A longitudinal study of the core values of West German journalists showed that while some West German journalists did identify a missionary element of their profession, as in the desire to share opinions with their audience, the importance of this idea had fallen for journalists from 1980 to 1992.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ “Stenografisches Protokoll.”

⁹⁹ Wolfgang Donsbach, “Journalismus Und Journalistisches Berufsverständnis,” in *Mediengeschichte Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Jürgen Wilke (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1999), 509.

Much like the new media law, the ethics code included principles that served as a confrontation with the past, for instance one tenet declared that journalists should not violate their own conscience in their reporting. This was a direct response to old interventions and dictates leveled by the party. The new journalistic code placed the ethical responsibility for a journalist's work in his or her own hands, regardless of administrative orders. This particular tenet empowered journalists to advocate and act on behalf of their conscience, to dispose of the "scissors of the mind," and served as a reminder that the old authoritarian structures were no longer in place. By placing a certain onus on the journalists to remain true to their own ideas and beliefs, the VDJ commission placed a certain responsibility on the shoulders of the journalists to ensure that the old power dynamics stayed in the past, acknowledging that obedience is a form of complicity.

While most of the tenets varied only slightly in language and tone from the West German version, there was one tenet that stood out as promoting the program of the third way.

(10) The ethical commitment vis-à-vis the universal values of humanity requires of journalists an anti-fascist attitude and a rejection of any justification or incitement of war, the arms race, neo-fascism, all forms of violence, hate, discrimination, especially racism and apartheid, repression under tyrannical regimes, colonialism, and neocolonialism, the subjugation of the third world, and the destruction of the environment. It promotes international cooperation and such international relations that serve peace, freedom, justice, détente, disarmament, and the solution to the global problems of humanity.

The goal of the document was to provide a starting point for a discussion on the role of journalists in the nascent democratic society in East Germany. And as such it provides a valuable point of reference for understanding how journalists and media experts saw themselves, and their profession during a period of profound social and political upheaval. Within the document there is a clear reverence for certain basic and fundamental journalistic norms, shared by journalists around the world. The commission clearly wanted to embed the East German profession within the international community of journalists and even called for solidarity with the journalists of

the world. The authors of the document did look to international examples, especially the West German code of ethics, a fact that is quite visible when reading the documents together. However, there were values and lessons from the GDR and its past that the commission felt it was necessary to include. In the historiography of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the East German case stands out due primarily to the existence of its West German counterpart. It is argued that the West Germans provided a legal and institutional model that was easy to adopt due to a shared history and language. While this ended up being the case in most institutions, even within journalism itself, it is important to remember that there was a period where the reunification of the two states was not seen as an immediate reality and there was a space for individuals and institutions to imagine a unique East German alternative. This proposal for the East German journalistic code of ethics reflects this period between dominant ideologies, where representatives of the profession tried to cobble together a usable moral foundation for the daily practice of their craft. The writers borrowed from their past and from the West to create a code of ethics that both represented and challenged the journalistic community in the GDR. This document shared the fate of the project set about by the dissidents at the Round Table. In the following months the reunification of the two German states would become a quickly approaching reality, and in the face of the myriad infrastructural and financial problems the East German professional institutions like the VDJ lost all utility. Indeed, the dominant role of the West German enterprises and institutions would subsume the floundering democratic socialist alternative.

Persistent Problems

Even with the penetrating reforms implemented by the Round Table and the Volkskammer, there were a number of legal, financial, and infrastructural hurdles that dogged

the long established as well as the newly founded East German media organizations. The paper crisis—which was introduced and discussed in Chapter Two—continued to plague the print industry in the early months of 1990. The government had issued a number of resolutions and measures to address the paper shortage, but the domestic paper supply was now taxed even further with the entrance of so many new publications. In February 1990, Wolfgang Meyer issued a statement declaring that in light of the explosion in the demand for paper, the current economic plan for the year would be short between 4854 and 7466 tons of paper. Even with the emergency measures that cut paper exports by 2000 tons, and the redirection of 1500 tons from the Economic Committee, there would still not be enough paper to cover demand. Meyer suggested that the government should consider cutting the paper allocation for the SED newspapers, and redistributing those resources among the remaining publications. However he felt that this was neither a sustainable nor desirable solution.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the existing technological infrastructure was overtaxed and now obsolete and new equipment was difficult to procure. In mid January, the editor of *Junge Welt* continued to fight to secure private telephone connections for his staff so that they could work from home. In response to his efforts, the Press and Information Service sent a letter explaining why some of his staff still remained without telephone service.¹⁰¹ In one case, the journalist’s apartment building already had the maximum number of telephone connections available, and the switch points provided by the Deutsche Post (which oversaw and maintained the telephone network) were already at capacity. In the case of another journalist, the department that oversaw the telephone service was missing the required contracts to approve the journalist’s private telephone connection. Only after the proper

¹⁰⁰ Wolfgang Meyer, “Report: Berlin, Den 6.2.1990,” February 6, 1990, DC9/1049, Das Bundesarchiv.

¹⁰¹ “Einrichtung von Fernsprechan schlüssen Bei Der Redaktion “Junge Welt.”

paperwork was re-submitted or located would it be possible to order the installation of the new telephone line.¹⁰² These two cases illustrate daily frustration of life in the GDR during this period. How could East German firms and individuals compete with Western enterprises when they were so severely constrained by their own domestic bureaucratic nightmares and infrastructural bottlenecks?

Compounding to these problems, however, was the dire financial situation of the old party press. Under the old regime, the SED and the bloc parties heavily subsidized the media. Prices for the printed press were held at post-war levels and bore no relationship to the cost of production. Many of the organizations were over staffed, had limited access to outside revenue, and little experience with advertisers. With the New Year, these organizations faced major budget deficits, and the SED announced in late February that the government would end all subsidies for publications on April 1.

Table 2: Financial Deficits of GDR Newspapers as of January 1990 by Party Affiliation

Newspaper Affiliation	Financial Deficit as of January 1990 in Millions of Ost Mark
SED Newspapers	345.4
SED - National/Berlin	113.7
SED - Regional Newspapers	231.7
Mass Organizations/Other	51.7
Bloc Party Newspapers	
DBD Newspapers	6.6
LDPD Newspapers	14
CDU Newspapers	13.6
NDPD Newspapers	11.1
Source: BArch, DC9/1049	

¹⁰² Ibid.

The papers predicted that they would have to increase their prices by 300% to make up for the loss in state funding. News organizations had a limited number of financial solutions available to address these problems. While papers could generate revenue through increasing their limited advertising space, the East German firms lacked the expertise in dealing with advertising on a large scale, since this was not an essential component of the financial model in the old regime. Advertising only contributed on average 21 percent of a paper's revenue, compared to 65 percent in the West.¹⁰³ Furthermore, many journalists, editors and institutions eyed the relationship between publishing and advertising in the West with great suspicion. They saw the dependency on advertising revenue as a limitation of journalistic freedom and did not want to trade one overseer for another. In paging through the newspapers from this period, there is a surprising lack of advertising visible on the pages of the papers. For example, on a randomly selected day, February 21, 1990, the eight page edition of the *Berliner Zeitung* contained six pages with no advertising what so ever. Two pages displayed very minimal advertising, (one to two small ads in the lower corners of the page). The only page with any substantial advertising was the sixth page of the edition, of which the lower half was devoted to revenue generators. Only around a third of the page contained ads and the remaining 15% or so was given over to classifieds. The paper is dominated by text and clearly not by revenue generating advertising.

An alternative to the growing financial pressure was to reduce costs by reducing staff. In mid-January, the Journalist's Union protested against what they saw as arbitrary lay-offs of journalists, saying that in the GDR there was a right to work and the media organizations had a

¹⁰³ Nürnberger, "Pressemarkt Der DDR – Dezember 1989 Bis Juli 1990," 3.

responsibility to do everything in their power to protect their workers.¹⁰⁴ While many organizations terminated editors and journalists that were seen as especially responsible for enforcing and perpetuating the old system, few organizations reveled in using arbitrary staff reductions as a cost saving measure. The internal memos at ADN reflect this hesitancy during the early months of 1990. As the organization debated possible strategies to increase revenue, layoffs were always seen a last resort. The Journalist Union's protest reveals the perceived presence of layoffs during this period, but these were relatively low compared to the massive layoffs that would come during the remainder of the year. A final option was to turn to Western firms for financial or technological support. During this period, East German and West German firms began establishing informal relationships. For example, in January, the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and the *Sächsische Tageblatt* agreed to the sporadic exchange of articles.¹⁰⁵ These informal relationships would provide the first step toward a more concrete financial partnerships and mergers in the months following the March elections.

As the established East German press battled with internal financial and infrastructure issues, the media market itself blossomed with a flurry of new titles either from newly established East German firms or West German transplants. In January, the weekly newspaper *Wir in Leipzig* was founded as the first German-German paper.¹⁰⁶ And in Erfurt, a group of oppositional journalists joined with a Bavarian publishing company to publish the weekly newspaper, *Thüringischer Anzeiger*. In February the West German newspaper, *Tageszeitung*, introduced a special GDR version of the Berlin based paper. The East German edition was led by West German editors and only existed as its own unique paper for a few months before being

¹⁰⁴ Nölte, "Chronik medienpolitischer Ereignisse in der DDR," 87.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁰⁶ Nürnberger, "Pressemarkt Der DDR – Dezember 1989 Bis Juli 1990," 12.

downgraded to an East German editorial department within the West German publication.¹⁰⁷

These West-East hybrids added to the dozens of new domestic East German titles, which flooded the newspaper market in the early months of 1990. While this abundance of alternative voices and perspectives reflected the new media freedoms in East Germany, it also generated heightened competition for the already struggling former party press. When the West German publishers finally found a way to import and distribute their papers to East German consumers in March of 1990, the fight for organizational survival became all the more severe. Two events however, would turn the “Media Spring” into a Media Collapse. The first was the introduction of West German publications on a massive scale in March of 1990. The second was the loss of the state subsidies. Without state funding, the newspaper’s financial troubles turned to crises. To keep the doors open, many firms looked for West German financial backing through mergers or sales. Some of these deals were negotiated by the institutions themselves, but the majority were handled by the *Treuhand* trust agency.

The End of the Third Way

Gysi incorporated the idea of the third way into the party platform of the SED-PDS in early December 1989, and over the ensuing weeks the other political parties of the GDR defined their stance on the third way. The NDPD advocated for an eventual unification with West Germany, but in the meantime they would pursue “market capitalism with social components.”¹⁰⁸ In early January, the East-CDU warned against any further experiments either on the left or the right when it came to state and economic ideology, arguing against the alternative for which “the Czechoslovakian convergence theorists had already thrown themselves

¹⁰⁷ Nölte, “Chronik medienpolitischer Ereignisse in der DDR,” 69.

¹⁰⁸ “NDPD: Abgrenzung Auf Dem ‘Dritten Weg’ Programmatische Vorstellung Als ‘Partei Der Mitte,’” *Berliner Zeitung*, December 28, 1989.

onto the funeral pyre.”¹⁰⁹ Alongside the CDU, the more conservative elements within East German society began to warn against the implementation of a new socialist alternative.

Wolfram Krause, who would eventually be named the head of the Treuhand Trustee Agency, argued,

I cannot at all warm up to the idea of the third way. The so-called only alternative was, as we now see today, not even a second way. It was an aberration, because it did not serve the people. To guarantee the latter [the service of the people] in a comprehensive manner, we want to chose a way that would bring the achievements of human civilization – the market economy – with the needs and potential of the GDR.

West German conservatives warned the East Germans against the pursuit of a socialist alternative cautioning, “The supposed third way between market and planned economy is economically a direct way into the third world.”¹¹⁰

As the left continued to debate the possibilities of the third way, many became anxious for concrete and ready proposals to address the deepening political and economic problems plaguing the GDR.¹¹¹ By the end of January the SED-PDS began to distance itself from the call for the formation of a new social, economic, and political path. In an interview with *Neues Deutschland*, the SED-PDS economist Dr. Uwe-Jens Heuer said,

I have great sympathy for the wish of those comrades who want to develop a new world vision. I believe, however, that right now we need to develop a practical concept for our country. We need to come to terms with the fact that the GDR is a small country, and it can solve its present objection to the over-powerful Federal Republic with world visions. We tried that long enough. ... This country cannot simply become a repeat, a copy of the Federal Republic of Germany. It must develop on the basis of its experiences, of its social

¹⁰⁹ “Von Ausverkauf und Werten, Auf welche Realität stellt sich neue CDU-Politiker ein?,” *Neue Zeit*, January 9, 1990, ZEFYS.

¹¹⁰ “Höheres Tempo Und Mehr Mut Wären Bei Kooperation Wünschenswert. NZ Interview Mit Dr. Tyll Necker, Präsident Des Bundesverbandes Der Deutschen Industrie (BDI),” *Neue Zeit*, January 16, 1990.

¹¹¹ Norbert Schwaldt, “Das Nachdenken kommt wieder einmal zu spät,” *Neue Zeit*, January 13, 1990, ZEFYS.

elements, an independent economic and political system that is oriented to the left of the FRG. For me, that is the only responsible promising path.¹¹²

By February and March, the more conservative elements within the GDR who advocated for a unification of East and West Germany encouraged the East German population to give up the illusion of an alternative socialist GDR. As unification as a practical and immediate solution to the GDR's systemic issues gained traction in the public, the left began to adjust the idea of the third way from a new type of democratic socialism, to a more socially aware market capitalism. With the conservative's substantial win in the March 18 elections, the practical possibility of the third way was eliminated; however, the idea continued to live on within a number of media institutions.

Conclusion

The crisis that began in the fall of 1989 had only intensified during the final months of the year. Krenz's reforms failed to stop the refugee crisis, and the opposition movement only gained traction and popular support. As the SED attempted to shift course yet again, ousting Krenz and rebranding itself as the Party of Democratic Socialism, the dissidents who had helped bring down the Wall had earned a seat at the bargaining table. Through power-sharing agreements and the Central Round Table, the Modrow administration worked with the East German opposition to find a course toward a free and democratic socialist German state. For a few short months, the dream of a "Third Way," between authoritarian socialism and materialist capitalism, seemed possible. In the spirit of this pursuit and under pressure from the Journalist's Union, the government affirmed basic freedoms of the press and information and began to dismantle the barriers that had isolated and corrupted the East German media market.

¹¹² "Für ein eigenständiges politisches System, links von der Bundesrepublik. ND-Gespräch mit Prof. Uwe-Jens Heuer zu Demokratie und Sozialismus.," *Neues Deutschland*, January 27, 1990, ZEFYS.

Freed from government control and censorship, the journalists of East Germany began a process of self-discovery and reinvention. As they rejected the practices and structures that had confined their profession for decades, their break from the past was neither immediate nor a full rejection of socialism. Like the members of the opposition, many journalists believed in the socialist cause and hoped to find a “Third Way” for their profession as well. This alternative vision was not completely uniform. For ADN it meant a continuation of their strong ties to the state infrastructure, serving the public by remaining tied to the government. For newspaper firms it meant an embrace of the new freedoms and independence and an initiation of a process of self-discovery. The journalists union undertook the most conscious attempt to re-define the profession through their conference and development of ethical principles. The new tenets show the understanding of the profession in this period as a hybrid of what was valued from the old system and what was desired for the new. This is not a clean break with the past, but an evolution, a new stage in the development of the profession, learning from the limitations of the past with an eye toward a more democratic future.

However these ideals and dreams did not reflect the economic and political realities of the time. The East German institutions had neither the finances nor the experience to compete with the established West German press, and the public’s desire for West German living standards and goods terminated the dream of an East German socialist alternative. The German opposition parties could not compete with the Christian Democrat’s political power and finances. The March 18 elections resulted in a profound defeat for the SED and the opposition groups. The public chose the CDU’s vision of a reunified German state over the prospect of a socialist renewal. Lothar de Maizière came to power and set the course for German Reunification. Over the next nine months, journalists and media organizations turned from redefining their profession

to protecting their positions as the West German media landscape expanded eastward. In reflecting on this period Gerhard Zazworka, the editor in chief of *horizont* said:

For only a few months, probably from January to May 1990, we experienced something like the true Freedom of the Press. After that we had our first experiences with the accession of the GDR to the FRG, and with that also the superiority of the FRG-Media in East Germany. With everything that we had learned in our process of self-discovery, we now had to search for new jobs, which for the most part were no longer in journalism.¹¹³

While some journalists and institutions fought to maintain a unique democratic socialist perspective, the dominance of the West German businesses and media institutions overpowered the East German market. Over the coming months, the Media Control Council fought to protect East German professional interests and continually tried to pose alternatives to the wholesale adoption of West German institutions and norms. But the speed of the reunification process and powerful political and commercial interests proved too powerful to overcome.

¹¹³ Zazworka, “Woher Wir Kamen: Oder: Verstellter Weg Zu Neuen Horizonten,” 243.

The Media Control Council, East Germany's Media Watchdog Agency (*February-October 1990*)

Introduction: The Wolf with No Teeth

On the 13th of February 1990, a new East German governmental committee held its first official meeting. This body was unique in German history and was a distinct product of the East German government's desire and struggle to reform the country's media institutions in the spirit of democracy and self-determination. As noted in Chapter Three, this new institution, named the Media Control Council (*Medienkontrollrat*, MKR), was envisioned as a central component of the February 5 Media Law and was tasked with ensuring that the provisions of the new media law would be honored. The Council embodied the hope that with appropriate protection and oversight the East German media could spearhead its own reform process and generate its own democratically and economically viable media institutions and firms. For some West German media observers, the committee's name evoked memories of the former East German regime's emphasis on control and surveillance.¹¹⁴ However, the MKR was, in fact, conceived as a reaction against this past. Although the job of the MKR was to oversee the complicated transformation of the media from central, socialist, and dirigiste control to democratic, free, and market-based direction, the Council was given no enforcement powers. The institution became known in the media as the "Wolf with no Teeth," a reputation the organization itself accepted with pride.¹¹⁵

During that initial meeting, Martin Kramer, a representative of the Protestant Church and the moderator of the MKR, declared explicitly that the Council was "not a censorship board";

¹¹⁴ Heinz Pürer and Johannes Raabe, *Medien in Deutschland* (Konstanz: UVK Medien, 1996), 417.

¹¹⁵ Ute Theon, "Medienkontrollrat -- ein Wolf ohne Zahne," *Tageszeitung*, April 3, 1990.

rather, the Council had been created to protect equal opportunity in the media.¹¹⁶ This new regulatory board, conceived not only in the spirit of, but also by the mandate of the Central Round Table, reflected the pluralistic spirit of the early months of 1990, when the coalition of East German reform parties hoped to correct the course of the East German state in time to save the GDR from complete dissolution. However, the surprising and dramatic win of the East-CDU in the March 18 elections quickly brought the “wolf” to heel. The toothless MKR was defanged even further, and the supervisory body was rendered practically impotent.

When it was time to take stock at the end of the Council’s short eight-month tenure, the report card was bleak. The Council had succumbed to dominant political powers during the highly volatile period in the final months of the GDR’s existence. The Council’s meetings had been mired in political scandal and infighting, the East German print media landscape was dominated by West German capital interests, and all attempts to transform the East German broadcast institutions into a singular East German public broadcast entity had failed. As such, the MKR has become little more than a footnote in the history of the East German transformation.

This small, ineffectual body was a failed relic of a short period of reformative optimism. However, the MKR provides an informative window from which to view this dramatic period of transformation and upheaval. Regardless of the body’s impotence, the Council became an arena where many of the major battles of the East German media transformation were waged. Simple nomination proceedings became mired in political battles between the new conservative administration and the successor party of the SED, which carried with it the legacy and burden of the fallen regime. As a supervisory body, the Council bore witness to the dramatic changes that overtook the East German media as the path towards unification was being carved. The Council

¹¹⁶ Rainer Bekesehus, “Medienkontrollrat der DDR konstituierte sich.,” *Neues Deutschland*, February 14, 1990, Year 45, Edition 38 edition.

was a venue for journalists, politicians, and media organizations to voice their fears, hopes and concerns about the process of transformation, and their testimony reveals many of the tensions and problems facing the industry during this formative period. As a wolf with no teeth, the MKR's role developed into that of advocate, record keeper, and sounding board.

As East German media professionals, entrepreneurs, and agencies struggled to shed the cumbersome burdens of their pasts while developing and establishing a new independent and democratic East German media identity, the landscape was being contoured by more powerful forces. West German firms and political interests were better able to adapt to the shifting playing field and were able to outwit and overpower East German interests. The MKR had the futile task of advocating on behalf of the East German media in a system that was incapable of protecting the industry's needs. The MKR witnessed on a small scale some of the larger forces shaping the East German fate in 1990 on the eve of the Reunification, and thus it provides a useful window from which to examine how and why the East German media was unable to prevent its complete dissolution and absorption into West German structures.

Relevant Works and Problem Statement

Of the many works that examine the history of the transformation of East German media, few delve into great detail when it comes to the Media Control Council. With little impact on the eventual structure of the media landscape, the MKR is noted but quickly passed over in favor of its more formidable competing institutions and successors: the Ministry of Media, *Treuhand* (the trust agency tasked with overseeing the privatization of East German state assets), and the *Einrichtung* (the 'institution' given the power to dissolve and re-create the East German

broadcast institutions in West-German form).¹¹⁷ Most works that do mention the Council note its origins and shortcomings; however, little analysis is expended on the MKR's greater significance. These works target instead some of the larger themes of this tumultuous transitional period. Some authors have focused on the way in which the West German structural model was implemented or cloned for East German broadcast institutions or print media companies.¹¹⁸ While some media observers were critical of this "colonization" of the East, others argued that such claims are exaggerated.¹¹⁹ Gunter Holzweissig argued, for example, that there were few realistic alternative paths for the East German media, stating that the acceptance of West German structures led to stability and pluralistic parliamentary democracy, which had been withheld from the East Germans during the six decades of National Socialist and SED rule.¹²⁰

Although the MKR is frequently overlooked, some media professionals and scholars who either participated in or came into conflict with the Council have contributed articles and chapters documenting their personal experiences and the Council's historical legacy. These first-hand accounts provide a peek into some of the Council's closed-door sessions and debates. Furthermore, the authors are able to provide insight into the motivations of some of the important actors. Their perspective helps establish the potential and the limitations of the MKR's reach. For example, Andreas Graf, an historian and media scholar who served as a managing executive of

¹¹⁷ See for example: Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*, 187; Donsbach, "Journalismus Und Journalistisches Berufsverständnis," 611; Susanne Hepperle, "Durchsetzung des westdeutschen Ordnungsmodells: Rundfunk und Fernsehen," in *Transformationspfade in Ostdeutschland: Beiträge zur sektoralen Vereinigungspolitik* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1998), 200–201; Pürer and Raabe, *Medien in Deutschland*, 417–418; Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 113.

¹¹⁸ Hepperle, "Durchsetzung des westdeutschen Ordnungsmodells: Rundfunk und Fernsehen"; Hans Bohrmann, "The Amalgamation of East German and West German Media: 1989-1995," in *Germany Reunited: A Five- and Fifty-Year Retrospective* (New York: P. Lang, 1997).

¹¹⁹ Sigrun Richter, "Vom Bewacher zum Überwacher," in *Publizistischer und journalistischer Wandel in der DDR: vom Ende der Ära Honecker bis zu den Volkskammerwahlen im März 1990*, by Arnulf Kutsch (Bochum: N. Brockmeyer, 1990).

¹²⁰ Holzweissig, *Die Schärfste Waffe Der Partei*, 188–189.

the Media Control Council has written multiple book chapters on the transformation of the East German Press during the Wende and Reunification period. In these chapters, he detailed the operations of the Council, and its contributions to the reform process. His first chapter, written in June 1990 (co-authored by Heike Graf), tracks the history of the institution from its original conception through the Council's initial hurdles and setbacks. Graf and Graf describe the spring and summer of 1990 as a West German "conquista" of the East German print landscape, in which the four dominant West German publishing houses were able to circumvent the MKR and the other governing bodies and capitalize on the legal vacuum that blossomed during the chaotic transformation process.¹²¹ Although the MKR 'barked' initially and prematurely when it issued the demand to create legislation regarding the distribution of press products, the Council was unable to thwart the "Wild East" mentality. However, Graf and Graf also lauded the Council for its courage in resisting the intervention of the East German executive branch into matters of the media, writing that in regard to broadcasting, "the MKR didn't just growl and bark, it bit."¹²² Graf and Graf saw the MKR's rejection of both Hans Modrow's and Lothar de Maizière's nominations for the General Director of Radio and Television as a rare and effective show of force. In this initial assessment of the Council, written on the eve of unification, Graf and Graf concluded that the MKR was not simply a "place for political slugfests" but rather a venue where parties could meet and generate common solutions to address the transformation of the media. In

¹²¹ Andreas Graf and Heike Graf, "Der Medienkontrollrat - Insel der Stabilität im medienpolitischen Schlachtenlärm," in *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien?: Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, ed. Werner Claus (Berlin: Vistas, 1991), 11.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 12.

June of 1990, Graf and Graf saw the MKR as immune from the grasp of state, party political, and group self-interest.¹²³

Andreas Graf later revised his June 1990 essay as part of a larger contribution for Michael Geyer's 2001 edited volume, *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany*.¹²⁴ While much of the content was included from Graf's original 1990 essay, much of the enthusiasm and optimism regarding the Council's ability to combat state influence and serve as a venue for constructive debate had disappeared. The decade that elapsed between the two publications allowed for a more critical reflection on the Council's legacy, and the final months of the Council's tenure had overshadowed the body's initial successes. With the benefit of hindsight, Graf was able to identify the Council's erosion of legitimacy, which was sparked by the March 18, 1990, elections and continued as authority and powers were stripped from the Council in the ensuing months.¹²⁵ However, he was quick to defend the MKR against its critics who described the MKR as an "inertia-germinating relic of the transitional period," countering that the Council was "an honest project, a mixture of resolution and ambition on the one hand, inexperience and lack of professionalism on the other."¹²⁶ From Graf's reflections, it is clear that he was invested in the Council's mission, and saw its potential undermined by political and commercial intervention. His essays provide a valuable perspective of someone within the organization, who is able to track the Council's actions from the inside and who personally experienced the Council's successes and failures.

¹²³ Ibid., 15.

¹²⁴ Graf, "Media Publics in the GDR: Unification and the Transformation of the Media, 1989-1991." This time around Andreas Graf was the only listed author on the text.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 256.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 256-257.

An interesting counter-point to Graf's perspective comes from Hans Bentzien who, as the nominated but never confirmed General Director of DFF (*Deutscher Fernsehfunk*) in East Germany, was the subject of many debates and political struggles that took place at the MKR. Bentzien's July 1990 retrospective was centered primarily on his desire to establish and defend his legacy as director of the DFF at the end of his brief and tumultuous tenure. His essay targeted certain arguments and biases about the transformation of East German media that he saw as pervasive, arguments he attributed primarily to the Christian Democrats who controlled the East German government and the transformation process. His account naturally included his own perspective on the MKR and his abortive nomination process. Bentzien described the MKR as caught up in a political battle between the Christian Democratic Party and the members of the PDS who were seen as remnants of the ousted establishment. Bentzien's frank account revealed wounds that were still raw from his divisive tenure steering the ship of East German Television in the turbulent waters of the transformation period.

One of the more valuable retrospective contributions came from Hermann Kresse, a corporate attorney for *RTL Plus*, one of the largest private broadcasters in Germany. In 1992, Kresse published a book reviewing the transformation of the East German broadcast media, focusing primarily on the legal and regulatory reorganization of GDR radio and television. The first two chapters of Kresse's book included a detailed analysis of the MKR's structure and function. These chapters were written in collaboration with Wolfgang Kleinwächter, a media scholar and member of the Media Control Council. Utilizing Kleinwächter's private archives and personal insight, Kresse is able to provide a detailed analysis of the Council and its role in the restructuring of East German broadcasting. His survey of the MKR is at the same time thorough and succinct and provides helpful insight into the structural and legal aspects of the MKR's

history. However, Kresse's focus was firmly trained on the broadcast institutions and their transformation. As a result he omitted valuable and interesting developments occurring during the transformation of the print media.

The MKR may have escaped scholarly attention due to its ineffectiveness at shaping or changing the trajectory of the East German transformation. However, it is precisely the Council's failure and ineffectiveness that makes it such an interesting subject for analysis. The MKR reveals the limits of the East German media's ability to determine its own path. The Council, a relic of the Round Table, extended the hope of East German self-determination past the point of its potential reality.

By tracing the history of the transformation of the East German media from the perspective of this failed supervisory board, it is possible to see the many contributing factors that led to the eventual shape of the unified German media landscape. The media was caught between competing interests and motivations. On the one side there were West German capital and political forces, which not only seized the opportunity to expand their spheres of influence, but which were also responding to the East German's desire and needs for democratic and capitalist transformation. These actors had the ability and knowledge base to maneuver adeptly and quickly through rapidly expanding and shifting legal and extra-legal spaces. On the other side, East German institutions tried earnestly to shake the burdens and associations of their authoritarian pasts, fervently rejecting any strategy that centralized power or decision-making. As a result, these institutions lumbered under slow and cumbersome democratic structures and decision-making processes. Institutions like the MKR prioritized compromise, cooperation, and consensus, which became harder and harder to achieve as the pluralistic, civic minded Council and the conservative CDU-led government diverged in their visions for the future shape and

structure of the East German media landscape. Engrossed and embroiled in their own stalled reform process, the East German media were unable to establish a viable alternative to West German institutional and structural expansion.

Media Control Council

Paragraph XII of the February 5 Media law established the creation of the MKR, and defined the Council's role, as well as the scope of its authority:

XII. To secure the implementation of this resolution, the Volkskammer at the recommendation of the Round Table, establishes the Media Control Council. The parties and associations with voting powers at the Round Table, as well as the represented political fractions of the People's Chamber not represented at the Round Table, may each appoint a representative for the Media Control Council. Likewise, the churches may delegate three and the Jewish community may delegate one representative.

The Media Control Council will elect one of its members as chairman and will generate its own by-laws. It will be constituted on 12 February 1990.

The Government ensures the working capacity of the Media Control Council until the enactment of comprehensive media legislation. In particular, the General Directors of Radio and of Television as well as the General Director of ADN are obliged to report to the Media Control Council.

The General Directors of Radio and of Television, as well as the General Director of ADN are to be appointed by the Prime Minister and confirmed by the Media Control Council.¹²⁷

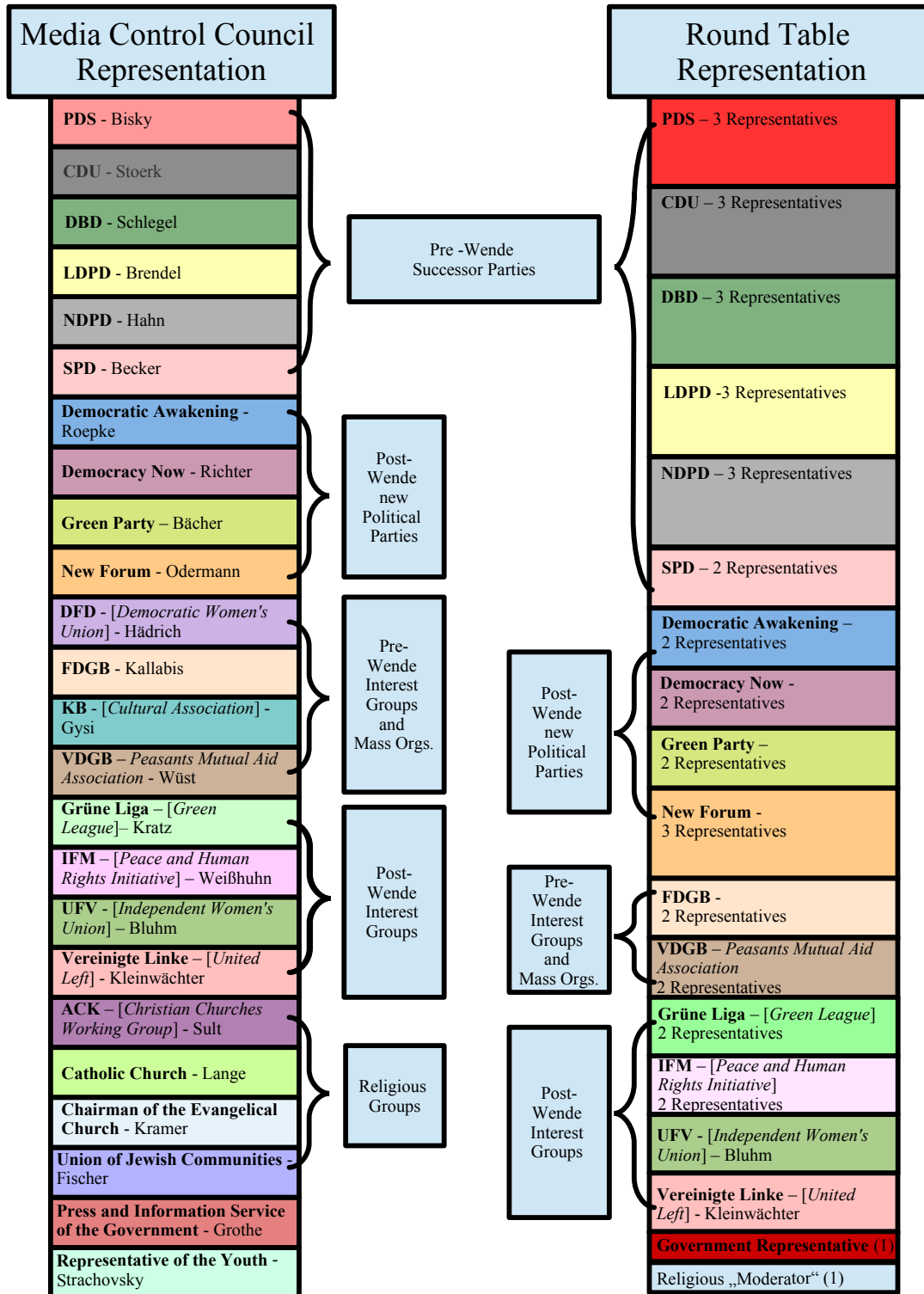
The structure and authority of the Council reflected an enthusiastic rejection of centralized and authoritarian power. By establishing equal representation from all political parties and associations in the Round Table and People's Chamber, as well as representatives from the religious communities, the MKR was established on the basis of equality and pluralism. This would not be an organization dominated by a single party, SED-PDS or otherwise. Such a broad diverse delegation of 24 representatives endeavored to ensure a plurality of voices and allow for

¹²⁷ "Beschuß der Volkskammer über die Gewährleistung der Meinungs-, Informations-, und Medienfreiheit vom 5 Februar 1990."

debate consensus rather than dictates and discipline. Instilled in the structure of the MKR was the hope that the citizens of the GDR would maintain some democratic control over the developing shape of the media. Graf, in his essays on the MKR, points to this pluralistic structure of the MKR as the longest lasting manifestation of the Round Table.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Graf, “Media Publics in the GDR: Unification and the Transformation of the Media, 1989-1991,” 33.

Table 3: Representation at the Media Control Council and the Round Table



A second way in which the MKR rejected authoritarian and central control was in its limited scope of enforceable authority. While the MKR was given vague authority to “secure the implementation of the resolution,” the only direct authority granted to the Council was the power to confirm the General Directors of Radio, Television, and ADN and the power to approve any partnerships between East German media companies and foreign (essentially West German) firms.¹²⁹ This limited scope of power was intentional and a point frequently lauded by its chairman and delegates during the early days of its tenure.¹³⁰ After decades under the authoritarian thumb of the SED’s Agitation and Propaganda agencies, policy makers in East Germany wanted to make it clear that there would be no central agency with the power to control, influence, or censor the newly liberated media.¹³¹ The result was an agency that was dependent on the cooperation of the East German executive and legislative branches. The only truly effective “bite” available to this defanged wolf was the Council’s ability to veto the Prime Minister’s nominations for General Director. With such limited authority, the MKR relied heavily on this one power to bite back at the government.

While the powers of the MKR were intentionally muted, the Council did serve multiple roles in the transformation process. Kresse and Kleinwächter defined these roles as the MKR’s appellative, executive, and legislative functions. The executive function included the few administrative powers that are outlined above. These limited executive powers were bolstered by

¹²⁹ Kresse and Kleinwächter define these power’s as the MKR’s “Executive Function.” Hermann Kresse, *Die Rundfunkordnung in den neuen Bundesländern* (Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel, 1992), 10–11.

¹³⁰ Theon, “Medienkontrollrat -- ein Wolf ohne Zähne.”

¹³¹ Klaus Bischoff, “Mit beschränkten Vollmachten; Gespräch mit dem Mitglied des Medienkontrollrates Prof. Kleinwächter,” *Berliner Zeitung*, April 19, 1990, ZEFYS; Bischoff, Klaus, “Kein Wundermittel aber nützlich. Medienkontrollrat soll gesetzfreien Raum überbrücken helfen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, February 15, 1990, 39 edition; “Medienkontrollrat Der DDR Hat Sich Konsituiert,” *Berliner Zeitung*, February 14, 1990, 38 edition; Bekesehus, “Medienkontrollrat der DDR konstituierte sich.”

moral imperative defined by Kresse and Kleinwächter as the Council's appellative function. The role of the MKR was inspired by the Swedish Ombudsman-System, meaning that the Council would advocate for the needs and rights of East German citizens and journalists, and the Council's power would flow from its ability to argue and lobby on behalf of the citizens and the Media Law.¹³² The third function defined by Kresse and Kleinwächter was the Council's 'quasi-legislative' function.¹³³ Section 14 of the Media Law allowed for the introduction of advertising in radio and television and assigned to the MKR the task of establishing a provisional "conception" to govern its implementation.¹³⁴ These three functions as defined by Kresse and Kleinwächter, were established by the Media Law. However, over time and through practice the role of the Council eroded as the government tried to exert greater influence over the shape of the media, and the MKR refined its own understanding of its role and function.

The evolving mission and authority of the Council

The political climate in East Germany shifted dramatically from February, when the Council was formed, to March, when the new government was elected. When the Media Control Council was conceived and instituted in the early months of 1990, the PDS under the direction of the Modrow Administration and the parties and social groups at the Round Table still envisioned a future for a separate but democratic East German state.¹³⁵ The Media Law itself was conceived as a provisional regulation, awaiting the drafting of a comprehensive media law and a new East German constitution.¹³⁶ The Council was a product of this brief period of reformative optimism,

¹³² Kresse, *Die Rundfunkordnung in den neuen Bundesländern*, 10.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³⁴ "Beschluß der Volkskammer über die Gewährleistung der Meinungs-, Informations-, und Medienfreiheit vom 5 Februar 1990."

¹³⁵ See Chapter Three of this dissertation

¹³⁶ See for example Article 15 of the Media Law, which states: Through Commission, created under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice, recommendations for a media law are to be

a fact that was reflected in the MKR's pluralistic structure and limited executive authority. This drive to salvage and reform the GDR was, however, not shared by the majority of the voting East German public. With the overwhelming win of the Alliance for Germany and Lothar de Maizière during the March 18 elections, the trajectory of East Germany pivoted. The CDU-led conservative Alliance (consisting of the CDU, Democratic Awakening, and the German Social Union) envisioned not a separate, democratic, and independent East German state, but rather set the course for German unification under the power and appeal of the Deutschmark, under the slogan "Socialism, never again!"¹³⁷ This course correction carried with it repercussions for the Media Control Council. The new government's vision for the future of East Germany diverged from that of the MKR, and the Council's structure and ethos made it a relic of the Round Table period as the country careened down the road toward unification.

When Lothar de Maizière took office in mid-April of 1990, he laid out the new path for East Germany and subsequently the MKR. In his inaugural declaration, de Maizière declared that, "nowhere in Germany's past has the contradiction between pretense and reality been so glaring as it in our media landscape."¹³⁸ The new East German Prime Minister argued that if the transformation of the media remained unsupervised or left to chance, the country risked the emergence of new monopolies of power and opinion. To ensure that the transformation would be successful he established a new Ministry for Media Policy "to pave the way toward a free and

developed. To the Commission belong competent representatives of all parties and social groups, the churches, as well as scholars, journalists and representatives of the appropriate unions. A draft of the regulation is to be distributed publically for discussion and then submitted to the Volkskammer for deliberation and resolution. The resolution of the media law can only take place after the passage of the new constitution. Until then, this resolution remains in effect. "Beschuß der Volkskammer über die Gewährleistung der Meinungs-, Informations-, und Medienfreiheit vom 5 Februar 1990."

¹³⁷ Lothar de Maiziere, "Regierungserklärung des Ministerpräsidenten der DDR," *Berliner Zeitung*, April 20, 1990, ZEFYS.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

diverse media landscape.” Although this new Ministry supplanted the MKR as arbiter of the transformation process in the media, de Maizière did see fit to renew the Council’s mandate until a new media law could be drafted by the soon-to-be-formed states.¹³⁹

These actions by de Maizière, taken immediately upon his entering office, resulted in a dramatic shift in the Council’s operations and future. First, with the introduction of the Ministry of Media Policy, de Maizière created a central authority within the executive branch under the authority of the leading political party to help overhaul and supervise the media. This was a dramatic turn away from the principles that guided the creation of the MKR. The de Maizière administration, with its political ties to West Germany, was not burdened with the same authoritarian legacy that encumbered the SED/PDS and felt free to establish a new central executive media authority. Now the de-centralized, pluralistic Media Control Council with little executive authority had a new powerful adversary in de Maizière’s new Minister for Media Policy, Gottfried Müller.

Müller’s Ministry had another impact on the Council. When the Media Ministry was established, the MKR was stripped of some of its already limited executive authority. During a May 1990 interview, the new Minister Müller was asked if he still saw a need for the Council. He answered:

In the inaugural decree we announced that we were in favor of the continuation of the [Media Control Council]. However, it will no longer administer any executive duties. But, the right to watch over the autonomy and equality of opportunities is kept by the Council.¹⁴⁰

In the eyes of the de Maizière government, the Council’s new role was restricted to that of watchdog only. As the country moved closer and closer to unification, the government felt a

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Bischoff, Klaus, “Zarte Pflanze Pressefreiheit Gespräch mit dem Minister für Medienpolitik, Dr. Gottfried Müller (CDU),” *Berliner Zeitung*, May 15, 1990.

decreasing need to consult the Council in matters of media policy or heed the MKR's demands or advice. The Ministry favored speed and efficiency over debate and consensus and saw the Council more as an obstacle than an ally.¹⁴¹

A third ramification of de Maizière's shift in course was the termination of the vision of a separate democratic East German state. The inevitability of unification resulted in a dramatic shift of how the Council, East German media companies, and journalists perceived and planned for their future. Now the East German media had to figure out just how it would fit within the new unified Federal Republic. For the press this meant either competing with or partnering with the better-equipped West German firms in a free market. The electronic media was left to strategize how it would compete or integrate with the West German broadcasting giants ZDF and ARD. While Ministry for Media Policy sought the insight of West German media experts to help devise a strategy for unification and the integration of East and West, the Council remained the advocate of the East German media throughout the unification process. The Council was committed to protect and nurture the East German journalists and media institutions and continued to advocate for a distinct East German media identity and presence within unified Germany. The Ministry, on the other hand, was wary of the old guard and often opted to dispense with structures or individuals associated with the old regime rather than risk contaminating the reunification project with "compromised" holdovers.¹⁴²

From the winter of 1989 through the spring and summer of 1990, each of the three East German administrations tried to provide institutional governmental support for the media as the industry battled to compete and survive. After four decades of central control, journalists and

¹⁴¹ "Seilschaften als Bremsen Ex- Medienminister Gottfried Müller zieht Bilanz," *Neue Zeit*, October 17, 1990, 243 edition, ZEFYS.

¹⁴² Ibid.

media companies were left to determine their own fate. There was no playbook, no clear course of action, and the records of the MKR, full of appeals for intervention and advice, show how desperate the journalists, newspapers, and broadcast media were for help, whether it be in the form of regulation, advocacy, or protection.

The East German press was in a particularly difficult position. The loss of government subsidies, compounded by a pressing need for modern equipment and technology, made the GDR press dependent on West German capital and partnerships. And while West German publishers offered much needed infrastructure and know-how, they simultaneously served as ferocious competitors, expanding their distribution networks throughout the East and slashing the prices of popular West German titles potentially pushing and pricing the East German products out of the market. The East German press sought guidance and protection from the MKR as it negotiated for its survival with its new brother savior/adversary.

As the press struggled in the new capitalistic world, the broadcast media battled in the bureaucratic arena. The DFF under the leadership of Bentzien had to advocate for its place within the new broadcasting bureaucracy of unified Germany. The two West German public broadcasting entities ARD and ZDF were formidable institutions, and the East German broadcast media was an over-employed, out-dated, centralized, bureaucratic relic of the old regime. In order to be able to advocate for continued existence within the unified Federal Republic, the broadcast media needed immediate structural reform, rehabilitation of its reputation, and new sources of revenue.

The MKR saw its role as an advocate for the East German media, and therefore it found itself frequently in line with Bentzien and the staff of the East German broadcasting agencies, advocating for the preservation of East German media jobs and journalistic identity. The battles

waged by the East German press and broadcast institutions mirror larger struggles taking place across East Germany. The impending unification sent the bulk of East German firms and entities in either of two directions, privatization and a collision course with market forces, or integration into the bureaucracy guided by the hands of the parties in power. In either direction, firms faced stiff competition from West German companies or bureaucratic institutions, and the success rates were minimal. As a result, many critical historians and observers have described the unification in terms of a “colonization” or “annexation.”¹⁴³ The records of the MKR support this view of the unification at least from the perspective of media professionals and institutions, and more importantly they reveal the obstacles preventing the East Germans from becoming a more formidable presence. In the chaos of the transformation, East German media firms and institutions fought for their existence, journalists fought for their jobs, and the MKR fought to ensure the independence and integrity of the East German media.

Transformation of the Print Media

During the spring and summer of 1990, the East German press underwent a baptism by fire. The February 5 Media law guaranteeing the freedom of access to information removed the final barriers holding back West German publications from the East German market.¹⁴⁴ In late February, the first trucks carrying West German newspapers and magazines crossed the border into the GDR.¹⁴⁵ The introduction of West German titles was only the latest in a number of

¹⁴³ “Reunification Controversy: Was East Germany Really ‘Annexed?’” *Spiegel Online*, August 31, 2010, sec. International, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/reunification-controversy-was-east-germany-really-annexed-a-714826.html>; Günter Grass, *Unterwegs von Deutschland nach Deutschland: Tagebuch 1990*, 1., Aufl. (Göttingen: Steidl Göttingen, 2009); Maier, *Dissolution*.

¹⁴⁴ See paragraphs 1 and 4 of the “Beschuß der Volkskammer über die Gewährleistung der Meinungs-, Informations-, und Medienfreiheit vom 5 Februar 1990.” Also see the Chapter Three in this dissertation regarding the opening of the border to West German press products.

¹⁴⁵ Coco, “Presse Der Wendejahre West-Zeitung Am Ost-Kiosk.”

serious impediments affecting the industry. Technology and infrastructure problems plagued the press, the paper crisis showed little sign of improving, and with the end of subsidies in April the press was facing a serious financial crisis. On top of all of this, each firm was undergoing its own internal transformation adapting to the new political and economic environment and developing new skills within the new free media.¹⁴⁶

Newspapers and magazines had a number of hurdles to face with every issue they published; however, some of the greatest challenges seemed to emerge in post-production. East German publishers were dependent on the overburdened and increasingly ineffectual East German Post Office to sell and distribute their products. Even a top-notch paper could not survive if it could not make it into the hands of the consumer. The transformation of the East German media into a free market of ideas and press required the creation of a new distribution model that would be able to effectively and reliably sell and distribute West and East German press products. The fight to determine just what this new model would look like became a central cause for the MKR.

Distribution Battles

In early March, the MKR took up the cause of the distribution crisis described in Chapter Three. Embodying its soft power and demonstrating its preference for debate and consensus, the Council invited representatives from the Federal Cartel Authority to discuss and help develop a new framework for the distribution of the press in the GDR.¹⁴⁷ The result of this discussion was the creation of a set of guidelines, issued publicly via the news service ADN, which would

¹⁴⁶ See Chapter Three

¹⁴⁷ Medienkontrollrat der DDR, "Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratsitzung am 7.3.1990," March 12, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

temporarily govern press distribution until the government could enact a more comprehensive regulation. The MKR guidelines held that:

1. The distribution of publications should not be handed over to any singular market-dominating company; rather, this should be the task of multiple firms working in tandem with the East German Post.
2. This system should be neutral, and not inhibit or benefit any particular firm.
3. Distributors, whether wholesalers, the Post Office, or individual sellers, are required to offer every title, the choice of selection belonged to the consumer alone.
4. Only publications that were officially registered in the GDR would be available for distribution.¹⁴⁸

The Council's guidelines were a simple, immediate, yet temporary, legislative fix for the distribution problem.¹⁴⁹ The MKR had very limited authority to draft or enforce regulations, and the onus was on the executive or legislative branch to develop a more rigorous framework based on the Council's recommendations. However, these guidelines were issued only 10 days prior to the March 18 elections, and with the chaos of the election period, no new regulations emerged. In the meantime, the distribution crisis only worsened.

By late March, there were increasing reports in both West and East German media of West German publishers [specifically Springer, Bauer, Burda, and Gruner + Jahr] engaging in cutthroat tactics when it came to pricing and distribution.¹⁵⁰ On March 30, Ralf Bachmann, the deputy spokesman for the East German government, appealed to the West German Federal Minister of the Interior, Dietrich Hübner, detailing the abuses committed by the four publishing giants. Bachmann recounted the series of abuses that were making headlines, namely that

¹⁴⁸ The registration of publications was enshrined in the February 5 media, and replaced the more restrictive licensing procedures of the previous regime. The purpose of registration was to allow access but ensure accountability.

¹⁴⁹ Medienkontrollrat der DDR, "Grundsätze zum Pressevertriebssystem."

¹⁵⁰ "Wildwuchs beim Vertrieb von Westzeitungen Deutsche Post drängt auf gesetzliche Regelungen," *Berliner Zeitung*, March 17, 1990, 65 edition, ZEFYS.

without consulting the East German government or the Media Control Council, the West German firms had started distributing their titles directly to East German consumers.

Since the beginning of March, over 10,000 individual retail outlets had sprung up across the country offering West German newspapers and magazines. Furthermore, according to Bachmann the giants of engaged in price dumping (in direct violation of the previously established 1:3 price ratio agreement). The publishers were accused of dividing the country between themselves into four separate spheres of influence, in order to build regional strongholds. Bachmann appealed to Hübner, stating that not only were these West German firms endangering the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of East Germans, they were also in violation of West German anti-trust law. Bachmann hoped that the Federal Government would intercede and bring these firms back in line to ensure that the freedom of information and opinion could be guaranteed in the GDR.¹⁵¹

Bachmann's letter not only revealed the desperate nature of the distribution crisis within East Germany, but it also showed how ineffective the East German government was at protecting its own media from West German capital interests. Once the original distribution proposal was jettisoned, the momentum behind the project stalled. The Media Control Council fulfilled its mandate: debating the problem, drafting appropriate guidelines, and calling for swift action from East German lawmakers. However, during the election period, the government was either unable or unwilling to follow through with the Council's demands. In the absence of regulation, the West German publishers were free to exploit the legislative vacuum and enter the East German market as they saw fit during a very important and determinative period in East Germany's development.

¹⁵¹ Bachmann, "Letter from Ralf Bachmann to Dietrich Hübner, Bundesminister des Inneren."

The West German media periodical *journalist* noted with concern the potential power of West German publications to influence the East German election. One article pointed specifically to certain manipulative headlines published in the popular Springer newspaper *Bild*: “Dearest Fatherland, be on alert”; “Kohl settles accounts with Modrow”; “Egon Krenz: 'I will kill myself' .”¹⁵² While the Council and East German lawmakers debated and discussed possible distribution models, the West German publishers were able to act quickly and gain a foothold in the East German market. The structure of the Council and the Media Law prioritized neither speed nor efficiency in decision making, thus making it a noble but out-matched protector of East German interests. In the chaos of the transformation period, speed and adaptability became powerful tools of success, while deliberative methods and democratic consensus became impediments to action. Without effective legislation, Bachmann was left to ask the West German government to take action where the East German government could not.

As the four giants continued to penetrate the East German market, the negotiations for a revised distribution proposal continued. In April, the West German publishers presented the Council with a new distribution model that came pre-approved by the West German Federal Cartel Office. This new model met with little resistance from the members of the MKR, who were now more concerned with the price-dumping practices of the West German publishers. As the West German press products became more established in the East, the Council feared the collapse of the domestic press market, which struggled to compete with the West in price and quality. However, there were few protectionist options available that did not endanger the free

¹⁵² Kulick, Holger, “Nahkampf nach dem Wahlkampf,” *Journalist* 4/1990 (April 1990): 24–25.

distribution of the press or involve dirigiste interventions into the press economy.¹⁵³ The Council concluded that they could not intercede on behalf of the East German publishers, and the market would have to determine prices and fates on its own.¹⁵⁴ By this point, de Maizière had taken office and declared that the task of resolving the distribution crisis would fall to his new Ministry, which had the power and mandate to tackle the obstacles standing in the way of a free German press.¹⁵⁵ The Council had done its part, and the Müller's Ministry set to work to devise a resolution.

As the Ministry for Media Policy debated and drafted a new distribution model, the East German press continued to depend primarily on its traditional distributor, the East German Post. While small East German distribution firms were beginning to emerge and take action, the Post still handled the bulk of the East German press deliveries and sales.¹⁵⁶ By mid-April, the Post had proven incapable of fulfilling this task. On April 22, representatives from the East German Union of Newspaper and Magazine Publishers penned an open appeal to the Media Control Council and others to take immediate action to “save the freedom of the press.” The threat to the

¹⁵³ Medienkontrollrat der DDR, “Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratssitzung am 4.4.1990,” April 4, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ de Maizière, “Regierungserklärung.”

¹⁵⁶ In March and April of 1990, the MKR received multiple inquiries and submissions of new East German and German-German distribution companies. As long as these companies adhered to the Council’s guidelines they were allowed to distribute publications in East Germany. See for example: “Letter from Neugebauer and Seyflerth to the Medienkontrollrat,” March 8, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 7, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; Bollmann, “Antrag auf Genehmigung der Leipziger Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenvertrieb GmbH, LZZ GmbH...,” March 6, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 7, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; Klaus-Ulrich Lehmann, “Pressevertrieb in der DDR - Einrichtung eines Grosso-Betriebes in den Bezirken Schwerin, Rostock und Neubrandenburg,” March 21, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 6, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

East German press was not the presence of West German publications, nor was it any failing in quality or content of the East German publications; rather, the existential threat facing the East German press was the East German Post office, which had proven itself incapable of getting East German publications in the hands of subscribers and customers.¹⁵⁷ The union's claims were substantiated by complaints submitted by editors of a number of East German publications who claimed that the Post failed to deliver or sell tens of thousands of copies of their newspapers.¹⁵⁸ The editors and publishers of the East German press complained that while their products collected dust in the warehouses of the East German Post, the West Germans had by-passed East German laws and agreements and had established their own distribution network on East German soil.

The Council received these complaints and took action. In April, the Council composed an "aide-memoire" to the new Minister for Media Policy, advising him that there was immediate need for new regulation for independent distribution of newspapers and magazines.¹⁵⁹ Without legislative or executive authority, the Council could only advise the new Minister to take action. When it came to the Post itself, the Council wielded the only functioning authority it had, its moral authority. In May, the Council invited the Post Ministry's director of newspaper distribution, Dietrich Germer, to hear testimony of the Post failures and shortcomings. To the

¹⁵⁷ Ursula Bergmann, Marga Schilling, and Helfried Schreiter, "Rettet die Meinungsfreiheit," April 22, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁵⁸ "Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratssitzung am 16.5.1990," May 17, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁵⁹ Medienkontrollrat der DDR, "Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratssitzung am 18.4.1990," April 24, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

Council's inquiries, demands, and suggestions, Germer responded, "We want to improve our performance," an answer deemed insufficient by the Council.¹⁶⁰

The solution to the distribution crisis was finally reached in May of 1990, when Minister Müller announced the enactment of a new ordinance governing the distribution of publications in the GDR. The Minister's regulation allowed the Post and private East German wholesalers to sell and distribute East and West German newspapers and magazines under the supervision and authority of the Media Minister, overriding the MKR's jurisdiction on the matter. New press wholesalers needed to be independent of the publishers and registered with the Ministry. The law also granted the Minister the ability to levy fines as high as 500,000 Marks for companies and 20,000 for individuals found in violation of the law.¹⁶¹ Rather than oversee the construction of a new centralized distribution agency, like the original model, the Ministry's regulation left matters of form and infrastructure open, allowing entrepreneurs and distribution firms to devise their own distributions schemes.

This shift from a central distribution model to a market-based solution highlights the transformation of political thinking and policy formation from January to May 1990. The central-but-democratic solutions of the Modrow era were rejected by the new administration in favor of Western models and market-based solutions. The new law solved the regulatory vacuum regarding the distribution of the press, and with the exception of continued complaints of incompetence against the East German Post, concerns about the influence of the large publishing

¹⁶⁰ "Ergebnisprotokoll 16.5.1990."

¹⁶¹ Minister für Medienpolitik, "Verordnung über den Vertrieb von Presseerzeugnissen in der DDR," May 3, 1990, DC20-I/3/2948, Das Bundesarchiv.

houses and reports of delivery delays, the regulation provided a temporary fix to the distribution crisis during the transitional period.¹⁶²

The distribution crisis reveals the power and efficacy differential between the media Council and the media ministry. The Council spent months fielding complaints, discussing guidelines, and suggesting action, but it was not until the creation of the Ministry with its executive authority that a regulation was enacted. Within two weeks of the Ministry's creation the Minister was able to announce the new law, showing that when the Council and Ministry acted in tandem, results could be quick and effective. The new regulation adhered to the guidelines set forth by the Council, and the Minister had indeed made the distribution problem a priority for the new Ministry. For the Council to function, it needed legislative and executive authorities willing to listen to its recommendations and to adhere to its guidelines. However, as spring transitioned to summer, the Council found in the Ministry an increasingly less cooperative partner.

Mergers and Acquisitions

The West German publishers proved to be fierce competitors for East German subscribers and readers in the spring and summer of 1990. However, the introduction of popular press products was only one facet of the West German's entrance into the East German media landscape. As East German newspapers and publishers restructured and adapted to the changing conditions, they found themselves in desperate need of financial support and experienced guidance, two things that West German firms were eager to offer. In return for capital

¹⁶² "Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratssitzung am 13.6.1990," June 26, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

investment, technical support, and journalistic training, West German firms were able to purchase a share of influence over the East German market.

The need and opportunity for East-West partnerships was so great, that there were few firms that opted to go it alone. In late January when the Council of Ministers passed a regulation authorizing “Joint-Ventures” between East German and foreign companies, they effectively opened the floodgates for West German capital to flow into the East German economy.¹⁶³ The January regulation laid out the framework for these partnerships, and the February Media Law bestowed the MRK with the task of supervising and approving any media joint venture proposal. By the time of its first meeting, the Council had already received a number of partnership proposals between East German publishers, newspapers, and distributors awaiting clearance from the Council. A February letter that was sent to the Council by the editor of a regional newspaper from Suhl, *Freies Wort*, provides an interesting snapshot of the state of the media landscape in the spring of 1990 and reveals why such partnerships were so attractive to both parties.

The former SED regional paper had declared its political independence in January 1990, and that independence carried with new realities. Without the financial backing of the SED, the paper now needed to raise its prices and cut costs to make sure that they could protect the jobs of its workers. In accordance with this higher price, the paper also sought to improve the quality of its product by raising the caliber of its reporting and safeguarding the paper’s newly established political independence. To achieve this, *Freies Wort* followed the example of the opposition groups and instituted an internal “Round Table,” made up of parties and organizations within the

¹⁶³ Dieter Resch, “Nun kommt das Kapital was wird es bringen? Regierung verabschiedete gestern die „Joint-Venture-Verordnung“ Runder Tisch war beteiligt / 49-Prozent-Klausel abgeschwächt,” *Berliner Zeitung*, January 26, 1990, 22 edition, ZEFYS.

paper to oversee the reporting and to ensure that the paper maintained its neutrality for the upcoming election. Along with these internal changes, the paper faced increased competition from a growing number of newly formed East German papers (West German papers were only beginning to enter the East German market in January of 1990).

In order to successfully implement the necessary internal reforms and face head-on the new competition brought forth by the recently liberated press market, the paper declared that it needed “to utilize the opportunities that are now manifest and necessary, so that we can make our mark as a modern and highly up-to-date daily newspaper.”¹⁶⁴ According to the editor of *Freies Wort*, West German publishers had been “beating a path to our doorstep,” offering financial partnerships and investments. After weighing offers from small, middle and large publishers, the paper found the offer from the Coburg paper *Neue Presse* (with its 70% shareholder Süddeutscher Verlag) most befitting its requirements of “material technical potential, a political line borne by the paper’s statute, and a social concept that guarantees social security.”¹⁶⁵ An added bonus was the fact that *Neue Presse*’s offices were in the city of Coburg, a short 40-kilometer drive over the now open border.

As the leaders of *Freie Presse* negotiated this critical partnership, they wanted to know what role the Council played in the negotiation process. Fritz Hahn of the MKR responded to the editor, confirming that the Council’s role was simply administrative. The paper was free to

¹⁶⁴ “Antrag zur Genehmigung von Verhandlungen mit BRD-Verlagen über eine Kapitalbeteiligung zur weiteren Profilierung unserer Zeitung als unabhängige Volks- und Heimatzeitung für Südthüringen,” February 13, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 6, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

negotiate “with no limitations” from the Council. Once the negotiations were completed, the paper simply had to provide the MKR with copies of the completed contracts.¹⁶⁶

By March, the Council had received so many requests for joint venture approvals that they had to assign two additional Council representatives to respond to the growing number of pending inquiries.¹⁶⁷ In general, the Council maintained a hands-off strategy when it came to proposed partnerships. The MKR saw its role regarding foreign partnerships as establishing transparency, not obstructing business.¹⁶⁸ The Council simply ensured that the proposed partnerships adhered to the guidelines set by the January Joint venture regulation. The law stipulated that foreign shares be held within 20 to 49 percent to ensure East German majority ownership. However, by the time the regulation was passed, this upper limit had been softened, allowing foreign majority interest for small and mid-sized companies and instances where “the function of the enterprise justified a larger foreign involvement in the interest of the national economy.”¹⁶⁹ The path was thus cleared of bureaucratic hurdles, and partnerships were forged right and left.

By the end of May 1990, nearly all of the former SED and Block Party newspapers still in operation had formed partnerships with West German publishers. The only holdouts were *Neues Deutschland*, the national paper of the SED/PDS, and *Tribüne*, the newspaper of the Free German Trade Union.¹⁷⁰ Of the 10 largest East German publishing companies only one, the

¹⁶⁶ Fritz Hahn, “Letter to Escher, Editor-in-chief of Freies Wort,” March 15, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 6, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁶⁷ Medienkontrollrat der DDR, “Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratssitzung am 21.03.1990,” March 21, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁶⁸ “Ergebnisprotokoll 16.5.1990.”

¹⁶⁹ Resch, “Nun kommt das Kapital was wird es bringen?”

¹⁷⁰ “Zeitungsmarkt in der DDR,” *Journalist*, June 1990.

“Tribüne Verlag,” opted not to engage in any Joint venture negotiations.¹⁷¹ The flurry of negotiations and partnership formations in the spring of 1990 began to raise concerns about the formation of cartels and monopolies within the East German media landscape. In May, the Council initiated talks with the Minister of Media Policy and the Office for the Protection of Fair Competition (*Amt für Wettbewerbsschutz*) to come up with regulations to protect the press from the formation of market-dominating media cartels.¹⁷²

By the summer of 1990, the East German press market had undergone a radical transformation. Many experts both in East and West Germany feared that the four would soon hold monopolistic power over the German press.¹⁷³ By early June, the Ministry for Media was aware of around 100 intended fusions of East and West German media companies.¹⁷⁴ Leading the charge was the Springer publishing company, which was hard at work establishing a foothold across the East German print landscape.

With growing concerns about the establishment of West German media cartels in East Germany, the task of overseeing the formation of foreign Joint ventures was handed over to the Office for the Protection of Fair Competition in June of 1990.¹⁷⁵ This new authority employed a West German media expert, Florian Lensing-Wolff (editor and publisher of the *Ruhr Nachrichten*), to examine the new contours of the East German landscape and advise the office of any troubling developments. In his report, Lensing-Wolff acknowledged the danger of monopoly formations and pointed to the proposed partnership between Springer and the leading

¹⁷¹ “Übersicht über Kooperationen zentraler Verlage und Medien,” May 22, 1990, DC9/1047, Das Bundesarchiv.

¹⁷² “Ergebnisprotokoll 16.5.1990.”

¹⁷³ Florian Lensing-Wolff, “Letter to Dr. Reinhold Wutzke Vizepräsident-Amt für Wettbewerbsschutz,” July 13, 1990, DC9/1030, Das Bundesarchiv.

¹⁷⁴ Ministerium für Medienpolitik, “Medienspiegel: Chronologischer Überblick,” October 1990, DC9/1043, Das Bundesarchiv.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

regional newspaper in Brandenburg the *Märkische Volksstimme*. If allowed to proceed, this partnership would give Springer a dangerous position in the Berlin media market since the publisher owned or controlled four newspapers in the region. Lensing-Wolff argued that even with a mere 24% stake in the *Märkische Volksstimme*, Springer would be able to influence corporate policy, and the publisher would always prioritize its own interests.¹⁷⁶ Lensing-Wolff advocated instead for mid-sized publishers from West Germany and abroad to establish partnerships with regional papers to help mute the influence of the big four.¹⁷⁷ At the end of July, Lensing-Wolff passed his concerns and suggestions on to Reinhold Gohlke, of the *Treuhandanstalt*, the trustee agency that would assume the oversight of the privatization of former East German state assets.¹⁷⁸

For the few months that the MKR oversaw the formation of joint ventures of the East German newspapers, it did little to intervene. Favoring transparency and non-intervention, the Council opted not to get in the way of the free hand of the market, letting each East German firm decide and negotiate on its own for a deal that best fit its needs. The result of this inaction, however, was the growing influence of the four publishers who seemed determined to control the press in the East. In July 1990, the oversight of the Joint ventures and eventual privatization of the East German newspapers and publishers was divided between the Treuhand agency, which oversaw the sale of former SED assets, and a Volkskammer committee that oversaw the assets of the former bloc parties. For the most part, Treuhand honored the partnerships that were established in the spring and summer of 1990 when it came to the eventual sale and privatization

¹⁷⁶ Lensing-Wolff, "Letter to Dr. Wutzke."

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Florian Lensing-Wolff, "Letter to Dr. Reiner Gohlke, Präsident der Treuhandanstalt," July 24, 1990, DC 9/1030, Das Bundesarchiv.

of the former SED papers.¹⁷⁹ Few of the former bloc-party papers survived the transitional period. Of the fourteen original regional bloc-party papers, only four remained in circulation by 1993.¹⁸⁰

During the spring and summer of 1990, the Media Control Council supervised the dramatic transformation of the East German press. For the Council this process was dominated by the entrance and activity of West German publishers within the East German print landscape. The MKR tried to protect the domestic press from the fierce competition of the West German firms but the West Germans were better equipped financially, technologically, and strategically to adapt and exploit the conditions of the transition.

The West German firms employed three simultaneous strategies to expand eastward: the import and distribution of their popular West German titles, the formation of Joint ventures with East German firms, and the creation of new newspaper projects tailored to the East German market. And while the four giants dominated the process, they were joined by small- and mid-sized publishers and newspaper companies, each trying to gain a foothold in the expanded German print market. The result was a white-hot market for press products during the transitional period. At one point in 1990, for example there were seven separate papers competing for readers in the regional market of Thuringia.¹⁸¹

When the smoke cleared, it was the former SED regional papers that managed to survive. Each of the seven East German national newspapers struggled to compete with the popular West German offerings, and only three managed to outlast the transition (*Berliner Zeitung*, *Neues*

¹⁷⁹ Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesrepublik, ed., *Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Lage der Medien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1994: Medienbericht '94*, Berichte und Dokumentationen (Bonn: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 1994), 88.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Deutschland, Junge Welt), albeit with significantly lower circulation numbers. It was the district newspapers of the former SED that were in the best position of all the East German papers to succeed. With their strong subscriber base, regional infrastructure and knowledge, and support from their West German publishing house partners, the former SED houses were able to outlast and out-perform both the former bloc-party press (which started out with a much smaller subscriber base), and the new West German offerings (which failed to form a lasting trust and bond with the regional East German readership).¹⁸² By 1993, eleven of the fourteen former SED district papers were uncontested in their region, thus making the structure of the new unified press landscape eerily similar to the SED print landscape, with one press source dominating each regional print market.¹⁸³

Electronic Media

While concerns over the print industry dominated a large portion of the MKR's attention during the spring and early summer of 1990, the electronic media required the intervention, mediation, and advocacy of the Council as well. And as the print industry's problems were passed on to other agencies – distribution to the Media Ministry and Joint ventures to the Treuhand agencies – by early summer the fate of East German radio and television became the central concern of the Council, especially during the MKR's final months. The problems of the print industry involved, in large part, the battle for influence, survival, and market-share between East and West German firms. The conflicts that emerged surrounding the broadcast media, on the other hand, involved a clash between differing visions for the future of East Germany among political foes: between the proxy-party of the past (the PDS) and the parties paving the way toward unification (CDU and its coalition partners). The PDS firmly believed that institutions

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 88.

and individuals could be reformed and that the centralized East German broadcast media could serve to nurture the East German identity and reflect the unique needs and desires of the East German people. The CDU and its coalition partners, however, distrusted any entity, institution, or individual associated with the former regime. The CDU felt that only through the dismantling and fundamental restructuring of institutions like the monolithic East German radio and television could democracy succeed. The Council became a venue where many of the battles between these two discordant visions were waged.

Conflicting Visions for the Future of East German Broadcasting

Paragraph XII of the Media Law granted the Council one of its few areas of explicit authority: the MKR was responsible for confirming the Prime Minister's nominations for the position of Radio, Television, and ADN General Director. Each of these General Directors had the potential to wield great influence in determining the structure and future of the electronic media, an industry that was seen to serve a crucial cultural and political function in the nascent democratic state. The Council's confirmation served as a check on executive power over the media and ensured that the electronic media remained "*staatsfern*," detached from the state's political influence. Political parties both in East and West Germany had very strong feelings about the role and future of the East German broadcast agencies, feelings that were largely discordant with one another. As such, the position of General Director became a lightning rod for political conflict during the transition period, and the Council with its veto power became at times the arbiter and at other times the instigator of these political battles.

In the early months of the Wende—prior to the formation of the MKR—the Modrow administration took steps to differentiate itself from its problematic predecessors. One quick way to establish distance from Honecker and his abuses was to institute quick and visible top-down

changes. For example, in early December 1989, the Press and Information Office (*Presse- und Informationsamt*) was renamed the Press and Information Service (*Presse- und Informationsdienst*), a title change that was supposed to signify its change in practice and structure.¹⁸⁴ Other simple quick fixes involved changes in leadership: the old guard was ousted, and men with newer visions and untainted resumes were strategically placed at the head of important organizations and institutions.

This is how Hans Bentzien found himself to be the new General Director of East German television. Bentzien, who was appointed along-side the new General Director of Radio, Manfred Klein, was a familiar face in both political and media circles. The *Wehrmacht* veteran had a long political history within the SED. In the early 1960s he was appointed the Minister of Culture and had held numerous important positions within the East German media institutions.¹⁸⁵ Despite his career in the upper echelons of the party, he was nevertheless seen as “politically unburdened” at the time of his appointment and certainly had the knowledge and experience to run the massive broadcast institution.¹⁸⁶ While Bentzien’s past as an unburdened old hand had served him well at the time of his appointment, his membership in the legacy party of the SED soon became a liability.

¹⁸⁴ This name change was very important to the new Press and Information Service, which differentiated itself from the former “Office” not only in name, but also in its scope of work, structure and personnel. In the MKR archive there is a series of letters from the head of the Press and Information Service complaining about a poorly researched article that was published in the *Berliner Zeitung*. Among the Press and Information Service’s complaints was the fact that the journalist referred to the “Service” by its old name, thereby associating their reformed organization with the old “Office.” Maria Grothe, “Letter to Hans Eggert, Editor in Chief of the *Berliner Zeitung*,” April 11, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 7, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁸⁵ “Bentzien, Hans,” *Biographische Datenbanken*, Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, October 2009), <http://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/wer-war-wer-in-der-ddr-%2363%3B-1424.html?ID=206>.

¹⁸⁶ “BERUFLICHES Hans Bentzien,” *Der Spiegel*, February 5, 1990, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13497605.html>.

In the early months of 1990, the relationships of power were evolving rapidly. As East Germany pushed forward in its transformation, any remaining affiliation with the party that had dominated politics and abused its authority for decades became a critical flaw. To East German conservatives and West German observers, Bentzien became one of the many former SED elites still clinging to the reigns of power. A March 1990 *der Spiegel* article pointed to Bentzien as a symbol of the SED's continued control over the media, which still operated under the control of unity party. The article claimed that 90 per cent of the editors in chief in East Germany were SED/PDS party members, and nearly 100 per cent of the SED/PDS department heads remained in place. Bentzien was seen as using his media institutions to shield the current SED/PDS party chiefs from criticism and dissent while also failing to purge the employment roster of its "burdened" staff.¹⁸⁷

Indeed, Bentzien's focus was not on replacing problematic personnel. The SED promoted the belief that individuals were capable of transforming themselves and adapting to new conditions.¹⁸⁸ So rather than fire the bulk of his staff, Bentzien needed to find another way to transform the discredited, insolvent, centrally organized institution into an independent, public, trustworthy broadcasting agency that could compete with the West German broadcasting

¹⁸⁷ "Erst Mitleid, Dann Zuschlagen," *Der Spiegel*, January 15, 1990, 20, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13497724.html>.

¹⁸⁸ In his June 1990 chapter in *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien*, Bentzien points to the irony of the fact that it was the socialists who believed that an inner transformation and redemption was possible, while the Christian party insisted on the inability of communists to reform themselves. "Im übrigen wäre die Behauptung einer inneren Wandlungsunfähigkeit, dazu noch von einer christlichen Partei erhoben, ein Armutszeugnis für das Vertrauen in die eigenen tragenden Ideen." Hans Bentzien, "Schritte zur Demokratie im Deutschen Fernsehfunk," in *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien?: Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, ed. Werner Claus (Berlin: Vistas, 1991). Also see the comments of Lothar Bisky during Volkskammer debate: Deutschland Volkskammer, "21. Tagung - Donnerstag, den 5. Juli 1990," in *Protokolle der Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: 10. Wahlperiode (vom 5. April bis 2. Oktober 1990)* (Springer-Verlag, 2014), 847.

juggernauts of ARD and ZDF. After initiating structural changes as well as a name change from *DDR-Fernsehen* to *DFF (Deutscher Fernsehfunk)*, Bentzien focused his attention to the immediate problem of funding. Political independence from the SED meant financial independence as well, so Bentzien needed to secure alternative revenue streams.

Bentzien moved quickly to introduce advertising into the DFF's business model. He presented a series of guidelines governing the integration of ads into the DFF programming to the MKR. Bentzien's guidelines limited ad time, placed restrictions on ads for alcohol, forbade ads that denigrated the dignity of women or promoted racism or behaviors that could endanger the protection of the environment, and required that children's programming remain ad-free.¹⁸⁹ The Media Control Council approved the new guidelines on March 7, clearing the way for the introduction of ads onto East German Television.¹⁹⁰ Meanwhile the General Director had been vetting companies that could handle the coordination and introduction of advertising to the East German television viewer.

In February, the MKR was made aware of "credible information" that Bentzien had conducted private meetings with foreign investors who were seeking a financial stake in the East German broadcasting institution. While the print partnerships between West and East German print firms were accepted as an essential part of the unification process, Bentzien's perceived

¹⁸⁹ Medienkontrollrat der DDR, "Konzeption zur Produktenwerbung im Fernsehen der DDR," March 7, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

¹⁹⁰ Manfred Klein's proposal for advertising in radio required multiple submissions before the MKR issued its approval. Only after Klein issued additional guidelines protecting children and teenagers from alcohol, tobacco, and violent content, and limited evening and weekend advertising, was the proposal approved. "Ergänzung des Antrages auf Genehmigung für Werbung im Hörfunk gemäß Beschluß der Volkskammer über die Gewährleistung der Meinungs-, Informations-, und Medienfreiheit" (Rundfunk der DDR, March 19, 1990), Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

attempt to seek financial support and possible influence from a foreign firm outside of the German realm crossed a line for his critics. Although Bentzien denied any wrongdoing, these accusations sparked a series of investigations and inquiries into Bentzien's management of the broadcasting giant. In a sense, Bentzien was tied to the reputation of his party. He was incapable of shaking off the stigma of corruption and abuse, especially after the conservative opposition wrested power from the SED and steered the country toward unification.

The accusations against Bentzien were specifically centered on his negotiations with a French advertising agency, which was rumored to have purchased the right to handle East German television's advertising needs for the sum of 200 Million DM.¹⁹¹ The most vocal opposition to Bentzien came from one of the CDU's representatives on the Council, Hennig Stoerk. Through interviews in the media, and Council meetings, Stoerk led the charge against the sitting General Director, even requesting that the Council formally pronounce its mistrust of Bentzien.¹⁹² Much of the conflict between Bentzien and Stoerk superficially focused on the General Director's choice of advertising agency. However, on a deeper level, the tension between the two boiled down to their party's discordant visions for the future of DFF and East

¹⁹¹ Helfried Schreiter, "Wird Adlershof Gesamtdeutsch Eingemeindet? Das Volk Schaut in Die Röhre.," *Das Blatt*, March 1, 1990. Bentzien later stated that the original accusations came from PDS-Members who were working within the East German radio institution. "*Allerdings waren es PDS-Mitglieder aus dem Hörfunk, die mit nur notdürftig getarnte Zuträgerinformationen in alter Stasi-Manier den von Modrow ernannten Generalintendanten des Fernsehens in ein Zwielicht zu setzen versuchten mit der lächerlichen Behauptung, er hätte den Sender an einen westlichen Financier verkaufen wollen. Auf diesen Schwindel fiel sogar der Medienkontrollrat zeitweilig herein; es gehörte wohl zur Atmosphäre des damaligen Misstrauens gegenüber dem Fernsehen, daß er diese Provokation nicht zurückwies, sondern in einem Merkwürdigen Zusammenspiel der alten Blockparteien, der SPD mit der Vereinigten Linken und dem zentralen Runden Tisch nach dem Staatsanwalt rief. Erst eine relativ sachliche Diskussion stellte die wahren Verhältnisse wieder her, obwohl der Denunziant nicht beim Namen genannt werden sollte.*" Bentzien, "Schritte zur Demokratie im Deutschen Fernsehfunk," 253.

¹⁹² Medienkontrollrat der DDR, "Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratssitzung am 28.3.1990," March 28, 1990, 2, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

German broadcasting in general. Bentzien and the PDS promoted a continuity of East German identity and culture via the retention of a singular and powerful East German broadcasting institution. Bentzien wanted to preserve the status and culture of the DFF within the East German territory and saw the institution as a viable competitor with ARD and ZDF.¹⁹³ Stoerk and the CDU advocated for a clean and fundamental break from a corrosive and corrupt past. They feared that the DFF harbored old networks and ties to the old regime, which could infect and contaminate the vulnerable nascent democratic structures. The CDU's vision involved breaking up the centralized broadcasting agency into smaller regional broadcasting institutions that would be absorbed into the bureaucratic structure of the new eastern German states and reliant on ARD and ZDF for content. Stoerk and the CDU saw a larger role for private broadcasters and wanted to expand the West German federal broadcasting model to East Germany.¹⁹⁴ Even after Bentzien successfully defended his choice of advertiser before the Council, he remained a target of Stoerk and his party.¹⁹⁵

With their idea of preserving the DFF, Bentzien and the staff of the DFF had tapped into a cultural desire for consistency and identity during a period of tumultuous and rapid change. While the East German television programming of the Ulbricht and Honecker eras was much maligned, and television figures like Karl Eduard von Schnitzler, who hosted the doctrinaire news review program *Schwarze Kanal*, became targets of scorn and symbols of the most egregious of the state-controlled media's violations, certain long-standing programs like the

¹⁹³ Meves, Ursula, "Fernsehintendant Hans Bentzien zur geplanten Umstrukturierung befragt 88 Prozent sind für den DFF, und trotzdem soll Schluß sein?," *Neues Deutschland*, June 7, 1990, ZEFYS.

¹⁹⁴ "Adlershof nach der Wende - und wie geht es weiter? Ein Gespräch der NEUEN ZEIT mit dem CDU-Medienexperten Henning Stoerk," *Neue Zeit*, March 3, 1990, 53 edition, ZEFYS.

¹⁹⁵ On April 4, Bentzien met with the Council during a closed session. He defended his actions regarding the sale of advertising rights, and the council found his explanation "sufficient." Medienkontrollrat der DDR, "Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratssitzung am 4.4.1990."

children's program *Sandmännchen* (the little Sandman) served as comforting cultural icons for millions of East Germans who feared a loss of identity and self in the transformation process.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, the reforms brought about as part of the Wende had provided an environment where East German news programs could experiment and evolve along side the East German public. As Bentzien stated in an interview, "not all journalists were Schnitzlers" (referring to the host of *Schwarze Kanal*) and as television journalists engaged in self-reflection and reform, the DFF was developing a slate of programs "free of taboos."¹⁹⁷ The DFF seemingly had won back the trust of its viewership. In June the results of a survey made headlines when it stated that nearly 90 per cent of East Germans wanted the DFF to remain as a third public broadcasting institution within the soon-to-be unified German space.¹⁹⁸

The Film and Television Union stood behind Bentzien's plan and argued that if given the chance, the DFF could "continue to safeguard its evolving historical function as communications medium as well as customer and sponsor of journalism and film production in the remaining GDR and thereby contribute to the preservation of more than 10,000 jobs in film and television."¹⁹⁹ The Employee Council of DFF appealed directly to the East German public, declaring:

¹⁹⁶ During debates about the future of DFF during Volkskammer hearings, the program *Sandmännchen* became a fill-in for East German programming identity, as the PDS and the coalition parties debated the potential federalization and fusion of East and West German broadcasting structures and institutions. See Volkskammer, "21. Tagung - Donnerstag, den 5. Juli 1990," 848; Kate Connolly, "The Sandmännchen, Germany's Cutest Communist, Turns 50," *The Guardian*, accessed May 29, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/23/sandmannchen-germany-communist>.

¹⁹⁷ "Was wird aus Radio und Fernsehfunk? Experten der DDR und BRD diskutierten ohne Ergebnis," *Berliner Zeitung*, April 30, 1990, ZEFYS.

¹⁹⁸ Meves, Ursula, "Fernsehintendant Hans Bentzien zur geplanten Umstrukturierung befragt 88 Prozent sind für den DFF, und trotzdem soll Schluß sein?"

¹⁹⁹ "DFF - Für und Wider Stefan Heym: Wir brauchen diesen Sender," *neues Deutschland*, June 15, 1990, ZEFYS.

Together with you we want to overcome the past, withstand the present, and master the future ... We believe that we indeed cannot do everything, but the important thing for viewers in the current and soon-to-be-former GDR, we can still do it better than ARD and ZDF.²⁰⁰

Bentzien and the DFF essentially equated the television institution with East German identity. If the broadcast media were so important to the formation of culture, identity, and society as the media experts were claiming, would it not be in the interest of the East German people to maintain the strength and integrity of their own voice, of their own unique and evolving style of journalism, through the maintenance of the DFF? Otherwise, would East Germany not risk diluting its voice and identity by splitting up the DFF into smaller regional studios and channels that had neither the experience nor infrastructure to compete with the West German broadcasting institutions? The argument to maintain the DFF became a push-back against the reunification process, a way for East Germans to maintain control over an element of their cultural identity as they watched their country dissolve into West German structures.

Hennig Stoerk and the CDU, on the other hand, argued that the colossal structure of the DFF was a relic of the problematic past and that the best method of cleansing the institution of corruption, censorship, and bias was to fundamentally restructure East German broadcasting along the West German federal model. Under their current leadership, the broadcasting institutions had remained bloated with its communist employment roster topping 14,000 employees in radio and television. As an example of the broadcasting industry's ridiculous and excessive staffing structures, an April *Spiegel* article pointed out the strange fact that the East German radio institution employed a surprisingly high number of hairstylists. The article continued: "In the editorial offices, former party-line spokespersons, informers, and Stasi-employees still hang around. 'The wide center of the broadcaster has yet to convert.' Says one

²⁰⁰ "Wer hat ein Sender zu viel," *Berliner Zeitung*, May 18, 1990, ZEFYS.

insider.”²⁰¹ Federalism and the introduction of private broadcasting became the cures for lingering totalitarian influences.

The underlying problem for Stoerk and the CDU was a fundamental distrust of the old elites. In an April article that appeared in the West German journalism periodical *journalist*, Stoerk declared: “A communist cannot stand at the helm of the country’s fourth estate.” He argued that Bentzien deserved an honorable dismissal, but it was time to “separate the wheat from the chaff.”²⁰² In the eyes of the CDU, allowing the East German broadcast agencies to maintain their centralized structure and former SED leadership endangered the democratization process.

When de Maizière took office, the conservative coalition had hoped that they could place their men at the helm of the broadcast media. Neither Bentzien nor Klein had ever been confirmed as heads of the broadcasting institutions, as their tenure had preceded the formation of the Council. At the end of March, after the PDS’s stunning electoral defeat, Modrow nominated both men to the Council, so that both men could retain their positions under the incoming political leadership. The Council, however, rejected the maneuver, stating that nomination was premature, since neither institution had successfully completed its transformation into independent broadcasting bodies “regulated by public law” (*öffentlich-rechtliche Anstalten*).²⁰³

²⁰¹ “Messer in Den Rippen,” *Der Spiegel*, April 16, 1990, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13498980.html>.

²⁰² Kulick, Holger, “Nahkampf nach dem Wahlkampf.”

²⁰³ They grounded this stance by citing paragraph 11 of the February 5 Media law, which states: “*Rundfunk, Fernsehen, und ADN sind unabhängige öffentliche Einrichtungen, die nicht der Regierung unterstehen. Sie sind Volkseigentum. Bis zur Umgestaltung von Rundfunk und Fernsehen in öffentlich-rechtliche Anstalten und des ADN in eine öffentlich kontrollierte Nachrichtenagentur mit ebenfalls rechtlich verändertem Status garantiert der Staat ihre Finanzierung.*” This paragraph makes no mention of a limitation on the confirmation of a General Director until that process is complete. The only other paragraph mentioning the Council’s jurisdiction over the General Directors is the next paragraph (12), which states: “*Die Regierung*

Furthermore, the Council questioned the efficacy of confirming a nomination from an out-going administration.²⁰⁴ Even though the veto against Bentzien's nomination came at the height of the foreign funding/advertising scandal, the General Director was allowed to hold on to his position in the absence of an alternative candidate. So Bentzien and Klein remained at the helm as holdovers from the Modrow administration, restructuring and reforming the broadcast institutions in accordance with their own vision for the future, a future that carried with it the legacy of the hopes for East German self-determination, much to the increasing frustration of the parties in power.²⁰⁵

As Bentzien was facing investigations into his dealings with foreign parties, Hennig Stoerk himself became the target of suspicion, as it was revealed that prior to his tenure on the Media Control Council (in January of 1990), he had tried to start up his own private television company, *MEDIANOVA*, which would have competed with the East German public television company.²⁰⁶ Hearing these concerns about Stoerk's potential bias against the DFF, the Council

sichert die Arbeitsfähigkeit des Medienkontrollrates bis zur Inkraftsetzung einer umfassenden Mediengesetzgebung, Insbesondere die Generalintendanten von Rundfunk und Fernsehen sowie der Generaldirektor von ADN sind dem Medienkontrollrat berichtspflichtig.

Die Generalintendanten des Rundfunks und des Fernsehens und der Generaldirektor von ADN werden von Ministerpräsidenten berufen und vom Medienkontrollrat bestätigt."

²⁰⁴ Medienkontrollrat der DDR, "28.3.1990 Ergebnisprotokoll."

²⁰⁵ In an interview on Radio Free Berlin, ARD's regional West Berlin radio station, in late March of 1990 Stoerk explained that, "Bentzien, who was never confirmed by the MKR, has made a big mistake here ... After this election result, it would have been a matter of fairness, that one should talk with one another. That he would call up the CDU and ask, 'who is your man? We should get together and talk; we should make these decisions together. ... He was entitled to have a good retirement." The interview was documented and transcribed in: "Infoblatt 6," March 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

²⁰⁶ Rainer Bekesehus and Kotsch, Ralph, "Spielball oder Mitspieler — DDR-TV im Medienmatch," *Neues Deutschland*, March 10, 1990, 59 edition. Some found Stoerk's attacks on Bentzien and his position within the Council suspect, and one article even accused Stoerk

asked the CDU to conduct an investigation into Stoerk's integrity and morality. By the end of March, Stoerk informed the Council that he would no longer serve as the CDU's representative, citing the party's electoral victory and its need for his services elsewhere within the administration. In stepping down, however, he firmly denied that he harbored any bias, and he claimed that he had abandoned the *MEDIANOVA* project prior to his short tenure serving on the Council.²⁰⁷

Throughout the spring, Bentzien and the CDU presented their competing visions for the future of East German broadcasting to the public via the media itself. While the conservatives tried to paint Bentzien and the DFF as burdened relics of the past, the more leftist East German press presented the CDU's plan as trying to subvert and destroy East German identity for the benefit and profit of West German institutions both public (ARD/ZDF) and private (RTL/SAT1/etc).²⁰⁸ More moderate pieces focused on the conflict between maintaining an independent and central East German identity and protecting East German jobs through the DFF, or benefiting from the West German experience, institutions, and structures, which had already been proven effective in the Federal Republic.²⁰⁹

In May, when the finance ministers of East and West Germany signed the treaty establishing the monetary, economic, and social union between East and West Germany,

of trying to use his position within the Media Control Council to usurp Bentzien as the head of DFF.[Schreiter, "Wird Adlershof Gesamtdeutsch Eingemeindet? Das Volk Schaut in Die Röhre."]

²⁰⁷ Medienkontrollrat der DDR, "Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratssitzung am 21.03.1990."

²⁰⁸ Peter Hoff, "Wem nützte es, wenn das Aus für Adlershof käm," *Neues Deutschland*, June 9, 1990, ZEFYS.

²⁰⁹ "DDR-Fernsehen soll in ARD und ZDF aufgehen Bonner Positionspapier von CDU (West) und Allianz," *Berliner Zeitung*, June 2, 1990, ZEFYS; "Was wird aus Radio und Fernsehfunk? Experten der DDR und BRD diskutierten ohne Ergebnis."

momentum toward the impending unification ratcheted up even further. Expediency and ease of integration were favored over more complicated and time-consuming concerns of preserving culture or maintaining a distinct East German “voice.” The CDU’s political program of utilizing West German structures and institutions to accelerate and simplify the integration process became a *fait accompli*. Bentzien’s vision became incompatible with the course being laid by the party in power, so in June, de Maizière took steps to remedy the situation. Gottfried Müller, the Media Minister, informed the Council that de Maizière had chosen Gero Hammer, a member of the NDPD [*National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*], who had made his career in the East German theater and the Culture Ministry, to be his choice to head both broadcasting agencies.²¹⁰ The Prime Minister’s choice angered many within the broadcasting institutions, who complained that the CDU administration had failed to consult the staff regarding the choice. They argued that Hammer, who had served for decades in the GDR’s defunct and dysfunctional Volkskammer, was not any more likely than Bentzien to ensure the democratic renewal of East German broadcasting.²¹¹

The Council met on June 14, and during a private session the members came to the conclusion that Hammer was indeed a poor choice as a candidate. The *Berliner Zeitung* reported that Hammer’s candidacy was rejected, not due to any issues with his integrity, but rather because the former theater director was unable to sufficiently answer questions regarding the

²¹⁰ The NDPD was one of the GDR’s former Bloc-Parties. It was a liberal party formed by the Soviet Occupying Authorities to attract former members of the NSDAP and the Wehrmacht, to lure them away from more right-wing extremist political formations. [“National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (NDPD) | Bpb,” accessed September 9, 2015, <http://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/lexika/politiklexikon/17884/national-demokratische-partei-deutschlands-ndpd>.] The party entered the March 18, 1989 elections alone, without forming a coalition party and suffered a huge defeat, securing only 2 representatives in the Volkskammer. Eventually the NDPD merged with the other liberal parties joining the FDP.

²¹¹ Detlef Friedrieb, “Der neue kam ‘von oben,’” *Berliner Zeitung*, June 2, 1990, ZEFYS.

future structure, independence, and financing of the broadcasting agencies.²¹² This did not mean, however, that Bentzien was allowed to continue by default. The Council released Bentzien from his position as General Director declaring that he had “fulfilled his mission” in converting the DFF into a public broadcasting institution. Underlying this decision however, was the fact that the CDU had made it clear that there was no room in their unification plans for the DFF to remain a third public broadcasting agency in the unified German republic.²¹³ In removing Bentzien, the Council cleared the way for the CDU to push forward their plan to federalize the East German broadcasting institutions.

Bentzien’s case provides useful insight into the shifting political dynamics from the winter to the spring and summer of 1990. The tension that existed between Bentzien’s vision and that of the CDU was at the heart of the unification process. After the collapse of the East German state, what would the future hold for East German culture and identity? Could a distinct, powerful, unique, East German cultural voice be allowed to remain standing among the remains of the collapsed and discredited regime; or, was that voice a fundamental threat to the blossoming democratic state?

The DFF represented both the dreams of the left and the fears of the right. The SED had been such an insidious, pervasive, and oppressive power, using deceit, manipulation, censorship, and fear to cement its domination over the population. The media had been a powerful weapon in the hands of that state, used to either indoctrinate or place the population into submission. Liberal democracy was young in the fading German Democratic Republic, and even as the march toward unification quickened, there was still a palatable fear of an authoritarian resurgence at the hands of the old elite. Leaving the electronic media in its centralized form

²¹² “Intendant nicht bestätigt,” *Berliner Zeitung*, June 14, 1990, ZEFYS.

²¹³ Kulick, Holger, “Nahkampf nach dem Wahlkampf.”

under the leadership of the former elite posed a fundamental threat to democratic transformation. The East German conservatives and the West German political leadership hoped that federalism and capitalism could convert the state and its population from totalitarianism to democracy.

Bentzien's push to maintain the DFF and to create an institution that could stand alongside and equal to the West German broadcasting institutions was the product of a hope that there were elements of East German culture and identity worthy of maintaining and protecting. Bentzien was placed at the head of the DFF in December 1989, when many in the SED and the opposition hoped that the GDR had a future as a liberalized and democratized state alongside the Federal Republic. When unification became the clear future for Germany, those hopes were reinvested in the idea that an independent public East German broadcasting institution could carry and protect a distinct East German identity as the German Democratic Republic disappeared and became incorporated into the Federal Republic. East German television was able to communicate to the East German population in its own unique and familiar cultural language. Even though West German broadcasts were a long-standing part of East German daily life, due to the prevalence of antennas, the DFF had become a valuable partner in the transformation process. As it became harder and harder to recognize the old and the familiar in East German society, the DFF was able to reflect and analyze culture and events from within. The left hoped that there would be some essential part of East German society to survive. This was an extension of those hopes that were enshrined in the third way. As the print industry became enveloped by West German publishers, there was hope that a distinct East German voice could remain in the broadcast industry to help guide the East Germans through the process of transformation.

The Transformation of the Broadcasting Structures

When the Media Control Council rejected Hammer and released Bentzien, it left the DFF leaderless. The broadcasting institutions, however, required guidance for the many structural and professional changes that needed to precede the impending merger of the two German states. To oversee this task, the Media Minister called on Manfred Klein, who had been serving since December 1989 as the General Director of Radio, and Michael Albrecht, who had served up to this point as the General Director of DFF's station *DDR1* as the new provisional directors of radio and television (respectively).²¹⁴ Bentzien's departure put an end to the ambiguity regarding the future of broadcasting in East Germany. The institutions were going to be re-structured along the federal model, and the Media Ministry and the de Maizière administration were going to determine the way forward.

The rapid pace of change was only kicked up a notch further in July of 1990 as legislators and leaders raced to implement legal and structural reforms before the August summer break. July 1 marked the arrival of the much-coveted Deutschmark into the East German economy as the Economic, Currency and Social Union with West Germany came into effect, fusing East and West Germany more tightly together.

July heralded great changes for East German broadcasting as well. New independent regional radio stations began broadcasting in Rostock, Weimar, and Leipzig, and new studios were established across East Germany.²¹⁵ The DFF also resolved to create five regional television stations that would correspond with the soon-to-be-formed states.²¹⁶ Meanwhile the Ministry for Media and Press was hard at work taking concrete steps to re-shape the East German media landscape so that it could integrate more easily into West German institutional

²¹⁴ "Kommissarische Leiter für Funk und Fernsehen," *Neue Zeit*, June 20, 1990, ZEFYS.

²¹⁵ Nölte, "Chronik medienpolitischer Ereignisse in der DDR," 101.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

structures. Minister Müller assembled a group of West German media experts from public and private broadcasting institutions to help devise a strategy for incorporating East German broadcasting institutions into unified Germany.²¹⁷

In late June, Minister Müller appeared before the Media Control Council to answer questions regarding his Ministry's ever expanding mission and structure. Müller informed the Council that his Ministry was preparing to introduce a new law that would provide comprehensive legislation covering the future of the broadcasting institutions. If enacted, the broadcasting law would render the Council's oversight of that branch of the media obsolete.²¹⁸ The February 5 Media Law had established the MKR as a provisional supervisory body until a comprehensive legal framework could be constructed. If Müller's law passed, the Council would have fulfilled its mission.

Some on the Council, however, expressed concern that Müller had bypassed proper channels in drafting this legislation, a competency that belonged to the Volkskammer committee "Press and Media."²¹⁹ This unease was echoed days later when the Ministry presented a draft of its new broadcasting law to some members of the Government Commission for Media Legislation (*Regierungskommission Mediengesetzgebung*). The Ministry claimed that in the spirit of expediency, it had decided to forego certain elements of the legislative process, including a public hearing of the law before the Governmental Commission. The Ministry

²¹⁷ The panel included, among others, the former director of WDR and speaker of SPD-East, Friedrich Wilhelm von Sell, the Director of the Berlin Institute for Cable Communication, Hans Hege, the former NDR director, Peter Schiwy, as well as the SFB director, Günther von Lojewski. Hepperle, "Durchsetzung des westdeutschen Ordnungsmodells: Rundfunk und Fernsehen," 213.

²¹⁸ "Ergebnisprotokoll der Medienkontrollratssitzung am 27.6.1990," June 29, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

justified this shortcut explaining that the new broadcasting law needed to be formalized immediately, so that the Volkskammer could vote before the upcoming summer recess. Many of the invited members of the Governmental Commission found these legislative maneuvers to be troubling. Konrad Weiß, a representative of Alliance 90/The Greens was so upset that he declared that he was going to go to the press and the Volkskammer to challenge the drafted legislation and the Ministry's attempt to forego public debate.²²⁰

As promised, Weiß took to the media to denounce the Ministry's plan for the future of East German broadcasting. In an interview with the *Berliner Zeitung*, he claimed that the conservative parties in power were trying to use this law to gain dirigiste control over the media. The article claimed that the East CDU had brought in media experts from West Germany to help write the law, resulting in a law that destroyed East German institutions and expanded the reach of the West German media. The article cited concerns raised by West German journalists that this law breached decades of legal precedent in West Germany in allowing the government significant access to East German broadcasting institutions.²²¹

The debate continued onto the floor of the Volkskammer the next day when the PDS made "The Future of the Media" a subject for the day's *Aktuelle Stunde* (an hour dedicated to topical discussions). The resulting debate was fractious and heated, and it highlighted the extreme differences and tensions between the parties when it came to their understanding of the press in East Germany. Lothar Bisky, the PDS's Media Control Councilman, kicked off the proceedings presenting his party's major objections to the Ministry's and the governments media

²²⁰ Ministerium für Medienpolitik, "Protokoll über die 4. Beratung der Arbeitsgruppe 'Allgemeiner Teil' der Regierungskommission Mediengesetzgebung am 2.7.1990," July 4, 1990, DC9/1031, Das Bundesarchiv.

²²¹ "Droht uns jetzt em neuer Staatsfunk? Unruhe um Rundfunküberleitungsgesetz / SFB will DDR-Sender einverleiben," *Berliner Zeitung*, July 4, 1990, 153 edition, ZEFYS.

policies. Bisky, like many in the opposition, objected to the way the Ministry had introduced this legislation. The Councilman advocated that such legislative processes occur in a more pluralistic fashion, incorporating the various media commissions and councils into the discussion, including representatives from the unions, churches, and democratic movements. The PDS was concerned primarily with the protection of jobs and wanted the government to consider the cultural benefits of a strong national public broadcasting system and not just the bottom line.

During his presentation, Bisky touched on a subject that struck to the core of the tensions between the PDS and the CDU. Bisky pointed to a letter, published in *Neues Deutschland* that purported to show that the CDU was discussing removing all SED-PDS journalists from positions of middle and upper management. While representatives from the CDU denied the veracity of the claims, it was clear that the two parties had a fundamental disagreement regarding the capacity of former regime loyalists to change. Representative von Essen of the CDU expressed his party's stance when he stated: "Can you imagine that a journalist, when he is conducting his work honestly, can fundamentally change himself within such a short period of time that he can go from communist thinking to achieving democratic thinking?"²²² Von Essen's statement elicited disgust from the PDS fraction, and Bisky countered that many current members of the CDU had been former SED members, concluding, "I believe people have the capacity to change."²²³

Other parties chimed in, presenting their support or objections to the proposed broadcasting law. The Ministry and the CDU defended the proposal stating that any shortcuts taken were legitimate legislative avenues and that the current situation required quick and decisive action. The Farmer's party elicited laughter and jeers when it claimed that the media had

²²² Volkskammer, "21. Tagung - Donnerstag, den 5. Juli 1990," 847.

²²³ Ibid.

contributed to the democratic reforms of the past months and that the media deserved respect and recognition. The Liberals pointed to the importance of a dual broadcasting structure, which would make public stations compete with private broadcasters as the cure for lingering authoritarian structures. The SPD struck a balance between the extremes, acceding to the need for a personnel transformation and the removal of the former party cadre from leadership positions. However, the SPD's representative Wolfgang Thierse also expressed concern about the new law. One element in particular troubled him greatly. The law granted the Prime Minister the power to name the directors of the state broadcasting institutions without confirmation or veto from any other party. "You shatter one central organization but dominate the new federal structure personally through a central figure. In this manner, a 'Maizerokratie' has been invented."²²⁴

The Media Ministry's attempt to expedite the legislative process and streamline the structural transformation of the broadcasting institutions clearly hit a nerve. The law extinguished once and for all any hopes of retaining a third central East German broadcasting agency. The law also signaled the death knell for the Media Control Council. While the Council had become increasingly impotent in the face of the Media Ministry's expanding authority, the MKR was one of the few remaining relics of the citizen's movement of the winter of 1989/90. Both the Council and the central broadcasting agencies were mementos of a unique and dynamic period of the East German transformation. However, the political space for both institutions was shrinking and the de Maizière administration was losing patience with the Council's interventions and delays. Media Minister Müller, in fact, blamed the MKR and their rejection of

²²⁴ Ibid., 856.

Gero Hammer as causing the current crisis situation in East German broadcasting. By rejecting Hammer, the MKR forced the Ministry to take such immediate and drastic action.²²⁵

In addition to eliminating the DFF, Radio DDR, and the MKR, the law violated one of the key tenants of the German conception of a free press. Media experts from East and West were troubled by the law's lack of *Staatsferne* (independence from state intervention), and saw the Minister's ability to determine the leadership of the broadcasting institutions as a sign of governmental overreach. The administration's tactics in drafting the law also confirmed for many the fear that the decisions about the future of East Germany were not being made in Berlin, but rather in Bonn by Kohl and the West German CDU party leadership.²²⁶ The Media Control Council added to the chorus of objections, and released a public statement denouncing the law as violating the February 5 Media Law. The MKR was particularly concerned that that Council, a pluralistic and independent oversight body, was going to be replaced with a body introduced by the state.²²⁷

Rather than withdraw or revise the proposal, Minister Müller presented the law, unaltered, to the Volkskammer for a vote. Müller highlighted the law's strengths: it was an "open, transparent, and quickly effective and practical proposal to federalize radio and television in the GDR." Federalism would eliminate any lingering authoritarian structures within the media and would grant state broadcasting stations to innovate independently of one another. He

²²⁵ "Trotz Protest unverändert Kontroverse um Rundfunküberleitungsgesetz," *Neue Zeit*, July 13, 1990, 161 edition, ZEFYS.

²²⁶ See the following articles covering the laws introduction: "Droht uns jetzt em neuer Staatsfunk?"; Ursula Meves, "Rundfunküberleitungsgesetz — das Ende eines Traums?," *Neues Deutschland*, July 5, 1990, sec. 154, ZEFYS; Bettina Urbanski, "Auf dem Weg zur Etablierung eines Regierungsrundfunks? Überleitungsgesetz zu Hörfunk und Fernsehen geht hinter BRD-Maßstäbe zurück," *Berliner Zeitung*, July 5, 1990, 154 edition, ZEFYS.

²²⁷ "Medienkontrollrat: Gesetzentwurf zu Rundfunk widerspricht dem Recht," *Neues Deutschland*, 12 July, 160 edition, ZEFYS.

acknowledged the criticisms that had arisen in recent days and suggested that the law be transferred to the necessary committees to resolve any fundamental problems. Again the Volkskammer turned hostile as parties and representatives exchanged jeers and barbs as they rehashed the debate from the previous weeks. The SPD countered Müller's law with its own proposal for the overhaul of East German broadcasting, hoping that their proposal could help shape an eventual compromise with Müller's draft.²²⁸ All parties agreed that the current draft could not stand without revision, and the Transitional Broadcasting Law was sent off to the committees to undergo the necessary fixes.²²⁹

The inability of the East German politicians to reach a consensus and devise an effective transformation strategy had lasting consequences. After the Transitional Broadcasting Law was rejected and sent off to committee, the political leaders in Bonn and Berlin devised a new strategy to restructure the East German broadcasting institutions without the intervention of the Volkskammer or Media Control Council. Rather than wait to see the results of the Volkskammer compromise, the West German delegation decided to make the transformation of the East German broadcasting institutions part of the Unification Treaty, with the goal of "destroying the old propaganda system of the SED regime as quickly as possible" to prevent "the old networks from re-establishing themselves any further."²³⁰ As a result, the Unification Treaty included article 36, which saw the creation of "The Institution" (*Die Einrichtung*). The Institution was created with one purpose: "to provide the population [of East Germany] with Television and

²²⁸ Deutschland Volkskammer, "26. Tagung - Freitag, den 20.. Juli 1990," in *Protokolle der Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: 10. Wahlperiode (vom 5. April bis 2. Oktober 1990)* (Springer-Verlag, 2014), 1117–57.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Original quote from: Wolfgang Schäuble, *Der Vertrag.: Wie ich über die deutsche Einheit verhandelte.* (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1991), 198. Cited in: Hepperle, "Durchsetzung des westdeutschen Ordnungsmodells: Rundfunk und Fernsehen," 218.

Radio based on the principles of broadcasting under public law.” The Institution, under the leadership of a Broadcasting Commissioner, had until December 31, 1991 to establish a federal broadcasting structure for the new eastern German states.²³¹

The “breathtaking speed” of the unification process astounded the members of the Volkskammer, who were hard at work revising the Transitional Broadcasting Law for a future that was an ever-shifting target.²³² As late as August 27, the Volkskammer draft of the broadcasting law had significant differences with the final provisions set by the Unification Treaty.²³³ However, by the time the Volkskammer Commission “Press and Media” presented the final version of the broadcasting law on September 13, the Unification Treaty had established the new reality for the future of broadcasting. The Volkskammer had to adjust its proposal to fit within the parameters set forth by the negotiating partners of the Unification Treaty. The result was a broadcasting law that supplemented the Unification Treaty, establishing a framework for a federal dual broadcasting system. The Transitional Broadcasting Law was intended to be a continuing provision, to be included in the attachments to the Unification Treaty. However, when the Federal Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble met with East German State Secretary Günther Krause to finalize the Unification Treaty negotiations, Krause agreed to leave the Transitional Broadcasting Law on the table. On September 26, the Transitional Broadcasting

²³¹ Werner Claus and Hans Bentzien, eds., “Artikel 36 des Einigungsvertrages,” in *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien?: Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90* (Berlin: Vistas, 1991), 182–83.

²³² Hilsberg of the SPD, cited the “breathtaking speed” of the unification process and the changing conditions created by Article 36 during the discussion of the revised Transitional Broadcasting Law. Deutschland Volkskammer, “35. Tagung - Donnerstag, den 13. September 1990,” in *Protokolle der Volkskammer der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: 10. Wahlperiode (vom 5. April bis 2. Oktober 1990)* (Springer-Verlag, 2014), 1633–1717.

²³³ Kresse, *Die Rundfunkordnung in den neuen Bundesländern*, 22.

Law was published and enacted, and seven days later it expired with the ratification of the Unification Treaty on October 3.²³⁴

The failure of the Transitional Broadcasting Law had tangible and symbolic consequences. First, the course of the legislation—from its inception to its failure—is a symbol of West Germany’s ability to control and shape the contours of the East German media landscape. The law was the result of a committee composed of West German media experts, whose goal was the integration of East German broadcasting structures into the existing West German media landscape. While some West German experts hoped that the Unification would provide Germans the opportunity to fundamentally re-think the way it structured its media, the most efficient strategy proved to be the simple expansion of the established West German structures eastward.²³⁵ The hope was that the tried and true democratic structures, even with their faults, were a safer bet than allowing lingering authoritarian structures to fester, re-assert themselves, or endanger democracy.

The inability of the East German politicians to legislate and determine their own transformation reveals the difference in the speed and adaptability of East and West German systems. The East German legislative process was mired in discord and dysfunction as the executive and legislative branches battled each other and themselves and failed to reach a consensus. When the Media Ministry attempted to intervene and streamline the process, the Volkskammer and the Media Control Council, who saw themselves as a check on centralized authority and abuses of the executive, stymied its efforts. The East German system was incapable of shaking loose the legacy of its past. Deference for consensus, debate, and pluralism, a reaction

²³⁴ Ibid., 23.

²³⁵ For example, Kresse quotes ARD- Chairman and Director Hartwig Kelm, “The Unification provides the chance, to correct [flaws in the West German system]”.Ibid., 28.

to the authoritarianism of the past regime, prevented the lawmakers and media overseers from taking decisive action. Given time to adjust and develop, these strategies may have proven effective and reformative, but the lightning speed of the unification process completely overtook the East German media leadership. The West German lawmakers and leaders were better able to protect and advance their interests because they were able to maneuver adeptly at that breakneck speed. The East German political process and economic system was in complete disarray, and the West Germans had media structures and models that had proven effective and the experience and capital to maneuver in the open media market. The reality of the economic and political environment in the summer of 1990 meant that, much like the third way, Bentzien's plan for the retention of an East German media identity and self-determination had little chance of survival.

The implementation of the Unification treaty put an end to domestic and independent East German reform. The treaty, which expanded West German structures, ensured that there would be little to no structural continuity from the German Democratic Republic. In the interest of protecting democracy in East Germany, the conservative coalition partners in East Germany and their West German counterparts fought to systematically dismantle all remaining structural traces of the GDR. Democratic integrity was a more valuable commodity than the preservation of an East German identity and continuity.

Conclusion

The official end for the Media Control Council came in late September. The Council closed its final meeting on September 19 with a brief statement, summarizing the MKR's reflections on its role within the East German media transformation. The Council saw itself as a "moral-appellative authority," bound to its duty of protecting the freedoms of opinion and choice

for the East German population against the threats of renewed centralization of power or “deformed commercialization.” “As an independent and non-partisan part of the public conscience in a democratizing society, the Council endeavored to awaken a public awareness of the problems of the freedom of opinion, information, and media within the future states of the union.”²³⁶ Members of the Council, like its deputy Chairman, Heinz Odermann, remarked to the press that the MKR was the longest standing political remnant of the Round Table, which brought together a group of people from a wide swath of East Germany’s political spectrum, providing a broad platform for important social groups. In his words, the Council was “a midwife for democratic regulations” and a “guardian of the freedoms of information, opinion and media.”²³⁷

Although the Council and its members extolled the MKR’s enduring symbolic legacy, the reality of the Council’s tangible achievements were less inspiring. As one journalist, Sibylle Licht, pointed out, the “wolf without teeth” was loud but ineffectual. West German firms controlled the majority of the East German publishing companies, and the broadcasting reform program was pushed through largely without the Council’s input. “The decisions about the German-German media landscape were made without the Media Control Council.”²³⁸ The major achievement of the MKR, according to Licht, was that the members of the Council received a firsthand lesson in democracy and broader political reality. The Council’s meetings were a venue where ideas could be discussed, opinions tolerated, problems debated, and consensus formed.

²³⁶ Medienkontrollrat der DDR, “Erklärung,” September 19, 1990, Medienkontrollrat 1-2, Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik Archives, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

²³⁷ Holger Haase, “Staatsferne und Meinungsvielfalt Gespräch mit dem Medienexperten Prof. Heinz Odermann,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 19, 1990, 219 edition, ZEFYS.

²³⁸ Sibylle Licht, “Mediengurus ohne Macht,” *Neue Zeit*, September 24, 1990, 223 edition, ZEFYS.

The problem, however, was that as the members honed their democratic skills, the transformation process sped forward and passed them by.

One of the Council's more formidable sparring partners, Media Minister Müller, saw the MRK less as ineffectual and symbolic and more as an obstructionist force in the transformation process. In an October interview, the Minister depicted the Council and the Volkskammer Committee "Press and Media" as inflicting "braking maneuvers" on the reform process, leading to substantial delays. The worst failure of the Council, according to Müller, was its rejection of the Hammer nomination for General Director of Broadcasting. Müller claimed that the MKR fell prey to lobbyists from the DFF, and their rejection of Hammer resulted in "significant damages" to the East German broadcasting institutions.²³⁹ Without effective leadership the broadcasting agencies were unable to push their own internal reform process forward, and the matter landed in the hands of the negotiators of the unification treaty. Considering the dizzying speed of the unification process, Müller had little patience for alternative and distracting plans and proposals. However, in that same October interview, Müller pointed to a deeper failing of the MKR. He declared that the Council's encouragement of Bentzien's "hopeless" proposal for a third East German public broadcasting agency lost valuable time and "awakened the illusion that the existing persons and structures of the *Deutschen Fernsehfunk*, which were badly compromised and centralized in GDR times, could find their way into the German unification "relatively unturned [*ungewendet*]." Ironically, it was the members of the Christian conservative party who viewed redemption and transformation as an "illusion." The gestures of reform, made by the former socialist elite, were deemed too shallow and too rapid to be considered genuine. Regardless of any declarations of reform or intent, the former socialist elite was seen as "un-

²³⁹ "Seilschaften als Bremsen."

turned.” The risk to democracy was perceived to be too great to allow un-reformed, former or current socialists to continue to direct and influence the fourth estate. There was no time or space for authentic reform to be nurtured and embraced.

The short tenure of the Council oversaw a period of momentous change. The GDR of February 1990 bore little resemblance to its final incarnation on the eve of unification in September. The Council was created when the hope for a separate democratic East German state was alive and well. The foundational mission of the Council as stated in the February 5 Media Law, foresaw an East German state with a new constitution codifying the democratic freedoms of the media. The structure of the Council reflected the innovations present in the Round Table, a form of pluralistic democracy that valued the collaboration and consensus of diverse parties and interests. The spirit of the Council and the Round Table fundamentally rejected centralized party control. This rejection was a central component of the reform process, a rejection of the authoritarian past and an enthusiastic grasp of grassroots democratic principles. However, consensus and debate took time, and time was one of the many things that East Germans had little of.

The conservative alliance partners offered a quicker and easier path to democratic freedom and economic prosperity. Why waste time and energy building a democracy from the ground up when your neighbor offered the blueprints for free? The era of pluralistic democratic renewal ended on March 18, but the Council remained and served as a lasting reminder of the road not taken. As Minister Müller pointed out, the Council allowed certain hopes and dreams to linger long after their political reality had expired. As a misplaced relic of a quickly expired political period, an analysis of the MKR and its inability to further an East German reform

project demonstrates why any such efforts to pursue a third or alternative path was destined to fail.²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ Thank you to Gail Kligman for help with this wording.

Chapter Five: Continuity and Renewal, Journalists recount their experiences of the transition out of the GDR into the modern Federal Republic

Introduction

The first four chapters of this dissertation have presented the history of a profession and its collapse. Under the leadership of Erich Honecker, the East German media was completely discredited and compromised, unable to resist or challenge the General Secretary's authoritarian and stringent control. When Egon Krenz ousted Honecker, and the opposition parties within the state gained power, the media were slow to join the revolutionary process. When, however, the profession was finally liberated from party control and was freed to undergo an internal revolutionary re-invention, the journalists faced an insurmountable challenge from the West. Reunification signaled a complete economic and professional colonization by the Federal Republic, with all its media powerhouses and bureaucratic structures. By October of 1990, the future professional lives of East German journalists looked bleak. Yet the intervening years have shown something surprising. By all accounts the East German journalists have proven to be stubbornly resilient. Unemployment among journalists during the transition period was lower than for other professions, and the continuity of East German personnel within media institutions remained surprisingly high.¹

¹ In 1992 the unemployment rate of East German Journalists was 9.7%, compared to a 14% unemployment rate of journalists in West Germany [Bernd Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?: ehemalige Journalisten der DDR arbeiten ihre Vergangenheit auf* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: P. Lang, 1996), 16.] Compare this rate to academics or lawyers and the low unemployment rate is even more dramatic. For example, one scholar noted that only 9.2 per cent of GDR attorneys held permanent positions by 1994. [See: Inga Markovits, "Children of a Lesser God: GDR Lawyers in Post-Socialist Germany," *Michigan Law Review*, June 1996.] Many scholars have pointed to the perilous position of East German academics in post-GDR Germany, as whole departments were closed and full professors were found to be professionally or politically unfit to continue their work within the Academy. It is estimated that one quarter to

In 1994, a group of communications scholars—who had come together as part of the “Social Committee of Inquiry on Journalists in the New States of the Federal Republic”—published the results from their comprehensive survey of the professional trajectories of East German journalists. Although this widely cited study showed that there was an overall contraction in the number of journalism jobs in the new states—in 1989 there were 7,800 full-time employed journalists in the East German territory, and by 1993 this was cut by 38% to 4,800 – within those remaining jobs the holdovers from the GDR were in the majority.² This study showed that three fifths of the full-time journalists working in East Germany in 1993 had been journalists in the GDR, an additional 18% had come over from the West, and the remaining 21% were East Germans who had entered the profession after 1989.³ Within most branches of the media a large population of East German journalists and editors had remained in place.⁴ In the face of all of the challenges posed by the events of 1989 and 1990, journalists have singled themselves out among the professions as one of the few success stories. The resulting picture does not depict the collapse of the GDR as a rupture in the lives of these individuals, but rather

one third of all academic professionals lost their positions after Reunification, the majority of which were in the humanities and social sciences, fields closely associated with Marxist-Leninist ideology. [See: Charles S. Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 303–311; Marianne Kriszto, “Transformation and Injustice: Women in East German Universities,” in *United and Divided*, ed. Mike Dennis and Eva Kolinsky (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 110–23, ma; Rosalind Pritschard, “Challenges of Participation in German Higher Education - an East-West Comparison,” in *United and Divided*, ed. Mike Dennis and Eva Kolinsky (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 110–23.]

² Dieter Stürzebecher, “Woher kommen sie, wie denken sie, was wollen sie?,” in *Presse Ost, Presse West: Journalismus im vereinten Deutschland*, ed. Michael Haller, Klaus Puder, and Jochen Schlevoigt (Berlin: Vistas, 1995), 208.

³ *Ibid.*, 208–209.

⁴ While there has been a clear continuity in the personnel of print and radio broadcasting institutions, there has been less continuity within television [See *Ibid.*, 211.].

the history of East German journalism in the wake of the unification is one of continuity and even renewal.⁵

This chapter will investigate the impact of this continuity on the individual professional lives and memories of journalists. At the heart of this chapter are five interviews that I conducted in the winter and spring of 2013. I interviewed two radio journalists (one who had worked for the youth Radio Station *DT64* and is now a freelance radio journalist and one who worked for *Radio Aktuell* prior to the *Wende* and *Sender Freies Berlin* afterward) and three print journalists from the *Berliner Zeitung* (who began their careers at the newspaper either prior to or immediately following the *Wende*). These journalists were gracious enough to sit with me and share their experiences both in the GDR and the path their careers have taken since. This small study included journalists of mixed ages, genders, and backgrounds, who have navigated their professional lives from their origins in the GDR through the dramatic events of 1989/1990. The resulting narrative is one of continuity, reflection, and professional reinvention. Because such a small sample size can hardly be seen as representative, I have placed these interviews in conversation with interviews conducted by other scholars over the past twenty-five years. By presenting these narratives in concert with one another, we can begin to see how memory shifted over time and how similar events were re-interpreted and re-evaluated as years passed and as perspectives shifted with distance, context, and personal reflection. I have structured the analysis of the interviews around certain shared themes and milestones that echo through the various

⁵ The terms continuity and renewal (*Kontinuität und Erneuerung*) were frequently invoked in the GDR under Honecker and even under Krenz. The hope was to convey a commitment to the Marxist and Leninist origins of the party while signaling an ability of the party to adapt and reform. In Krenz's October 1989 declaration, in which he began to wrest control away from Honecker, he used the terms, which had so often been employed by Honecker, as he signaled a major shift in the party's policies while maintaining a commitment to the fundamental tenants of socialism. [See: "Erklärung des Politbüros des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands," *Neues Deutschland*, October 12, 1989, ZEFYS.]

narratives including journalists' professional origins, training, professional ethos, the transition between systems, and the legacy of socialist journalism in a post-socialist Germany. In many instances the journalists reflect one another, generating a coherent narrative across the interviews, but there remains important nuances and perspectives that shed light on the unique individual experience.

Literature Review and Sources

The events of the twentieth century in Europe have encouraged a massive growth in the history of memory. The rise and fall of dictatorships and authoritarian regimes have prompted historians and social scientists to collect oral histories and personal remembrances, with the hope of unlocking a perspective on the past that is not represented in traditional or official sources. Oral history and memory projects—which have been important in post-Holocaust studies because they empower and give a voice to victims—resurged in popularity in the post-Cold War era as historians and scholars were able to access a population that had remained largely inaccessible behind the Iron Curtain. These sources were used to challenge the unreliable narratives of state propaganda and incomplete or misleading archival records.⁶ As a result, the history of memory has blossomed within the field of contemporary history, and some argue it has even developed into a veritable “memory industry.”⁷

This memory industry has also found its way to the history of the East German media. The historian, Gunter Holzweissig, argued that there was hardly any other East German profession that had created so many self-testimonies—in the form of interviews, memoirs, and

⁶ The unreliability of governmental sources from the state-socialist countries has been discussed previously in this dissertation.

⁷ Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 11.

newspaper articles—than that of East German journalists.⁸ The result is a profession that has documented its experiences and memories throughout its transformation process. Historians, communications scholars, social scientists, and journalists have all tried to capture this narrative at various points over the past quarter century. I have grouped these collections and studies of interviews into four large categories in order to highlight the trends and developments in the history and politics of memory when it comes to the media history of the GDR.

The first category was the earliest to emerge and consisted of interviews that allowed journalists to recount, process, and reflect on the relationship of their pasts to their present condition.⁹ These works, published primarily in the early 1990s, were immediate reactions to recent events, and were imbued with the journalists' need to redefine themselves and draw a clear demarcation between the old and the new. As a result, some have been critical of these collections, judging them to be self-serving and opportunistic as subjects were seen as claiming their democratic bona fides by publicly rejecting their socialist past, but failing to undergo the necessary internal and moral transformation.¹⁰ This critique was based on a fundamental mistrust of this population. Scholars like Bernd Mosebach, Gunter Holzweißig, and Hans Joachim Föllner spoke primarily in Cold War terms and argued that a significant portion of the East German

⁸ Holzweissig, Gunter, "Die Medien in Der DDR Während Der Zeit Der Wende Und Im Alltag Der Neuen Bundesländer Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung Der Tageszeitungen," in *Materialien Der Enquete-Kommission "Überwindung Der Folgen Der SED-Diktatur Im Prozeß Der Deutschen Einheit" (13. Wahlperiode Des Deutschen Bundestages)*, vol. Band IV/2 (Baden-Baden und Frankfurt am Main: Deutschen Bundestag, 1999), 1764–65.

⁹ Willi Steul and DeutschlandRadio Berlin, *Genosse Journalist: eine Sendereihe im DeutschlandRadio Berlin* (Mainz: D. Kinzelbach, 1996); Edith Spielhagen and Maryellen Boyle, *So durften wir glauben zu kämpfen--: Erfahrungen mit DDR-Medien* (Berlin: Vistas, 1993); Renate Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?: Gespräche mit Journalistinnen und Journalisten der DDR* (München: Ölschläger, 1992).

¹⁰ Holzweissig, Gunter, "Die Medien in Der DDR Während Der Zeit Der Wende Und Im Alltag Der Neuen Bundesländer Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung Der Tageszeitungen." Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*

journalists may not have fully broken with their socialist pasts, a fact that the scholars feared could endanger the democratic development of the newest German states.¹¹ As a result of this concern—that professional continuity among former SED-Journalists could limit the potential formation of a fourth-estate in the former East German states—Mosebach, a West German journalist working in the former GDR, conducted his own set of interviews to ascertain just how willing former East German journalists were to admit their own guilt and complacency in supporting the SED. His study fits within a second category of studies and surveys that focus on guilt, coming to terms with the past, and Stasi revelations that shape much of the political narrative around the press in the eastern German states.

A third category of interviews and surveys emerged from the communications and journalism fields and comprised scholars attempting to understand the nature, history, and structure of socialist journalism and its legacies in post-socialist Eastern Germany.¹² The most recent of these works is also the most thorough collection of interviews completed to date, and was titled, *Die Grenze im Kopf*, by Michael Meyen and Anke Fiedler.¹³ Meyen and Fiedler, communications scholars from the Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich, have produced a number of works on the history of the journalistic profession in East Germany. As a result, their

¹¹ Hans-Joachim Föllner, “Abwehr der Vergangenheit. Methoden der Beeinflussung der Urteilsbildung im öffentlichen Raum durch ehemalige-SED Journalisten,” in *Agenda DDR-Forschung*, ed. Heiner Timmermann, Dokumente und Schriften der Europäischen Akademie Otzenhausen 112 (Münster: Lit, 2005); Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*; Holzweissig, Gunter, “Die Medien in Der DDR Während Der Zeit Der Wende Und Im Alltag Der Neuen Bundesländer Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung Der Tageszeitungen”; Ulrich Kluge, Sylvia Müller, and Steffen Birkefeld, *Willfähige Propagandisten: MfS und Bezirksparteizeitungen--“Berliner Zeitung”, “Sächsische Zeitung”, “Neuer Tag”* (Stuttgart: In Kommission bei F. Steiner, 1997); Steffen Reichert, *Transformationsprozesse: der Umbau der LVZ* (Münster ;Hamburg [u.a.]: Lit, 2000).

¹² Stefan Pannen, *Die Weiterleiter: Funktion und Selbstverständnis ostdeutscher Journalisten* (Köln: Verl. Wiss. und Politik, 1992); Michael Meyen and Anke Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR* (Berlin: Panama-Verl., 2011).

¹³ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*.

interviews were grounded in an extensive background and knowledge regarding the history and development of the media in East Germany.¹⁴ Their book *Die Grenze im Kopf* was a collection of 31 interviews of high ranking editors and media policy functionaries conducted twenty years after the fall of the wall. Their study was an attempt to form a collective biography of East German journalists and their experiences in the GDR, and their interviews focused primarily on the individuals' careers pre-1990.

Finally, a fourth category of interviews consisted of social science investigations that tried to analyze the profession from the outside. Two works of particular relevance within this category were the study by the ethnographer Michael Boyer and the social psychologist Angelika Holterman. Boyer's study tied the experiences of East German journalists to the shifting perspectives of German intellectuals from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the way that the dialectical knowledge of 'German-ness' shaped their self-understanding.¹⁵ Holterman, on the other hand, dove into the psychological impact of formative experiences and relationships on the development of a personal and professional biography as journalists moved from one life (pre-Wende) to the next (post-Wende).¹⁶

For the purposes of this chapter I have selected one study from each of these categories to support the analysis of my own interviews. From the first category, there is the book, *Ohne Grosseren Schaden?* (Without greater injury?) by Renate Schubert, a communications

¹⁴ Michael Meyen, "Kollektive Ausreise? Zur Reichweite Ost- Und Westdeutscher Fernsehprogramme in Der DDR," *Publizistik* 47, no. 2 (2002): 200–220; Anke Fiedler and Michael Meyen, *Fiktionen für das Volk: DDR-Zeitungen als PR-Instrument: Fallstudien zu den Zentralorganen Neues Deutschland, Junge Welt, Neue Zeit und Der Morgen* (Berlin: Lit, 2011); Anke Fiedler, *Medienlenkung in der DDR, Zeithistorische Studien* 52 (Köln: Böhlau, 2014).

¹⁵ Dominic Boyer, *Spirit and System: Media, Intellectuals, and the Dialectic in Modern German Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁶ Angelika Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben: Journalistenbiographien und Medienstrukturen zu DDR-Zeiten und danach* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1999).

psychologist who interviewed sixteen journalists in 1991. Schubert approached her subjects from a place of curiosity about the history of journalism in the GDR, and in the introduction to her book she expressed the desire not to be seen as a judge, passing a verdict over her subjects' guilt or innocence; rather, her goal was to open a gateway to these individuals and uncover their particular perspective.¹⁷ Schubert's journalists ranged in age, sex, and branch of media, but she focused on individuals who carried some responsibility for the creation of media in the GDR. Her interviews were structured around the journalists' professional biographies, their roles within their organization, changes they had witnessed over the course of their career, their hopes and visions for the future, and the challenges that this future could pose.¹⁸ These interviews, conducted in 1991, reflected their time period as the events of 1989/90 were fresh and recent, and the full transformation to a unified German society was still underway. Emotions were still raw from recent experience, and Schubert explained how affected she was by what her interview partners shared with her.¹⁹ The interviews that Schubert conducted are presented in an edited form without her questions, so that the voice of the journalist is the only voice we see. This raises methodological issues. It is hard to analyze the impact of the interviewer on the final testimony, because she does not show how questions were framed or how the subject directly responded to a question. Schubert's goal was to allow the journalists she interviewed to present their own reflections without interference or judgment from the interviewer, but the result is a collection that does lack critical distance and analysis.

The second study, Bernd Mosebach's, *Alles bewältigt? Ehemalige Journalisten der DDR arbeiten ihrer Vergangenheit auf* (Everything Overcome? Former Journalists of the GDR work

¹⁷ Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

through their pasts), stands in vivid contrast to Schubert's collection. Mosebach, a West German journalist and reporter with NDR and MDR (broadcasting agencies that merged with East German regional stations after 1990), with degrees in communications and history, conducted his eleven interviews in 1994 with the expressed goal of judging the degree to which East German journalists had successfully or unsuccessfully "worked through" their pasts. Through his questions he hoped to compare their responses to criteria of "successful processing of the past."²⁰ His questions challenged his subjects, asking them to differentiate between their functions in the GDR and their functions in unified Germany. He asked if they felt guilty or responsible for any mistakes or failures of the previous regime, and whether or not they felt it necessary for East German journalists to come to terms with their pasts. Mosebach's study is unusual in its confrontational stance. Mosebach based his study on the premise that since these journalists were trained and socialized to have a different "functional consciousness" (*Funktionsbewusstsein*) than that of the West German system, they may not have the sufficient "functional ability" (*Funktionsfähigkeit*) to fulfill their roles in the fourth estate.²¹ The interviews, therefore, placed the journalists in a position where they were required to prove to their interviewer they were morally and professionally capable of engaging in their profession.

This study was the product of the political climate of the early 1990s, when politicians and political observers raised questions and concerns about the continued presence and influence of the former East German elite. The period was dominated by public scandals of former Stasi informants and employees lurking in nearly every corner of eastern German society. The tension between those who had been victimized by the regime and those seen as having benefitted from the suffering of others charged the political atmosphere with accusations and scandal. This study

²⁰ Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 64.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 18–20.

tapped into that tension and the feeling that those who benefitted from, and helped support, an authoritarian state needed to demonstrate contrition and earn the trust of the public.

Mosebach's methodology and analytical imperative had a direct impact not only on the testimonies that he elicited but also on his analysis. He created criteria of what he determined to be a "successful" processing of the past. Subjects would need to demonstrate "distance" from their pasts they would have to "correctly" identify their "individual position" in the old regime, understand the "consequences of their actions" and their "individual responsibility," and finally derive "lessons" from their actions.²² If they failed in any one of these categories, Mosebach concluded that they were unlikely to be able to function properly as journalists in unified Germany. Mosebach's results confirmed his concerns, and he found that the journalists did not have a proper relationship to their past. Mosebach's methodology and analysis were severely weakened by his own clear objectives, and the limits of his study become even clearer when compared to other studies and my own interviews.

The third work of particular interest to this study is *Die Grenze im Kopf*, by Meyen and Fiedler.²³ Their work was conceived in direct counterpoint to studies like Mosebach's, which have tried to cast the profession as complicit supporters of the authoritarian state.²⁴ Published in 2011, their study endeavored to shift the narrative of the history of East German journalism and present a neutral and unbiased collective biography of journalists. The goal of the project was to gain insight into the inner workings of the leading media institutions within the GDR and

²² Ibid., 57–58.

²³ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*.

²⁴ While Mosebach is not specifically mentioned by Meyen and Fiedler, they open their book with a review of the current scholarship on East German Journalists that tries to cast the profession as perpetrators and co-conspirators, citing: Pannen, *Die Weiterleiter*; Roland Reck, *Wasserträger des Regimes: Rolle und Selbstverständnis von DDR-Journalisten vor und nach der Wende 1989/90* (Münster: Lit, 1996); Kluge, Müller, and Birkefeld, *Willfähige Propagandisten*; Gunter Holzweissig, *Zensur ohne Zensor: die SED-Informationsdiktatur* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1997).

develop an understanding of the professional origins and trajectories of the leading journalists in East Germany. Without working from a formal questionnaire, their interviews were tailored to the individual biographies and experiences of their subjects, targeting their training, career arch, decision making processes, professional ethics and ideals, experiences with control and censorship, and general reflections on their East German careers.

The final study included in this chapter is Angelika Holterman's, *Das geteilte Leben*, which as presented above, sought to reveal the psychosocial implications of a career that bridged two worlds. Holterman divided her interviews into two parts: narrative and interactive. In the narrative portion of the interview, she posed an open-ended question about the subject's biographical origins and allowed the subject to tell his or her story without interruption from the interviewer. In the second interactive portion, she was able to target certain portions of the biography more directly for clarification and greater detail. Unlike the other three selections, the transcripts of the interviews are not included in her publication; rather a number of excerpts from the interviews are presented and analyzed. It is from these excerpts and analysis that I will compare Holterman's interviews and findings to my own.

Each of these four studies presents a particular interpretation of East German journalists and East German journalism. They differ in perspective, methodology, time frame, and presentation. By bringing these collections together, the strengths and weaknesses of the scholars' approaches become more apparent. The study of memory and lived experience presents a number of challenges and limitations, and methodology and approach can have a profound effect on the end result.

The Challenges of Memory and Oral History

Each of the studies at the center of this chapter pins its analysis to interviews conducted in a variety of styles and contexts, and as a result they reveal some of the limitations of interviews as a means of distilling historical “truth.” There are many factors that can affect both the way that an individual remembers the past and the way that he or she presents that past to an outside party. One challenge that emerges is the relationship between the interviewer and the subject.²⁵ In each of the studies outlined above, including my own, the interviewer was an outsider. The published interviews were conducted primarily by West German scholars, who came to their respective projects with their own biases and perspectives. Mosebach was on the search for journalistic integrity, Schubert was curious about the background of her new colleagues, and Holterman was “fascinated” by East German history and wanted to analyze the psychological implications of the Wende as a rupture in the lives of her subjects. This naturally shaped the relationship between the interviewer and subject. This effect was clearly evident in my own interviews. My American background not only made me an outsider nationally and geographically, but also linguistically. Although the interviews were conducted in German, my subjects presented their stories to me without a shared language and common past. The subjects defined certain terms, names, and concepts in a way that they may not have felt necessary for a peer or fellow German. While the interviews were cordial, the narratives emerged with a pedagogical quality to them. This shift in tone, from the familiar to the explanatory, reveals the effect the relationship between the interviewer and subject can have on the interview.²⁶ While

²⁵ This problem is presented in detail by Kligman and Verdery [Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 30.]

²⁶ Similar observations regarding the relationship between interviewer and subject were made by Meyen and Fiedler who found one subject, Günter Schabowski to be a less willing and eager participant in their study. As the interview process progressed it became clear that the authors and Schabowski differed greatly in their goals for the interview, and the published transcript

this outsider position of the interview can change the way a subject recounts his or her past, there is some benefit to this process. By being forced to contextualize and frame events, rather than rely on a common language and understanding, a subject must construct and present his or her own context and framework for understanding. Furthermore, while many of the interviews conducted by West Germans were charged with emotional and political baggage from the unification process (fears of judgment, resentment, or a need to construct a narrative for a Western audience), my presence as a young female American, naturally brought with it different assumptions about my political, historical, and educational background. I was not a figure of authority, and my project was intended for an English-speaking audience; therefore, the end result was more distant and less threatening than a study to be published in Germany or conducted by a West German. Therefore, while my subjects were guarded in some ways (which I will identify in the analysis), there was also a friendly and open quality to the interviews, and multiple subjects were thankful to have the opportunity to revisit and discuss a distant period in their lives.

Interviews are fixed in a specific moment in time, and it is therefore difficult to extrapolate far beyond the specific historical, generational, and temporal context surrounding the interview. By comparing interviews conducted over the span of nearly a quarter century, we can see how remembrances and narratives can shift over time as formative events fade into the past and move from being fresh upheavals in an individual biography to brief experiences during long life span. One temporal factor affecting memory is generational: as one's specific age during a

reflects the devolving relationship between the subject and interviewer. [See: Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 23–36.]

moment of rupture may ground that experience in different yet fundamental ways.²⁷ By collecting interviews from individuals of various ages we can see the generational impact of the Wende on journalists.²⁸ Similarly, a subject's age at the time of the interview can shape the way that she or he processes and recounts the past. The oral historian Luisa Passerini pointed out that people's memories of their own pasts "are shaped by their own expectations for the future."²⁹ By looking at a large set of interviews, it is possible to see how the interviewees in general and, in a few cases, how specific individuals adjust or reconstitute their pasts at different ages. For Schubert's subjects the Wende was a fresh trauma, and their emotions were still raw from the experience. For Meyen and Fiedler on the other hand, the GDR had long expired. After nearly twenty years, most of their subjects reflected on their pasts with distance, disappointment, and with the understanding that the socialist project had failed. In three cases, certain individuals have participated in multiple interview projects: Brigitte Zimmerman and Hans Dieter Schütt spoke with both Renate Schubert in 1991, and Meyen and Fiedler in 2009/2010. My own interview subject Alfred Eichhorn also participated in Schubert's interview project, and as a result we can compare the interviews and see how memories and narratives change over time.³⁰

²⁷ Dorothee Wierling, "A German Generation of Reconstruction: The Children of the Weimar Republic in the GDR," in *Memory & Totalitarianism*, ed. Luisa Passerini (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 87; Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 31; Luisa Passerini, *Memory & Totalitarianism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 12.

²⁸ This generational impact was an important finding for Meyen and Fiedler, who concluded their book with a collective biography of journalists based on their respective generations: The "founder generation" who began their careers during the Weimar Republic and whom the war was a formative experience; the "construction generation" who entered the profession in the post-war period under the leadership of the founders, and the "young generation" who were born in the GDR, entered an established profession, and who had no direct experience of the horrors and trauma of the war. See: Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 338–355. Also note the discussion of generations in Chapter One of this dissertation.

²⁹ Passerini, *Memory & Totalitarianism*, 12.

³⁰ Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 57–60; 76–82; 88–94; Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 176–182; 183–194.

As the length of time increases from an original experience, certain memories fade, while others can be shaped by established and popular narratives, because individuals try to fit their lives into familiar, accepted, and dominant tropes.³¹ Much of oral history has operated with the goal of giving voice to previously silenced victims and has focused on documenting the experiences of trauma. As a result, those who have had experiences that do not fit within this dominant mold of suffering and victimization, those whose experiences under state-socialism were positive or even neutral, may feel a “silencing effect” and feel reluctant or ill-suited to participate in such projects.³² Subjects may also feel pressure to construct a narrative that conforms to certain societal and political pressures as in Mosebach’s emphasis on “coming to terms with the past.” A common tendency that oral historians have noticed is an impulse on the part of the subject to emphasize biographical continuity in his or her own life. Rather than see a life broken into disparate parts, subjects prefer a narrative that connects one’s formative experiences to one’s ultimate current position, to justify themselves, or to find a coherent narrative to their lives.³³ Memory is also “teleological.”³⁴ Knowing that the GDR collapsed, that its leaders were rejected, admonished, and discredited, that socialism failed to continue within Germany, can naturally alter the way that one’s experiences, choices, and actions are recounted and processed.

While there are many limitations to the study of memory and history, there is still great value in the collection of interviews and testimonies. Interviews offer access to individual experience and provide a voice to persons and experiences not represented in the archives or in more traditional sources. As a result, adding these voices to historical investigations can generate

³¹ Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 29.

³² *Ibid.*, 16.

³³ Passerini, *Memory & Totalitarianism*, 12.

³⁴ Kligman and Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege*, 33.

a richer and deeper context to the events and periods in question. These interviews trace much of the same timeline that is presented in the first four chapters of this dissertation. They enrich our understanding of the period and the process of change and transformation by narrowing the scope of our focus, thereby illuminating the individual experience.

The interviews are grounded temporally, not in the specific moment being recounted, but rather in the time the interview is conducted. As a result, the interviews themselves become sources to help the historian understand how a specific historical narrative shifts and changes as political, historical and social contexts develop. The interviews conducted in the early 1990s are focused primarily on uncovering facts, revealing the degree to which the media was under the authoritarian control of the SED's leaders, encouraging journalists to engage with their own actions, and allowing them to demonstrate a distance between their Post-Wende selves and their lives under state-socialism. More recent interviews, however, do not emphasize "coming to terms with the past" but rather seek to understand structures and relationships in the GDR period. This study in particular seeks to understand how formative experiences in the GDR impact careers that bridge the old system and the new.

The Interviews

The studies presented above will be used to place my own interviews in a broader context and ground the narratives in a broader conversation about journalists, memory, and professional lives bridging two periods and societies. I conducted my interviews in the late winter and early spring of 2013 in various locations throughout Berlin (my apartment, a café, or in the offices of the interviewed journalists).³⁵ Before heading to Berlin, I put together a list of journalists to

³⁵ Please see the individual transcripts in the Appendix for a specific overview to the context, timing, and location of each interview.

contact as potential partners for this project. This list was the result of research into biographies, résumés, and the mastheads of the various major and local East German publications. When I arrived in Germany and began to conduct work in the archives I expanded the contact list to include the names of journalists who appeared in the membership roles of the Journalists Union. As I was conducting my research, I was able to add to this list from suggestions from colleagues and word-of-mouth. The population I was targeting was a diverse group of active or retired journalists who had been born and trained in the GDR and who were able to continue their careers past 1989. From this information I generated a list of sixteen names of journalists for whom I could locate reliable contact information, and sent out interview requests. Initially, these requests were not immediately successful; six requests were simply ignored or never reached their intended recipients. For those journalists who answered, one said that the project would require too much of her time, and another stated that she had already participated in a similar project years before and had no interest in repeating the process. This lack of interest was a problem identified in three of the other four works. At the outset, each project ran into problems resulting from journalists' hesitancy to participate and mistrust of the interviewer. In each of these cases, it took personal connections, reassurances, and word-of-mouth to establish a large enough group to study.³⁶ This was no different for me. Through connections, relationships, and persistence, I was able to find eight willing participants, from which five could meet with me during the limited time I was in Berlin.³⁷ In one case, one journalist (Torsten H.) put me in contact with his wife (Susanne H.) who was also a journalist, and she agreed to participate in the

³⁶ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 19–21; Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 66; Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 9–10.

³⁷ Should this dissertation become part of a post-doc or book project, I will return to Berlin and conduct more interviews as well as follow-up interviews with the current five subjects. In the intervening years I have established more contacts within the journalism community, and I will be in a better position to locate and recruit interview partners.

project as well. Another journalist (Abini Zöllner) suggested I contact her colleague (Frank Herold) who subsequently agreed to participate in the study.

My interviews were structured in the style of a *Leitfadeninterview* or guided interview, where subjects were asked open-ended questions about their professional biographies.³⁸ The questions were formulated in a neutral fashion to try to limit any perceived judgment or bias and allow the journalists to present their narrative with minimal interference. The questions were constructed as part of an interview outline rather than a firm questionnaire, which allowed for flexibility and allowed me to tailor the questions to the subject and adjust appropriately as the interview progressed. My questions were centered on the following major themes: family background, journalism in the GDR, the Wende and events of 1989/90, and the resulting professional transformation.³⁹ The interviews lasted anywhere from one to three hours, and subject's were given copies of the transcripts to check for errors or needed clarifications. These interview transcripts have been included in the appendix in their full, original form, so that the subject's words and memories may be presented within their own original and intended context.

Journalistic Origins: Who Becomes a State-Socialist Journalist?

At first glance, East German journalists appear to be a relatively homogenous group. They were predominately white, male, party members, who worked full-time and resided in Berlin after completing a four-year degree at the Karl-Marx-University in Leipzig.⁴⁰ However,

³⁸ The interview outline was constructed with the guidance and insight from an oral history workshop with the UCLA Center for Oral History Research.

³⁹ See a sample interview outline in the Appendix of this dissertation, page 377

⁴⁰ Based on the statistics from the Journalists Union, VDJ, in 1989: 80% of journalists worked full time, 63% were male, 50% lived in Berlin, and party membership was almost a prerequisite for pursuing the profession. See: "Entwurf: Geschäftsbericht vorgelegt dem Zentralvorstand des VDJ auf seiner 6. Tagung am 12 Januar 1990," January 25, 1990, DY 10/822, 228, Das Bundesarchiv.

within this broad homogeneity there were many paths that led an individual to study and work in the East German media system.

Alfred Eichhorn, born in 1944, the oldest of my interview partners, found his formative experiences in youth to have profound importance on shaping his life and career.⁴¹ His parents operated a small restaurant and grocery store in a village outside of Leipzig. He explained that although his parents were financially independent, they were also therefore part of a disadvantaged class in the GDR, a country that preferred to advance the interests of the working class over the interests of the bourgeois classes. His parents did not have strong ties to the party. His father had joined the SED immediately after the war but was kicked out within a year. To explain his parent's relationship to the SED, he recounted a memory of his mother from his childhood. On the day that Stalin's death was announced, Eichhorn's mother turned to him and said, "Son, when it comes out ... what that man has done," hinting at the abuses under Stalin that would eventually be uncovered through glasnost.⁴² This was not a family that accepted the party's historical narrative. At the end of our interview, he remarked how it is only now, when he reflected on his life and the lives of his adult daughters, that he could see how these formative childhood experiences shaped his identity and thought process.⁴³

For Eichhorn, becoming a journalist meant an opportunity to travel and get out of the GDR. As a young boy he idolized a famous East German Sportscaster, Florian Oertel, who, "through the manner of his reporting, through his use of onomatopoeia, through his art of

⁴¹ Alfred Eichhorn and Morgan Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn, Audio, March 22, 2013. 417

⁴² Ibid. 451

⁴³ Passerini notes the impact that having children can have on shaping one's reflection on one's own past and life. Passerini, *Memory & Totalitarianism*, 12.

narration, ... brought the world into the relatively closed GDR.”⁴⁴ Eichhorn shared a vision that many young East Germans had about the journalistic profession of the GDR. One of the most common reasons given for wanting to become a journalist was the opportunity to escape.⁴⁵ In this, Eichhorn remained consistent with his 1991 interview with Renate Schubert. When she inquired about what drew him to the profession, he answered, “Culture, the culture of humanity, and travel. Through my travels to West Berlin I experienced a lot.”⁴⁶ Eichhorn still remembered these experiences and travels as a highlight of his career. In both his interview in 1991 and my interview with him in 2013, the radio journalist listed fondly the names of prominent East German cultural figures he had come into contact with throughout the course of his career.⁴⁷ The high status of journalism and its proximity to the elite were enticing not only for Eichhorn, but also for other journalists as well. For example, in their interview with Meyen and Fielder, Ralf Bachmann (the former Editor-in-chief of ADN) and his wife similarly recounted the appeal of being so close to important events and individuals.⁴⁸

Access and travel were also important enticements for Frank Herold. Herold, born in 1959, was a child of the war generation. His mother never finished school as a result of the war, and she was therefore limited to those jobs that did not require a diploma. His father had a background in agriculture and farming, and his father eventually landed in the journalism

⁴⁴ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 418

⁴⁵ See for example: Günter Schabowski: “I wanted to gain distance, and go abroad.” in Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 27–36.; Hans Dieter Schütt: “It was only about the travel; It was not about the politics, rather about the knowledge, that through this profession you could get out.”, *Ibid.*, 183–194.; as well as the interview with Hartmut Venske in Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 162–185.

⁴⁶ Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 88–94.

⁴⁷ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn.423

⁴⁸ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 48–58.

profession by way of an agricultural newspaper.⁴⁹ Herold described his childhood as “sheltered,” and he structured the memories of his life in the GDR around a particular understanding of the concept of security. This was not a security from violence or crime but a security in life.⁵⁰ In the GDR, housing, schooling, and career were laid out without the threat of unemployment, poverty, or starvation.⁵¹ Herold used this idea of security to counter what he saw as a misconception or lack of understanding about life in the GDR. He said that people liked to question why East German citizens endured a life in the GDR that was mildly repressive and incapacitating. He explained that the problem with this premise was a fundamental misunderstanding surrounding the idea of freedom. Herold described a functional freedom that was bound to the concept of security.

We in the West speak only about freedom because ... we connect it to the terms of security and prosperity. Because we are free, we are secure and prosperous. But for someone who comes from Eastern Europe or the East, this is not the case.

...

Freedom in the East means complete insecurity. Those thoughts would land you in jail. Therefore, you cannot judge someone who says, before I go to jail, I would rather engage with the system.⁵²

This concept of social and economic security ran throughout the interview and framed the way he recounted his experiences of the collapse of the GDR and the transition to Post-Wende Germany.

When asked what drew him to the profession of journalism, Herold answered that he “wanted to tell stories.”⁵³ However, journalism was not his only choice of career. His journalist

⁴⁹ Frank Herold and Morgan Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold, Audio, April 4, 2013. 454

⁵⁰ Ibid. 457

⁵¹ Ibid. 457

⁵² Ibid. 459

⁵³ Ibid. 459

father had tried to dissuade him from pursuing the profession, and so alongside his desire for journalism he also entertained the idea of going into foreign trade.⁵⁴ The common theme between these professional desires was the predisposition toward travel. Again, the journalistic profession was one of the few career paths in the GDR that would provide a ticket abroad, and this fact was one of the profession's most attractive features, a feature that we will see came at a significant cost.

Torsten H., born in 1961, came to journalism by chance. As a young boy growing up in the town of Köpenick on the outskirts of Berlin, Torsten assumed that he did not have what it took to become a journalist. He had not attended the gymnasium (Germany's university tracked secondary school), and he assumed that this fact precluded him from pursuing a career that required rigorous educational training at the Karl Marx University. However, the Berliner Verlag (the publishing group that was responsible for the GDR's major local Berlin newspapers, *Berliner Zeitung* and *BZ am Abend*, among others) was intrigued by his good grades and social involvement, and they encouraged him to go back to school to finish his *Abitur* (secondary school diploma, a prerequisite for university attendance).⁵⁵ What was it about Torsten's background that made him so attractive to the Berliner Verlag? Torsten came from a long line of "believers."⁵⁶ Like most journalists his age he was a child of the war generation, and for Torsten's family the experiences of the war drew them closer to the party and the socialist cause. Torsten's grandfather, a communist in the 1930s, let his KPD membership lapse under Hitler, thereby escaping persecution from the Nazi party. However, he ended up in a Soviet prisoner of war camp for the duration of the war. Immediately following the war, Torsten's grandfather

⁵⁴ Herold did not explain why his father had tried to dissuade him from the profession.

⁵⁵ Torsten H. and Morgan Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H., Audio, March 22, 2013. 496

⁵⁶ Ibid. 497

made himself available to the SED, and he rose up the ranks of the local Berlin administration, eventually becoming a magistrate in Berlin. Torsten's uncle was the head of the artillery regiment of the border troops in Berlin.⁵⁷ His godmother spent eight years in a concentration camp for her communist beliefs, and his godfather was in Sachsenhausen and committed military espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union, an act for which he was nearly executed.⁵⁸ Torsten's father was in the East German civil service, in the Ministry for National Education, and he was one of the first to volunteer for East German military service.⁵⁹ When it came time to decide whether or not to go to the army himself, Torsten remarked that in his family there was no choice. "A true communist is always first in line. In front of all others. He is the first to dive into the flood."⁶⁰ In stark contrast to Eichhorn's depictions of his mother's reaction to Stalin's death, Torsten recounted his family's love for the Soviet leader, remarking how they sang songs in his honor.⁶¹

As Torsten recalled, it was not opportunism that drew his family to party involvement and public service but the simple call, "We need you."⁶² After the horrific experiences of war, of being displaced, losing loved ones, and being relocated from the eastern territories of Germany to Berlin, Torsten's family seized on the alternative path offered by the SED, a cause that one could devote oneself to under the motto, "we are building a new country, which we will rid of Nazi barbarism, and the future will be bright and friendly."⁶³ He explained how the SED replaced one totalitarian vision with another and how growing up within this ideological context

⁵⁷ Ibid. 493

⁵⁸ Ibid. 497

⁵⁹ Ibid. 497

⁶⁰ Ibid. 497

⁶¹ Ibid. 499

⁶² Ibid. 493

⁶³ Ibid. 494

shaped both his own and his parents' understanding of the world around them.⁶⁴ The anti-fascist, anti-Nazi stance was an important facet of the state socialist identity across Eastern Europe. As discussed in Chapter Three, anti-fascism grounded socialism in its lived experience. It legitimized the cause through the creation of an ever-present threat and, especially in the case of the GDR, it absolved the GDR of any societal guilt of the holocaust.⁶⁵

The idealism and young admiration for the SED and its goals were echoed throughout the collections of interviews.⁶⁶ For example, Günter Böhme, who worked in the Agitation Commission and then under Günter Schabowski as a Press Relations Officer, said in his 2010 interview with Meyen and Fielder, "In this profession ideas and actions were born."⁶⁷ In our interview, Torsten made it clear that he had not been a blind and faithful follower of the SED's ideology.⁶⁸ He spent significant portions of the interview countering what he perceived as misconceptions and distortions about the GDR, the party, and unification.

You see, it wasn't the case that I ran blind through the neighborhood, even back then. We knew that there was something else there [in the West], that [in West Germany] there were more discussions, and more debates, and there were much better, more wonderful, more colorful shop windows, and that the unemployed didn't have it all that bad, we knew that. ... But we didn't want that department-store-mentality, this "everything can be bought" ... there should be a different meaning, also in society, a different togetherness. The social [should be] at the epicenter, and not consumption at the epicenter ...

⁶⁴ Ibid. 499

⁶⁵ See for example, Jürgen Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship in Modern German History* (Hanover [N.H.]: Published by University Press of New England, 2010), 72–74; Konrad H. Jarausch, "The Failure of East German Antifascism: Some Ironies of History as Politics [1991]," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung. Supplement*, no. 24 (January 1, 2012): 212–28; J. H. Brinks, "Political Anti-Fascism in the German Democratic Republic," *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no. 2 (April 1, 1997): 207–17; Christian Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989: Social Movement in a Leninist Regime* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1995); Annette Leo and Peter Reif-Spirek, *Vielstimmiges Schweigen: neue Studien zum DDR-Antifaschismus* (Berlin: Metropol, 2001).

⁶⁶ See for example: Journalist H, "I chose journalism because I wanted to serve socialism." Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 131–137.

⁶⁷ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 27–36.

⁶⁸ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 499

Today one thinks history looked like this: The *Ossis* [colloquial term for East Germans] were all repressed, then they all wanted to run away to the West, then the Wall fell, everyone hugged, and then came freedom and democracy. So then why are they thankless?

It was like this: it was another societal principal, another society, and you can't demonize the whole thing from the beginning, because there were approaches there that were worth a second thought. Precisely this social approach, that [people] looked from the neighborhood to the factory, [asking] where could I do the most for the community. ... But precisely everything with the stamp "state", or the stamp "society", or the stamp "ideology", or some organization, everywhere where there was that stamp, it is burned today.⁶⁹

This impulse to counter the prevalent understanding of the GDR and to justify and rehabilitate some elements of the GDR's ideology and history was echoed by other interview partners. At multiple points during the interviews, three of my subjects—Torsten H., Frank Herold, and Susanne H. —felt either the need or the impulse to identify positive elements of East German life or mentality. This was done in almost a defensive manner as if there was a need to counter an established and unfair characterization of the GDR and its history. There are many possible explanations for this phenomenon in the interviews: the need to justify one's actions upon reflection (as highlighted by Passerini), a temporal distance from the events that allowed these journalists the freedom to counter some of the dominant political narratives of the history of the GDR, or a reaction against a perceived bias on the part of the interviewer as an outsider.

Unlike her husband, Torsten, Susanne H.'s family was not as strongly connected to the party. Born in 1965, she was raised by a single mother who was not a member of the SED. She remembered her childhood in the GDR to be "uncomplicated."⁷⁰ She participated in the usual organizations and events that went along with growing up in the GDR: the Young Pioneers, the youth organization FDJ, etc. She said, "I didn't see everything, especially when I got older, in an

⁶⁹ Ibid. 500

⁷⁰ Susanne H. and Morgan Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H., Audio, April 18, 2013. 555

uncritical manner. But, how should I say this, it was still a better alternative than that other Germany that we always had in front of our eyes.”⁷¹ Susanne did not grow up with the singular desire to become a journalist; rather, she considered a number of career options including archeology and criminology. In the end, she landed on journalism because as a child she had enjoyed participating in radio-style dramas as a hobby, and her mother knew someone who worked in radio.⁷²

The most circuitous route to journalism belonged to Abini Zöllner, a newspaper journalist born in 1967. Abini’s family background and upbringing do not fit within the traditional mold of the East German journalist. Abini’s mother was Jewish, and fled Germany to China in 1937, only to return to the GDR after the war in 1949/50 because Germany was her home and “she felt that people could learn from their mistakes.”⁷³ Upon returning to Germany, Abini’s mother met a young communist from Nigeria who was studying journalism at the Karl Marx University. The two met, and shortly thereafter Abini was born.⁷⁴ Her father spent ten years in the GDR, working for the *Magdeburger Volksstimme* and the *Berliner Zeitung*. He was a committed communist, so much so that he became disillusioned in the GDR. After ten years in East Germany, he returned to Nigeria because he was so disappointed in the reality of state-socialism and its failure to live up to the ideals laid out by Marx.⁷⁵

As a child, Abini was an accomplished dancer, who frequently appeared on East German television. Her experiences backstage at these performances with the make-up artists had a

⁷¹ Ibid. 556

⁷² Ibid. 555. Personal connections were an important part of establishing a foothold in the career, as networks helped secure the internships that were a prerequisite for pursuing a journalism degree.

⁷³ Abini Zöllner and Morgan Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner, March 19, 2013. 382

⁷⁴ Ibid. 383

⁷⁵ Ibid. 383

profound effect on her plans for her future. After completing her secondary school coursework, she decided to forego the *Abitur* exit exam. Instead, she decided to train to be a hairstylist, in the hopes of one day returning to television as a makeup artist. Although this choice “nearly drove her mother mad,” her mother insisted that Abini complete the certification process, even after the young dancer became bored and frustrated with her newly chosen career path. After completing the three-year certification, she decided that she would now try her hand at journalism. In our interview, Abini remarked that she did not seek out journalism to follow in her father’s footsteps. She was so young when her father left that, in her mind, there was little of his career that could have made an impact on her.⁷⁶ Instead, she said that it was a love and a natural skill for writing that piqued her interest in journalism alongside her natural curiosity for research and investigation.⁷⁷

Since Abini had not completed her *Abitur*, she could not study at the Karl Marx University like the majority of aspiring journalists. Instead, she enrolled in evening classes in Berlin Friedrichshain. Although her instructor at the adult education center warned her class that in his ten years of teaching journalism, he had only seen four of his students make it into the profession, Abini told herself that she was going to be the fifth.⁷⁸ However, upon completing the program, she found her career path to journalism blocked by something completely outside her control. Although her father was a proud communist who had worked as a journalist in the GDR, Abini was told that she was not permitted to pursue a career in journalism because she was the child of a foreigner from a non-socialist country.⁷⁹ Abini’s otherness had precluded her from the profession of her choice. Shortly after this setback, she gave birth to her first child and took the

⁷⁶ Ibid. 385

⁷⁷ Ibid. 384

⁷⁸ Ibid. 386

⁷⁹ Ibid. 385

requisite year off to tend to the needs of her infant. When her baby year was over, she still had no way into the career of her choice, so Abini returned yet again to school. This time she turned her scholarly attention to musical history, because this was one of the few degrees in the GDR that did not require an *Abitur*, and she had already spent five years studying at a music centered secondary school. She graduated with a degree in musical history in 1989, on the eve of the Wende.⁸⁰

These five cases highlight the varied experiences of journalistic aspirants in the GDR. Although the profession demanded ideological conformity, not all journalists were born into families with strong ties to the party. For some, party membership was instrumental, a box that needed to be checked to pursue a chosen path.⁸¹ Others were enthusiastic believers in the socialist world-view and saw the profession as a way to do good work and further the cause.⁸² Many journalists like Torsten did not come to journalism on their own accord. Some were pressured or recruited by publishers, news institutions, and mass organizations because they fulfilled certain desirable qualities.⁸³ Journalism was a career of strategic significance to the party's ideological control of the population. As the SED's "sharpest weapon," aspiring journalists needed to demonstrate that they were capable and trustworthy for fulfilling that role.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 385

⁸¹ See for example: Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 185–204.

⁸² See Günter Böhme and Ralf Bachmann in Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 48–58; 115–124. As well as Konrad Elmauer in Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 232–254.; and "H" in Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 131–137.

⁸³ See for example the interviews with Günter Schabowski, Wolfgang Tiedke, Eberhard Heinrich, Arnulf Kriener and Brigitte Zimmermann in Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 27–36; 75–86; 89–98; 99–114; 176–182. What these individuals all share is that while, journalism was not their first choice or for some even a desired choice, they were recruited or selected for the job and ended up rising up the ranks to positions of leadership.

Susanne and Frank Herold fell back on journalism because other preferred careers turned out to be less desirable or impossible.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, there were journalists like Abini who came to the profession because of a fondness or skill in writing and the craft of journalism.⁸⁵ However, Abini's experience is a reminder that there was little free choice when it came to pursuing a career in journalism. If you belonged to a certain group or exhibited certain undesirable qualities, the avenues for access to the profession remained inaccessible. Hans-Dieter Schütt, the former editor-in-chief of *Junge Welt*, provided an interesting example of these hurdles. Although he wanted to become a journalist, an initial offer to intern at the Erfurt regional newspaper *Das Volk* was revoked when he was accused of having firsthand knowledge of a classmate's attempt to flee the GDR. Not reporting a potential flight risk was a crime in and of itself. Schütt, however, found a way back to the profession through a side door. He completed a degree in theater sciences and eventually joined the culture desk of the *Junge Welt* as a film critic.⁸⁶

Although journalists could come from a minimally diverse group of individuals, homogeneity within the profession was further enforced through a streamlined and ideologically dogmatic training process. After completing an internship at a media institution, young aspiring journalists were sent to study at the Karl-Marx University in Leipzig to complete both ideological and technical training.

⁸⁴ See for example: Werner Micke in *Ibid.*, 127–138.; As well as Horst Schmidt in Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 31–33.

⁸⁵ See Manfred Quiring in Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 59–65.; Gerlinda Kollman and Bruno Wolthagen in Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 185–204; 204–232. Journalists “D” and “G” in Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 138–147; 177–187. And Dr. Stefan Amzoll and Dietmar Ringel in Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 90–94; 100–103.

⁸⁶ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 183; Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 76–82.

The Red Monastery: The Creation of Socialist Journalists

The Karl Marx University served as the official port of entry to the journalistic profession. Aspiring journalists had to first secure an internship at an established media organization. The *Volontariat* or internship was the first step in forming a professional consciousness of the budding East German journalist, because—in the opinion of one journalist—it allowed the young aspirants to see the practice of the profession in action and to experience first hand the discipline needed to carry out the job.⁸⁷ The next step was to gain admittance into the “Red Monastery,” the journalism program at the Karl-Marx University. To be accepted, journalists had to pass an interview, which evaluated potential students based on the following criteria,

... Political and moral demeanor; second, the motives for entering the profession and their existing understandings of the demands of the job; third, the ability of the individual to complete the specific professional components of the job; and fourth, the person’s willingness to enter the army.⁸⁸

The descriptions of the training at the Karl-Marx University were relatively consistent across the interviews. The program consisted of two pillars, an ideological pillar and a technical pillar. The former was not unique to the journalism program. Marxism and Leninism (known colloquially by the abbreviation ML) comprised the foundation for most if not all of the advanced degrees in the GDR. These courses focused on the ideological canon and the essential works of Marx and Lenin. Most journalists described this two-year basic study period of their education as a boring nuisance. Susanne H. for example found this portion of her education interesting, but ultimately so undemanding that she used this time to continue her French studies on the side so that her language skills would not languish while in Leipzig.⁸⁹ However this

⁸⁷ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 83.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 557

ideological foundation was a critical component of the journalist's professional consciousness.

When asked about the nature of Leninist journalism, Eichhorn emphasized this point,

Naturally we were raised, educated in the principle that you allude to in subtext. The Leninist principle of journalism was that journalists served the party. We are the propagandists, or the other way around, we are the agitators, the propagandists, and the organizers of the party. That was clear, it was stated openly. We lived in the GDR. I studied [at the University] in the mid 1960s. [Regardless] if someone liked the party, or the party feeling, everyone who studied there was clear on the fact that he served the party. Yes, one simply has to state that from the beginning. That is effectively how we represented ourselves.⁹⁰

Although many found this ideological component secondary to their original goals of learning the art of journalism, both Susanne and Frank Herold remarked on the utility of having a formative ideology around which to frame one's thoughts and problems. Susanne, for example, continued to find Marx's writings helpful to her understanding of capitalism and the economy in the post-Wende period.⁹¹ And Herold remarked, "even this portion of my education that was ideological, was not in vain, was not for nothing. ... Rather it gave me something."⁹²

Beyond this first ideological pillar, the journalists in Leipzig were also trained in specific practical elements of their profession. After completing a basic foundational curriculum as a group, journalists were divided into sub-groups based on their eventual job placements.⁹³ There was little choice in this selection; the journalism program functioned as part of the planned economy, and the number of radio journalists compared to print journalists was carefully computed and tailored to the specific needs of the socialist media economy.⁹⁴ In these smaller cohorts the journalists were instructed on the particulars of television, radio, print, or news service reporting. Students learned how to structure and formulate an article, commentary, or

⁹⁰ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 421

⁹¹ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 557

⁹² Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold.468

⁹³ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 487

⁹⁴ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 496

portrait or how to properly conduct and present an interview. The instruction was precise, regimented, and Herold described the experience more like school than university.⁹⁵ However, many journalists remarked in retrospect that this was where they learned the handicraft of journalism, where they learned to write, to investigate, and develop the muscles and skills that would follow them throughout their professional lives.⁹⁶

While nearly all of the journalists with whom I spoke remembered their days in Leipzig in either a neutral or positive tone, the experience at the “Red Monastery” was not universally pleasant. One journalist interviewed by Angelika Holterman described her experiences at the Karl Marx University as particularly challenging,

This stuffy journalism program, there, where every false word was analyzed. It was horrible, it was plainly and simply horrible. And then on top of everything, the dorm, with three women in one room. I do not know any living conditions more horrendous than that. It all ended with the fact that I had a proper mental breakdown, I mean I was really given a leave of absence for “being nuts,” which had the result that I had to go see a psychiatrist on the direct orders of the dean, who determined that I was having a classical conflict between what was inside me, and what was around me.⁹⁷

The journalism program in Leipzig tried to ensure ideological conformity in the future socialist journalists of the German Democratic Republic. When asked, how important the journalism program was to the system of media control, Wolfgang Tiedke – a former KMU instructor – answered, “It was the hatchery. When the chicks hatched, they were divided into their roosts.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold. 468

⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that in my interview with Eichhorn, he describes the attempt of the faculty at the KMU, at the time he was studying there in the 1960s, to treat journalism as a science, as a specific science of reflecting reality. Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. Wolfgang Tiedke, a journalism instructor at KMU in the 1970 describes his attempts to create an internal model of the profession within socialist journalism. He developed the concept of socialist journalism as a manner of communication within society as a whole. He was trying to ascertain what was the role of journalism outside of the party and the state. Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 80.

⁹⁷ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 259.

⁹⁸ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 80.

The program formed the foundation for establishing conformity within the profession. As one journalist interviewed by Renate Schubert described, texts were passed back and forth until they were considered up to snuff. This meddling pervaded even the smallest formulation or phrasing.⁹⁹ At the university students were pressured to join the party. One scholar estimated that nearly 80 percent of the students at the journalism school belonged to the SED.¹⁰⁰ For those who sought an alternative to the dominant party, the only other options were to join one of the bloc parties or one of the mass organizations.¹⁰¹

Because Abini Zöllner was unable to attend the KMU, her description of her training in the GDR naturally differed from that of her colleagues. The technical school in Berlin was open to anyone; there were no evaluations or qualifications required to attend the night school classes in journalism. Zöllner described the program as the same training that was provided at the KMU but without the ideological pillar: “it was super,” she recalled, “We learned pure journalism.”¹⁰² Like her colleagues, Zöllner noted the practicality of the training and the way it helped her hone her craft. She did, however, experience some of the pressure to conform alluded to in the other interviews. Reflecting on her education, she remembered an impulse not to write independently but to construct your text so that it would please the instructor.¹⁰³ She cited this tendency to illustrate how conformity and control were steeped into the East German journalistic profession.

The consistency regarding the training and education process seen across the interviews helps establish how well the East German media system was able to generate a profession with a

⁹⁹ Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 34–39.

¹⁰⁰ Pannen, *Die Weiterleiter*, 32.

¹⁰¹ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 84.

¹⁰² Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner. 384

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 4. 403

clear functional consciousness. As Eichhorn remarked, journalists were aware of their role, and it formed the foundation of their professional awareness.¹⁰⁴

Agitators, Organizers and Propagandists: The Role of Journalists in the GDR

In nearly every interview with a former East German journalist, when asked, “What was the role or function of journalists in the GDR?” the journalist would declare, nearly without exception, that the role of the journalist was: agitator, organizer and propagandist. These three terms emerged over and over, repeated almost from reflex, usually recited in the same order and tone. However, within this clearly defined ideological foundation, each journalist had his or her own understanding of what this formulation meant in reality. Herold described the journalist as a “transmission belt,” transmitting and translating the political party line into a more accessible German.¹⁰⁵ For Torsten, the journalist was,

... A tool, a politically responsible person, who was bound to a cause, and not to him or herself or his or her own conscience. Rather, [the journalist was bound] to a higher cause, an idea, an ideology, sometimes more and sometimes less. ... With everything, with the articles one wrote, one was supposed to inspire the workers for socialism, for the idea of socialism, for the ideology.¹⁰⁶

For Susanne, the role of political organizer was also empowering. It allowed her and her colleagues to advocate on behalf of their audience. As an example, she described an instance where the radio station helped put pressure on the local government to repair the gym at a local school. The students and teachers had become more and more frustrated because their school gym was made inaccessible for a long period due to a protracted and stalled construction project. According to Susanne, the school appealed to the radio station, because they knew that the

¹⁰⁴ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 421

¹⁰⁵ Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold. 470

¹⁰⁶ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 511

station could put public pressure on the necessary individuals to get the project moving. In this, Susanne reflected, “The political organizer could also be helpful.”¹⁰⁷

Abini was the only journalist I interviewed who did not recite the traditional tripartite role of the journalist. While the other journalists repeated the refrain almost from reflex, she differentiated between political journalism, which she referred to as “Communiqué Journalism” (*Verlautbarungsjournalismus*), and cultural journalism, which she called an “oasis or island” within the profession, where you could work with less influence and interference from the party.¹⁰⁸ While this absence of terminology may have been a simple fluke of the interviewing process, it was nevertheless striking due to the near ubiquitous use of the terms in the other interviews. Perhaps Abini’s alternative training, which did not bring her through the “Red Monastery” in Leipzig, resulted in a less ideologically formed professional understanding. Regardless, it was clear to all journalists that the role of the journalist was tied closely to the party.

In the interviews conducted by Mosebach, the journalists frequently used metaphors similar to those employed by Frank Herold and Torsten H. to describe their role in East German society. Journalists were tiny wheels or parts of a larger machine. They were working parts of a larger whole.¹⁰⁹ Although there were clear forms of censorship and control—which will be discussed in the following section—within this limited functionality there was room to maneuver. Meyen and Fielder asked their journalists variations on the question, “What was, in your opinion, ‘good journalism’? What did it take for you to go home happy?” To this, many journalists described the goal of producing a product that fit all necessary criteria but that also entertained

¹⁰⁷ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 570

¹⁰⁸ Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner. 386

¹⁰⁹ Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 80.

and challenged the audience.¹¹⁰ There was a pride in producing “good” work, work that would make it through review without problems or errors and end up in the paper and appeal to a broader audience, not only the party members.¹¹¹ Similarly, the journalists interviewed by Schubert described goals of working within the party’s prescribed dictates to challenge and push the margins, if only a little. As one journalist stated,

One had the pretense that one could move something with certain content, one wanted to reflect something interesting, to respond to conflicts, to resolve hypocrisies, to make the system better, to solve problems, to bring society forward. No one emerged as a critic of the regime: A generational conflict did not take place. Among the colleagues, there was a wide spectrum, also those who represented the official politics, whitewashed, with few problems – ready to contradict. But at *DT-64* these were the minority, if you compare it to other editorial offices in GDR radio.¹¹²

However not all journalists saw their work under communism in such a positive light. One journalist interviewed by Meyen and Fiedler responded,

A central organ, that understands itself as a megaphone for the party leadership is not a reasonable newspaper. Whatever you can say about the GDR that is good: *Neues Deutschland* is not a part of that. There is nothing there that one can preserve. Actually, you can spare yourselves the work of your whole study. You can simply say: *Neues Deutschland* was a central press organ in a dictatorship. The End. ...

The newspaper was boring and humiliating for the readers, because they were condescended to. The readers should believe in something and think in a particular direction. No one likes that. Maybe you can find minutiae, one or the other small joy, something between the lines. But that is no substitution for a decent newspaper.¹¹³

I asked my interview partners if there were unique socialist “ethics” to journalism in the GDR.¹¹⁴

I wanted to understand how journalists understood and moralized their profession within the

¹¹⁰See the interviews with Werner Micke and Brigitte Zimmerman in Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 127–138, 176–182.

¹¹¹See the interviews with Eberhard Heinrich and Angelika Unterlauf in *Ibid.*, 99–114, 320–326.

¹¹²See the Dietmar Ringel interview in Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 90–94.

¹¹³See the interview with Irmatraud Gutschke in, Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 50–58.

¹¹⁴Due to the uniqueness of Abini Zöllner’s background, and the fact that she did not practice journalism until after 1989, this question did not come up in her interview. Additionally, the interview with Torsten H. was much less rigid than the other interviews. I asked a minimum of

political and social context of the GDR. For Eichhorn, the ethics of journalism in the GDR returned to the fundamental principles that governed the profession: “You were the Agitator, Propagandist, and Organizer of the party. And if there was ever a misunderstanding, comrade, the party would appear and you had to answer for yourself in all sorts of ways.”¹¹⁵ However, other journalists developed their own moral ethics within those parameters. For both Susanne H. and Frank Herold, journalistic ethics in the GDR required you to handle your subject with care and respect. For Herold, this meant that you did not degrade or debase someone’s character. You did not trick your subject in to revealing unflattering or controversial facts about themselves. You treated your subject with humanity. However, Herold did note that this idealism did have its boundaries. And within this positive ethic, there was hidden a negative ethic. When your subject was the enemy, the capitalist, the imperialist, or the fascist, then it was your job to dehumanize them, debase them and expose them. You did what you had to do to win the historical struggle.¹¹⁶ For Susanne, respecting your subject meant that you were gentle and careful in your portrayal, so that everyone involved could be happy with the final product. She gave the following illustrative example.

... For example, someone who constantly misspeaks, you would edit them so that they sounded good. Also, for example, occasionally we would have the situation, before we would broadcast something, we would confirm again with the subject, so that we could make sure that they would not get into trouble. Because we knew, that they could potentially be held accountable if they had spoken a little too courageously in their interview.¹¹⁷

Susanne described a partnership between herself, her subjects, and her audience. In a system where individuals were subject to repercussions for straying too far from the party line, Susanne

questions, and he spoke extemporaneously and at length about his experiences before and after 1989. The question of a specific journalistic ethic did not come up in our conversation.

¹¹⁵ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 427

¹¹⁶ Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold. 473

¹¹⁷ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 572

felt a duty to protect her subjects from political reprisal. This impulse, however, reveals how internalized and multifaceted the forms of self-censorship were. Although she saw herself as protecting her subjects, she also limited the scope of available information for her audience.

Although the East German media was tied closely to the mechanisms of power, journalism as a profession enjoyed a relatively high status. Both Abini Zöllner and Torsten H. drew a connection between the high barriers to entry and the profession's prestige. Perhaps speaking from personal experience, Zöllner noted that not just anyone could become a journalist in the GDR.¹¹⁸ The profession was protected, and the title had to be earned through hard work. As a result, journalism in the GDR belonged to the highly regarded professions frequently cited as such: doctors, lawyers, etc.¹¹⁹ Torsten also noted that the profession did have the ability to wield some power, a fact that added to the job's mystique.¹²⁰ Both Torsten and Susanne pointed out, however, that the determination of a journalist's social status depended completely on perspective. Torsten noted that some journalists stood closer to the party and the mechanisms of control and repression, while Susanne emphasized that your opinion of journalists depended upon your own relationship to the state.¹²¹ For those individuals who were supporters of the party, or felt neutral about the SED, journalism as a profession was seen as a great job that allowed you to travel and experience a number of things. However, for those individuals who were critical of the SED and the East German government, journalists were lumped together with the corrupt and authoritarian state and party.

Although the journalists whom I interviewed remembered the profession as having a relatively high status, the journalists interviewed by Mosebach had a more negative collective

¹¹⁸ Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner. 404

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 404

¹²⁰ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 507

¹²¹ Ibid. 571

recollection of the profession and its prestige. The job was inextricably tied to the state, and you were either used by the party, or resented by the public. One (female) journalist even remarked that if a female journalism student was single and dating, “and she told the guy she was studying journalism, then she could forget it. I mean she would have to look really good for him to take her home.”¹²² Another journalist responded that the status of the profession had worsened over time. What used to be seen as good degraded quickly as newspapers and broadcast institutions failed to maintain a critical distance from the party. As journalism moved away from reporting on the reality of events, the profession’s prestige plummeted.¹²³ The variation in tone between my interviews and Mosebach’s is striking and provides the opportunity to investigate the number of factors that can affect the responses in an interview.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, one factor is time. In 1996, the events of the late 1980s were still fresh in the minds of the subjects being interviewed. In the final years of the GDR, the profession did experience a massive loss in trust and prestige. The newspapers and broadcast institutions failed to report on the reality of the events occurring around them. By 2013, the events of the late 1980s may have become merged into a longer and broader understanding of life in the GDR. Furthermore, the tone of my interviews and that of Mosebach were entirely different. Mosebach framed his interviews around the idea that the journalism of the GDR was invalid and dangerous to the practice of journalism in the post-Wende period. As a result, these journalists may have experienced pressure (either consciously or sub-consciously) to present an image of the profession that fit within this framework. In my interviews, I attempted to create a more neutral tone, framing my questions in such a way that any potential perceived bias be diminished. Regardless, each collection reflected the individual experience and

¹²² Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 177–187.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 170–176.

understanding of the journalist at a specific point in time. It is therefore interesting to note how impressions and understandings could shift over time and context.

Working within the System: The Daily Practice of Journalism in East Germany

Although most journalists understood themselves to be Agitators, Propagandists, and Organizers, the reality of the daily practice of the profession naturally varied by individual and by institution. However, across all the interviews, certain common themes emerged as journalists described their daily work in the GDR. Most journalists described an experience of internalized control, either in the form of a “scissors of the mind,”¹²⁴ writing between the lines,¹²⁵ or in an impulse to create work that they knew could get published or broadcast so that their words could reach their intended audience.¹²⁶ Many journalists also reported coming into contact with more direct forms of control: supervisors who rewrote, rejected, or denounced an article or piece; or clear dictates coming from the Argus meetings regarding what could and could not be published or broadcast.¹²⁷ Many journalists spoke of nonsensical taboos, topics that for one unspoken reason or another could not be broached.¹²⁸ One television journalist interviewed by Mosebach claimed that he had to cut footage of people eating sausage out of a broadcast, because the GDR was suffering from a sausage shortage at the time.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H.; Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold. 485Herold8, 510Torsten12

¹²⁵ Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner; H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 396Abini14, 558Susanne8

¹²⁶ See for example the interview with Wolfgang Tiedke in, Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 75–86.

¹²⁷ See the interviews with Gerhard Kirsch and Manfred Quering in *Ibid.*, 59–65, 66–74.

¹²⁸ See for example, the interview with Gerhard Kirsch in *ibid.*, 66–74; the interview with Journalist “H” in Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 131–137; the interview with Dietmar Ringel in Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 90–94; Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 98–100.

¹²⁹ See for example the interview with Journalist “H” in Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 131–137.

A familiar refrain echoed throughout the interviews as journalists recalled retreating into certain ‘niches’ or areas of the job where they could exercise relative autonomy without the intervention of the party or the editor.¹³⁰ Finally, many described instances where they tried to push or shift the established boundaries, to challenge the status quo and push themselves and their profession beyond the party dictates.¹³¹ The resulting picture was one of journalists clearing a space where they could function on a daily basis in a profession that had clear and established boundaries of acceptable behavior.

Alfred Eichhorn described his career in the GDR as a series of stages. As a young man in the 1960s he came to Radio DDR with “wide eyes.”¹³² He was amazed at the depth of the station’s cultural program, with its seven orchestras, radio dramas, and large choirs; it was a veritable “cultural institute.”¹³³ In a centrally planned economy, the allocation of funds and resources were not attached to profit or earnings, so the government heavily subsidized the production of radio. This excess of funds and resources allowed Eichhorn to travel all over the GDR, organizing, moderating, and broadcasting events. He described journalism in this period as a “lively” and “fun” experience.¹³⁴ He got to see things and meet people, stand on a stage in front of an audience, and interact with prominent cultural figures.¹³⁵ After some time, he was moved

¹³⁰ See for example the interview with Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold; the interviews with Angelika Unterlauf and Arnulf Kriener in Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 89–98, 320–326; the interview with journalist “F” in Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 188–197; and the interview with Hans Dieter Schütt in Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 76–82. 461

¹³¹ See for example the interview with Gerlina Kollmann in Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 185–204; the interview with Journalist “F” in Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 148–155; and the interviews with Wolfgang Spiekermann, Dr. Klaus Preisike, and Hans Dieter Schütt in Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 17–23, 24–30, 76–82.

¹³² Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 422

¹³³ *Ibid.* 422

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 423

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 423

from the cultural department to the political department. He had been singled out because he had proven himself professionally, and his superiors decided that he needed to be “transferred to the frontline.”¹³⁶ Life on the metaphorical front was naturally harder, days were longer and started earlier, and the process of producing radio was more regimented and serious. Eichhorn remarked, however, that it was still fun, because,

Radio is fast. Radio is connected to events. We had, in radio ... access to every information source. We had Tel-ex connections to news agencies from around the world. [Our station] streamed AP, UPI, Agence France-Presse, ADN, TASS... naturally they came on a black roll and not on the computer... All of that was available. In the archive we had a pile of newspapers from the West, so we were informed.¹³⁷

The move to the political editorial office gave Eichhorn great access to information and news from around the world, unavailable to the average East German citizen. This was a valued and coveted privilege and allowed journalists to be one of the few informed classes in GDR society. This privilege added to the profession’s prestige but also expanded the distance between the media and the public, whose information sources were limited to the censored propaganda produced by the journalists, West German broadcasts, or smuggled items and information from the West.

Eichhorn fondly recalled the first 15 years of his career in the GDR. However this initial joy made the final years of his career in the GDR harder to bear.

It was doubly difficult, this paralysis, this paralysis in the political life. You could feel it with your hands. The powers had been struck dumb. The pressure on the street increased, and of course you followed [the events] breathlessly. There was, in radio and in television in the GDR, there was at this time, I am speaking of 1985, ’86, ’87, there was no ... opposition movement within the media. Whoever wants to tell you today, ‘I was a member of the resistance,’ that’s hogwash. Naturally we spoke about things freely, we complained, and cursed, but there was no organized or structured resistance.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ibid. 423

¹³⁷ Ibid. 423

¹³⁸ Ibid. 424

Eichhorn explained that there was no opposition among the journalists because the role of the socialist journalist was so internalized.¹³⁹ Your job was to support the party. It was that simple. However, resistance came in less tangible forms. He described how he and his colleagues would retreat into cynicism and sarcasm, as if to say, "...well, shit. Fine, we'll do the shit [they demand]."¹⁴⁰ However, Eichhorn noted that there were small ways to push back.

‘We observe the way the ordinary man speaks [*Volk aufs Maul schauen*], we speak the language of the working class.’ ‘We are the protectors of the advanced legacy of the German nation.’ There were tons of ... umpteen such postulates, that most of the time stayed as postulates. And under these auspices you could do a lot.¹⁴¹

Journalists felt they were able to manipulate the language of propaganda, to communicate within the postulates, so that they remained loyal on the surface and communicated a deeper or alternative message in the subtext. Eichhorn explained that through persistence and proving that he was not a flight risk, he was able to make frequent trips to West Germany to meet with and interview important West German cultural figures like the playwright Rolf Hochhuth or the author and artist Peter Weiss. He reported on these encounters for his radio program and was able to bring these interesting and challenging western voices and ideas to his East German audience.¹⁴² To his superiors he demonstrated the requisite behavior to be trusted with an exit visa, but he internalized this privilege and party loyalty as a way of bringing alternative voices to the East German public.

Regardless of these small victories, Eichhorn described the daily practice of broadcasting in the GDR as “dismal.”¹⁴³ In his 1991 interview with Renate Schubert, Eichhorn revealed just how dismal and toxic his work environment had become, “from ’82-’85 I drank. I was

¹³⁹ Ibid. 424

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 424

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 425

¹⁴² Ibid. 425

¹⁴³ Ibid. 425

repressing. In '82 Brezhnev died. I went to the party academy for a year. At the same time I learned to see through a lot, I understood a lot more.”¹⁴⁴ The job required him to maneuver among increasingly frustrating and severe party controls and demands. In our interview, Eichhorn recounted how orders from the leadership came daily through the Argumentation meetings. He remembered that these orders were simply passed along down the chain of command. The orders were by and large negative and came in the form of topics and terms to avoid in the broadcasts. Eichhorn remarked, if the editorial staff was asked not to report on France, they could guess that there was probably an important meeting currently taking place in France. If they were told not to report on baby formula, for example, it usually meant there was a shortage of baby formula. Within these orders, however, Eichhorn pointed out that there was room to maneuver.¹⁴⁵

Within these orders, we operated. And in between there was again and again the attempt to produce decent work. Do not get the impression that we were cerebral-automatons. That was not the case, one likes to say that today, but that was not the case. There were a large number of people who tried to make the best of what they were given.¹⁴⁶

This attempt to push back, even in minor ways, to work within the propaganda and orders of the party, to produce a product that one could be happy with, recurred throughout the interviews. Eichhorn pointed to the way that certain creative people were able to establish a free space within which they could operate. In the political departments, this was much harder to achieve, but within the cultural departments, where there was less political supervision and oversight, there was more wiggle room that the individual journalist could exploit.

Torsten H. found that there was great power within that wiggle room. Torsten graduated from the KMU in 1988, and so his time at the *Berliner Zeitung* during the GDR period was short

¹⁴⁴ Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 88.

¹⁴⁵ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 426

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 426

lived. He spent the bulk of this short time working the local desk for his hometown of Köpenick. Within the local department, Torsten argued, the journalist had the ability to wield a relatively high degree of power to change small things and help people.¹⁴⁷ For example, he described an instance where a factory was discovered to have been storing barrels of toxic asphalt. He and his fellow local reporters organized a town meeting and wrote about the discovery, uncovering a mini environmental scandal.¹⁴⁸

For Torsten, the daily practice of journalism did not differ greatly from journalism in the West. There were morning meetings where stories would be pitched and discussed, and there were deadlines just like one recognizes in the West. There were, however a few important differences where journalism in the East diverged from its western counterpart. First, there was more time. Journalists did not stand under the same time-pressure in the East, because everything needed to be organized, approved, and set up in advance. You could not simply run off to a factory to do an interview. You needed to obtain the proper signatures and set up everything in advance.¹⁴⁹ More importantly, though, were the layers of control. The first one, Torsten explained, was the journalist's own head. Everything began with the question, "can you write that?"¹⁵⁰ He gave the following example.

As the local editor I would be sent to an urban district meeting. There were the representatives. And the head of the housing department gets up and says, 'we no longer have any materials; our houses are so old that they are falling apart. We are taking the materials from the old houses and re-using them to build the new houses.' He tells you how it is, the unvarnished truth. You return to the office and you say, 'Wonderful, great, but can you write that in a newspaper that will also be read by the West? ... You can say a lot of things internally; when the doors are closed you can be honest and open. But do you write that in the newspaper, where the enemy is looking and reading. It was not like you did not want to discuss these things; rather [the fear] was always fomented, how can

¹⁴⁷ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 507

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 507

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 508

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 509

they use this against us? This explains why so many things were not in [the newspaper], even though we spoke openly about them.¹⁵¹

Because journalism was framed as a weapon in the struggle with the class enemy, protecting that cause was of higher value to the ideological soldier than communicating facts to the public.

Torsten noted that although many people refer to this phenomenon as the “scissors of the mind,” it was less like scissors and more like a feeling: you just knew.¹⁵² Journalists were trained in a “double public” [*Doppelöffentlichkeit*], one internal and one external.¹⁵³ The journalists represented the more instrumental external public.

For Torsten, just like Eichhorn, the journalist in the GDR was not a simple ‘automaton-machine’ who followed orders of the party to the letter.¹⁵⁴ He described one instance in the summer of 1989 when the situation in the GDR was getting worse and people were fleeing to the West via the Hungarian border. Torsten’s editor pitched a story called, “Why I love living in the GDR!” The editor wanted his journalists to go out on the street and ask regular East Germans what they loved about life in the GDR. Torsten explained the entire journalistic staff flat-out refused to take the assignment. They knew the situation around them and understood the mood on the street. They knew that if they, as journalists, were to go out on the street and ask that question amid the growing political unrest in the country, “you would have been smacked in the face.”¹⁵⁵

Much like Eichhorn and her husband Torsten, Susanne H spoke of working within a prescribed and permitted area, where journalists worked to push back where they could. In radio, just like in print journalism, all reports and contributions had to be vetted before they went on the

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 509

¹⁵² Ibid. 510

¹⁵³ Ibid. 510

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 513

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 513

air. Even at the youth radio station *DT64* where Susanne worked, you had to present your audio and your written text to your editor prior to broadcast. If you strayed too far from the party line, you could be reprimanded or forced to revise your segment. Susanne noted that you quickly learned where the boundaries were and how to operate within them. She recalled, “Once you bash against the barriers enough that you are covered in bruises, eventually you give up and try an alternate path.”¹⁵⁶ Working within this confined space posed its unique challenges. Susanne was assigned to the education desk at *DT64*, which focused on teachers and education policy. Whenever there would be a teachers’ conference, she and her colleagues would run into a predicament. Their audience had no interest in hearing yet another speech from the Education Minister, Margot Honecker. However, if a journalist came across a teacher who was doing unique and innovative things in her or his classroom, implementing breakthroughs in education and curriculum that the radio audience might find interesting, the journalist had to carefully consider the implications of broadcasting this more interesting story. Innovation was dangerous in the GDR. If they drew too much attention to a teacher who was challenging the traditional models and curriculum, that teacher or the school’s principle might run into serious trouble. The journalist had to weigh the value of the story against the possible negative outcomes for the teacher, and usually the safest bet was simply to broadcast yet another Margot Honecker speech. Susanne described these calculations as walking on eggshells. “Where you always went one step forward and one step back, as you tried to maneuver your way through.”¹⁵⁷

Like many journalists, Susanne emphasized that there was a complexity to writing and the production of media in the GDR. There was quite a lot of information communicated to the audience informally through subtext, between the lines. She described how, when reading *Neues*

¹⁵⁶ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 569

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 571

Deutschland, you could intimate an alternative meaning from the journalist's placement of a comma or the emphasis in a title.¹⁵⁸ Although Abini Zöllner never worked as a journalist in Honecker's GDR, she remembers the same importance of close reading and subtext when it came to consuming media. She remarked, that in the East German press there were topics that were hinted at but never clearly stated.¹⁵⁹

Frank Herold graduated from the journalism program at the KMU in 1982, and began working at *Neues Deutschland* as a news editor. Within a very short period of time, Herold was sent to the Soviet Union to be the paper's Moscow correspondent. Herold attributed his rapid rise within the ranks to Günter Schabowski, who was the editor in chief of *Neues Deutschland* at the time and felt that young people needed to be given a chance.¹⁶⁰ By February 1984, after only two years at the paper, Herold found himself in Moscow reporting on the funeral of Yuri Andropov. Herold's time as a foreign correspondent coincided with a tumultuous period in the history of the Soviet Union. Andropov was succeeded by the sickly and feeble Konstantin Chernenko, whose physical state upon entering office was, in the words of one historian, "zombie-like."¹⁶¹ Chernenko's tenure was—unsurprisingly—cut short due to long-standing health issues. In 1985, Gorbachev rose to power, and his reforms made waves across the socialist world. The revelations of glasnost, of the reassessment of history and the uncovering and discussions of Stalin's crimes, had a profound effect on the young East German foreign correspondent. While in Moscow, Herold came into contact with the political elite who devised and advocated for economic and cultural reform of the Soviet Union. He became a close friend of Yegor Gaidar, the architect of

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 558

¹⁵⁹ Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner. 396

¹⁶⁰ Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold. 454

¹⁶¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (Penguin, 2006), 228.

many of the Soviet Unions and Russia's eventual economic reforms.¹⁶² As the Soviet Union advanced its reform project, Herold became increasingly disillusioned with his job, saying that he could no longer write about economics or politics because,

Nobody wanted to hear it. Because my editorial office did not want to hear it. For example, at that time there was the genesis of an economic reform movement. These stories where people became rich like Berezovsky or Abramovich ... where they became rich. It all started back them. This whole system of opening, even the economic sector. These models that were being implemented... that interested ... it interested the Stasi and the party leadership, but you couldn't write about it.¹⁶³

The privilege of travel came with a price. Although the journalist was granted the unique opportunity to see and experience a broader world outside the borders of the GDR, there were limits to what he or she could communicate back to the public at home. As a result of this growing frustration, Herold recalled that he retreated into niches, topics that interested him that he could talk about freely without censor or pushback. One of these niches was space exploration. Herold had always been interested in Soviet space exploration and said that he wrote anything and everything he could on the topic. "From the missions to comets, to manned space flight. I went to all those places that are so interesting, all of the launch sites, in the command center, everywhere. I found that interesting. But I didn't do politics anymore, and I didn't do economics."¹⁶⁴ The niche was another form of self-censorship and provided a potentially critical journalist with an alternative outlet. By retreating into niches they found another way to conform to the ideological boundaries set by the party leadership.

Herold explained that many of his colleagues were frustrated with their jobs during that period. In a statement that echoed Eichhorn's 1991 interview, Herold said that the need of the journalists to prop up and support a regime that was moving further and further away from

¹⁶² Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold. 463

¹⁶³ Ibid. 455

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 461

reality led to “a high degree of alcoholism and a permanent shaking of the head.”¹⁶⁵ As an illustrative example of the “absurdities” of the job, Herold recounted a specific instance where he got into trouble. The Foreign Ministry of the Soviet Union, in an effort to promote a certain story or event of particular propagandistic value, would invite all of the resident foreign correspondents from inside and outside the Soviet sphere of influence to travel together to a given location. On one such trip, Herold and his colleagues were invited to Yakutia, a territory in the north east of Siberia to report on the Japanese efforts to encourage black coal production.

We drove to the south of Yakutia, my colleague Werner Adam from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and I. And we stood there, all of a sudden, on a road in deepest Siberia, in January. It was picturesque. The band of asphalt, the trucks were coming, and left and right were the trees. We stood next to one another, and [we each] took a photo. We both described this story, of the Japanese who came there to promote black coal in Siberia. And we told the story of the people, of the people and their working conditions, and we told the story not that differently from one another. It all would not have been that bad... but the coincidence that on the same day the same image appeared both in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Neues Deutschland*. I got into quite a lot of trouble after that.¹⁶⁶

In another instance, Herold was reporting from Brest, a town on the Polish border with East Germany. In Brest, there was a customs museum with an exhibit of all of the items that the customs officials had confiscated from people crossing the border. Among the items, were things that East Germans had tried to steal or smuggle. Herold was told he could not write a story on the exhibit because the editor-in-chief said: “Yeah, what type of image of the East German citizen would be created, they were not criminals!”¹⁶⁷ Herold claimed there were thousands of these examples where there were clear political guidelines. “I was at a party newspaper, and everything was determined by the framework of the party congress or the political guidelines

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 470

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 471

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 460

handed down from the Central Committee.”¹⁶⁸ Herold escaped the party’s control by retreating into niches where he could follow his own intellectual interests and tell the stories he wanted to tell.

One of the themes that emerged in the interviews was just how knowledgeable and aware the journalists were about the events happening around them. There was a large discrepancy between what the journalists knew and what they presented in the press. Many spoke of a dual public consciousness, one faced inwards and one facing outwards. The journalists had access to information and were experiencing major societal shifts and changes but were prohibited from communicating those processes, thoughts, and ideas to the public. This was a unique point of privilege, one that was valued, but also one that led to deep internal frustrations and contradictions. The privileges came at a cost, and as the Soviet Union began to experiment with reform, the GDR’s own refusal to budge politically resulted in a deep intra-professional disillusionment and frustration.

As oppressive and omni-present as the control mechanisms were in the GDR, most of the journalists did remember their jobs with some fondness and pride. As Frank Herold explained in his interview,

Why did someone do this if it made you so unhappy, internally? Because there were absolutely positive [elements]... I do not deny, that there were people who were convinced of what they were doing. I know many, I cannot tell you a percentage, but I know many who were engaged until the end, just like I participated until the end; because, there were many interesting components of this job. Which was the case, because I never had anything to do with GDR domestic policy. ... And I got to travel abroad, I found [the job] interesting because of this travel, because it interested me. In these five years I saw every republic in the Soviet Union. I saw all of the regions of this massive country, for that reason alone, for me it was an unbelievable enrichment. ... And

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 460

in each of these regions you could tell stories that were interesting, obviously only to a certain degree.¹⁶⁹

There were ways to work within the parameters, to challenge oneself, to experience things, and produce work that was internally satisfying. In retrospect, for many, a career in East German journalism was a challenging and rewarding line of work, even as the increasing political frustrations that developed as the 1980s progressed to their climax.

The Turning Point: Glasnost and the Wende

Although the fall of the Berlin Wall was a singular symbolic moment and a fundamental turning point in the history of the GDR, many journalists experienced a pivotal change in their own understanding and relationship to their profession in the years leading up to 1989. In a majority of interviews, Gorbachev was cited as a figure of profound importance and impact, and his emergence as the new General Secretary of the Soviet Union in 1985, marked a shift for many journalists in their relationship to their job, the state, and the party that they had bound themselves to serve.

As discussed in the previous section, Frank Herold's proximity to the events unfolding in Moscow had a profound impact on his own internal intellectual development. He described the four years of Gorbachev's tenure as the most important years of his life. It was not Gorbachev as a person that was so important. Herold remembered Gorbachev as a very ambivalent figure, who triggered a powerful reform process but ended up disappointing many of his followers due to his inability to follow through and complete the process. More enlightening and inspiring than the man were the revelations of glasnost and the resulting re-interpretation of history. Herold had

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 471

been unaware of the repression under Stalin and said that what he has learned of those horrors in the intervening years has been disenchanting.¹⁷⁰

While stationed in Moscow, Herold would return to Berlin each year for five or six weeks at a time. The experience was jarring. The discrepancy between the exciting and revolutionary developments in the Soviet Union and the stubborn and stale party politics of the GDR became harder and harder to understand. He repeated throughout the interview that his only means of coping was to retreat into his favorite topics of space and science and that he could no longer bring himself to write about politics or economics.¹⁷¹

In 1989, Herold and his family returned to Berlin for good. Herold was made news editor in the summer of 1989, just as the Hungarians opened the border to Austria. Herold described this period as a rapid development of events that left him and his family feeling very insecure. He and his wife considered fleeing to the West with the thousands of other East German refugees, but ultimately decided to stay in the GDR because they had two small children and no family or contacts in the West who could help them upon arrival. He said this was one of those choices that highlighted the tension between security and freedom. In that moment, he and his wife chose security over freedom, even though life in the GDR no longer felt as secure. Herold's wife, an art critic, was an early supporter of the opposition group New Forum, and was one of the first to sign their appeal. This action was not without repercussion; she nearly lost her job at the *Junge Welt* in retaliation for her support of the growing opposition group. Herold's wife had many friends among the artists who had helped organize the November 4 demonstration at Alexanderplatz. Both Herold and his wife thought it was important to be a part of such a crucial event, but the sense of insecurity and fear was so great that they felt compelled to send their

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 464

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 455

children away, to stay with their grandparents, because they did not know how the state would respond or what the consequences would be.¹⁷²

Because Herold had been thinking about the possibility of reform in the GDR for years, he said that the events of the night of November 9 were less of a surprise. He remembered coming home late that night after reporting on Günter Schabowski's press conference and woke his wife. In that moment, he told her that the GDR was over.

I was convinced that with open borders, socialism in the GDR had no chance. This is due to the fact that I had been thinking of these things since 1985, not because I can see into the future. There was a long period, where I was able to prepare myself, where I could think... In that moment I was convinced that it was the end of the GDR, and that it would go very, very quickly.¹⁷³

This realization, that open borders would strike a deathblow to the GDR, was a phenomenon repeated by multiple journalists.

Abini Zöllner spent the night of November 9 like she would most any other night. After putting her son to sleep, she grabbed a book and went to bed. Her husband, Dirk Zöllner, a prominent rock musician in the GDR, spent the evening performing at the House of the Young Talents. When he came home at midnight from his concert, he was clearly shaken. He told his wife that he had just finished the worst performance of his career.

Dirk explained to his wife that during his performance the auditorium became more and more empty. Never before had his audience left mid-performance in such great numbers. To take some of the edge off, the two drank a bottle of wine and went to bed. The next morning the phone rang. It was an editor from the West German television station *SAT 1*, asking if Dirk would be willing to come on their program that night. Dirk, confused, asked, "How exactly do

¹⁷² Ibid. 474

¹⁷³ Ibid. 475

you propose I do that?" The editor responded, "The wall has fallen." The Zöllners did not own a radio or television and had no idea about the events of the previous evening.¹⁷⁴ In the days that followed, Dirk made many appearances both in West and East German television. During this time the two attended a large concert at the Palace of the Republic, with the concert concluding with the East German national anthem. Abini remembered turning to her husband, in that moment, with tears in her eyes, knowing somehow that this would be the last time they heard the song.¹⁷⁵

Abini recalled a lack of enthusiasm for the Wall's collapse. "It all happened too quickly, she said, "like *coitus interruptus*." The couple had been supporters of the New Forum and wanted change to come, but,

We wanted a GDR ... we knew that the GDR as it stood could not continue. We wanted to change the GDR, but all of a sudden the GDR was no longer there. It was all too fast, we would not have decided for the *Westmark* [West German currency] so quickly. That's why we stood there slightly under shock. We did understand, that it was a new time, and there was a sense of upheaval, that would end up benefitting us both.¹⁷⁶

The benefits for Abini came quickly. She used the momentous sweeping cultural changes occurring around her in November 1989 to her advantage. Under the old system, she had been essentially barred from entering the journalism profession, but with all of the changes happening she decided to give her preferred career one more chance. That same month, November 1989, Abini applied for a job at the *Berliner Zeitung*. She had only her technical diploma and a few short pieces she had written while in school to show for herself, but she applied nonetheless. With a chuckle, she recalled how she arrived for her interview and she handed over her resume listing her relevant job experiences: Hair Stylist, Dancer, etc. Abini clearly remembered the head

¹⁷⁴ Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner. 388

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 389

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 389

of personnel saying to her, “it is unacceptable that you came here with that resume.”¹⁷⁷ Rejected, Abini was sent home. At that moment, she remembered her world collapsing as she realized that she would never become a journalist.

Rather than go home, Abini went to the cafeteria to grab a cup of coffee and decompress. A man sitting near her saw how upset she was and asked what had happened. After she recounted her disastrous job interview, the man asked to see her dossier for himself. This benevolent stranger worked at the youth newspaper *Junge Welt*, which shared the same building and facilities as *Berliner Zeitung*. Two weeks later he invited her to interview, and on January 1, 1990 Abini began her career as a journalist for the largest daily newspaper in East Germany.¹⁷⁸

The Wende was also an important event in the life trajectories of Susanne and Torsten H. The events of the fall of 1989 took on a special and personal nature for the two young journalists. Susanne was due with their first child on October 30, 1989. Although Susanne desperately wanted to attend the demonstrations at Alexanderplatz on November 4, she was already past her due date and felt it would neither be safe or prudent for her to attend. Instead, she watched as the events unfolded on television. Susanne beautifully described this period as a late spring after a long and cold winter.

You hoped the entire time that this torpor, that this ice would thaw, and then finally, finally something happened, it finally warmed up, and then it came like a rupture. ... and this weariness with torpor, with everything that would not move. There were collisions everywhere, and you really did realize how this political system was rumbling along on nothing but flat tires. It no longer rolled smoothly, it was plainly clear that on every corner, every end, it gnashed and fell apart. But what wasn't clear was how to move forward.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 390

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 391

¹⁷⁹ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 574

The problem as Susanne saw it, was that these events were not occurring in a vacuum. The GDR was sandwiched between West Germany and the Soviet Union, both of which had greater power and influence over the outcome of events. For Susanne, the events at the Wall on November 9 were of little importance. She spent that famous night in the maternity ward giving birth to her daughter.

For Torsten, the events of November were naturally tied to the personal tension, drama, and joy of his daughter's birth. Although Susanne stayed at home, Torsten was still at work and was able to experience first-hand how the tensions were growing within East German society. Torsten described this period as "mounting pressure."¹⁸⁰ As the Monday demonstrations built momentum, he remembered his colleagues and himself wondering when the newspaper would finally comment on the growing domestic uprising. At party meetings within the newspaper organization, the journalists discussed putting pressure on the party to institute reforms. The goal was to fix the party from within, because there was no viable external opposition. The journalists hoped to introduce reforms along the line of glasnost and perestroika. The hope was not to unify with the West but to reform the GDR into a more democratic socialist country. When Honecker stepped down, the editor-in-chief of *Berliner Zeitung* told the staff that the revolution was going to happen in the factories and not out on the street. The unrest on the street was unsettling and journalists were made to be wary and fearful and not get involved. This editor reminded his staff that the *Berliner Zeitung* was first and foremost a party newspaper, and as such, the paper would continue to follow the party's leadership as the power was transferred over to Egon Krenz.¹⁸¹ Torsten remembered the newspaper leadership trying to convince him to go out on the street and engage with the protesters and join the *Kampfgruppe* (combat group, an armed mass paramilitary

¹⁸⁰ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 505

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 517

organization). Torsten refused to join the combat group, but he did go to the protests, not to engage the protesters but to hear what they had to say. He realized that the protesters shared his same desires. “They wanted to speak openly and freely, to place all of the country’s problems on the table so that change could finally come. More freedom. More democracy.”¹⁸² For Torsten, the protests on November 4 were far more important than the fall of the wall. It was at this demonstration that the people had their say and the pressure on the government reached a climax. The Wende was more of a disappointment. Torsten remembered watching with confusion as people fled the GDR through the newly opened border checkpoints. He and his wife wondered why people were leaving now, when they, as a collective group, had so much power to implement change.¹⁸³ Susanne recalled it was like watching her country “bleed out.”¹⁸⁴

Although the fall of the wall and the Wende triggered massive change within East Germany, for Torsten the rise of Gorbachev was a more important and formative experience. Glasnost and perestroika were introduced right around the time that Torsten was studying in Leipzig. As a young man, Torsten was frustrated with the leadership of the SED. He was not a fan of Honecker, and hoped for a reformer to come on the scene.

Then suddenly there was Gorbachev, and he was a model reformer for us. We actually believed what he was saying, that you could approach socialism differently. And then he went on a promotional tour for socialism in a manner of speaking. ... and we thought, if he really makes an impact, then maybe something could come of all this ... But we never thought that that there was so much filth in the system, that it was unsalvageable.¹⁸⁵

Torsten remembered that Gorbachev signaled that change was possible in the GDR; he gave people hope that things did not have to continue on the same path. The promises of the Soviet reforms helped frame the hopes and desires for party members like Torsten, who became

¹⁸² Ibid. 519

¹⁸³ Ibid. 522

¹⁸⁴ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 577

¹⁸⁵ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 502

convinced that change was possible from within. The terms perestroika and glasnost became synonymous for internal democratic socialist reform.

When I asked Alfred Eichhorn about his recollections of the Wende, he did not engage in a detailed accounting of that formative day in early November. Rather, he described a long process beginning in 1985 where there were small shifts and hints that encouraged and fostered hope for those living in the GDR. He spoke of a joint paper produced by the SED and SPD in which they agreed to move closer to one another. Although the agreement was severely regimented, and ultimately ineffectual, Eichhorn remembered that seeing the two parties come together to open a dialog fostered hope that changes were on the way. Another indication of change came from the Helsinki process, which again provided Eichhorn with the hope that the rigid GDR held the power and possibility of change. A third hopeful sign were the more frequent visits of the Prime Ministers from the individual West German states. But the biggest sign that change could be on the way came from Gorbachev. Perestroika and glasnost generated the belief that reform was possible even in the GDR. However, Eichhorn noted that many of the party's hardliners were skeptical of Gorbachev and his ability to fulfill his promises. The fall of the wall, for Eichhorn, was just one moment in a cascade of events that unfolded over a half a decade.¹⁸⁶

I came to this project with the hypothesis that November 9 and the processes of reforms and changes that we call the Wende would form a formative midpoint, a fulcrum of sorts, in the lives and careers of the journalists under investigation. There would be the life before and the life after and a clear differentiation between. However after conducting the interviews and reviewing the numerous other recollections under investigation the picture is much less clear. While some journalists have very detailed and specific memories of the day the wall fell, the change or

¹⁸⁶ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 428

rupture happened over a much longer period of time. The image of the period that emerged from the journalist's recollections is one of slowly increasing insecurity and fear, followed by euphoria mixed with trepidation about the future. There seemed to be a relative consensus that the year 1985 and the appearance of Gorbachev marked the beginning of this period. The promises of glasnost, openness, had particular resonance for journalists who were firm believers in socialism and made their living through words. Freedom of the press and freedom of speech were causes and desires that touched on a deep professional tension. Gorbachev also promised reform from within, a socialist answer to questions of freedom and democracy, and for a population with strong emotional, ideological, and professional ties to the party, the call to internal reform naturally resonated. Although, with the promises of reform came fear and insecurity. In his interview with Meyen and Fiedler, the foreign correspondent Manfred Quiring echoed Frank Herold's experiences and frustrations in Moscow in the mid 1980s. When asked if Gorbachev's rise to power influenced the way he worked, Quiring answered,

Very much so. The people were more open, and spoke with me. Even the public agencies. And all of a sudden the newspapers became interesting. You suddenly had opportunities, and you could not take them.

[Meyen and Fiedler:] *Why not?*

You knew the rules, and where to employ the scissors. This was clearly not an honorable chapter. At that time I was of the mindset, this is the way things are and how they will stay. When perestroika came, every article had to cross the desk of the Editor-in-Chief. Dieter Kercheck was my personal copyeditor. Which ended up being good, because other people would have cut more out of fear.¹⁸⁷

Fear was a common refrain in the interviews as journalists worried about potential consequences of crossing an increasingly volatile political line.¹⁸⁸ Across the interviews journalists reflected on the internal discussions and debates that were happening within their respective news

¹⁸⁷ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 63.

¹⁸⁸ See for example the interviews with Brigitte Zimmermann and Stefan Amzoll in Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 57–60, 100–103; the interview with Journalist “G” in Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 177–187. Amzoll in Schubert, G in Mosebach, Zimmermann in Schubert

organizations. Although they spoke openly about glasnost, Gorbachev, and reform, none of these conversations and debates made it into the newspapers. In Manfred Bogisch's interview with Meyen and Fiedler, he revealed some of the considerations that went along with the decision to keep the papers quiet. Bogisch worked as a speechwriter for Manfred Gerlach, the head of the LDPD party within East Germany. Beginning in 1988, Gerlach and Bogisch began to shift the tenor of the debates and speeches given within the LDPD. Within meetings and events, Gerlach spoke openly about the situation in the GDR, and he gave the clear directive: "People speak your minds." This directive, however, was not extended to the party's publications. Bogisch recalled that the trauma of June 17 (the mass uprising in 1953 that ended with the violent suppression by Soviet tanks and troops) was still fresh in the mind of Gerlach, who had also personally experienced the SED's censorship practices when his 1978 manuscript was banned by Honecker. According to Bogisch, Gerlach's experiences made him fear for the safety and security of his 100,000 party members. As a result, Gerlach reminded his followers, "We are saying a lot here, but none of it will be publicized."¹⁸⁹

This discordance between what was said and what was published or broadcast was the source of intense professional and personal frustration for many. So when the wall finally opened, and Krenz signaled that change and free speech would be tolerated, the experience was euphoric and liberating, ushering in a period of unprecedented freedom and innovation.

Anarchic Freedom: Journalism Reinvented

A familiar refrain emerged from the interviews when the journalists discussed the transition period in 1989/90. The year 1990 "blossomed"¹⁹⁰ with "enthraling"¹⁹¹ and "unbridled

¹⁸⁹ Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf Journalisten in der DDR*, 260–261.

¹⁹⁰ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 430

¹⁹¹ Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner. 393

freedom.”¹⁹² It was an unregulated freedom, mixed with “anarchy,” where journalists went from complete oversight to zero oversight almost overnight.¹⁹³ It was a period when, “they no longer controlled us, and the others did not yet govern.”¹⁹⁴ As the mechanisms of control faded into the past, East German journalists were finally free to experiment and innovate, to toss the “scissors of the mind” into the trash, and write from their consciences. The overwhelming majority of journalists relished this “democratic awakening,” where they were able to test themselves, innovate, challenge the old formats and bring in new strategies. However, by nearly all accounts, this brief period of anarchic freedom was cut short by the economic and political reality of the unification. With the influx of western capital, competition, leadership, and bureaucratic structures, the period ended almost as soon as it had begun, and journalists were forced to adapt and adhere to the new journalistic paradigm brought over by the West. As Alfred Eichhorn recalled,

It was a wonderful time. I was able to see [and broadcast from] all over Europe ... [I broadcasted] from Radio Vatican, from the BBC in London. From Radio France. ... It was a crazy time. But we didn't really recognize what was happening, and how it was going to proceed, we didn't realize back then. It was outweighed by the enthusiasm for freedom. In the shadow of these events came the phasing-out of GDR-Broadcasting.¹⁹⁵

Although broadcast and print media underwent distinctly separate transformations – the former was absorbed into newly expanded public broadcasting structures under governmental oversight, and the latter experienced a transformation by the invisible hand of the market – the arc of the narrative is the same. With the fall of the wall came a period of blossoming anarchic freedom that contracted as soon as one system replaced the other. However, within this broader shared

¹⁹² Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 430

¹⁹³ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 532

¹⁹⁴ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 430

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 430

narrative, there are nuances and differences that emerged from the interviews that shed light on individual experiences and reactions to the shifting professional reality.

When Renate Schubert interviewed Alfred Eichhorn in May of 1991, the East German broadcasting institutions had yet to complete their transformation. The merger of East German radio and television into West German public broadcasting structures meant massive lay-offs and professional uncertainty. This uncertainty was compounded by a growing number of Stasi-scandals and revelations as former colleagues and superiors were fired or denounced in public for their interactions with the GDR's massive surveillance organization.¹⁹⁶ In 1991, Eichhorn was particularly troubled by the growing number of Stasi-revelations and denunciations within the media.

The atmosphere has been poisoned here through intellectual denunciations, of everyone who had worked for the Stasi. These things escalate when two positions become one. At an open reception in the city, one of the heads of SFB [*Sender Freies Berlin*, a West Berlin broadcasting station that merged with the East German station *Rundfunk der DDR*] announced loudly to the entire hall, 'Your deputy and your coworkers are Stasi employees.' He named names. They had become known through the publication *die andere*. To be called out, in public, in that manner ... it is a power-struggle.¹⁹⁷

By 2013, much of Eichhorn's frustration regarding these revelations and scandals had passed. His recollections focused more on the practical implications of this period. He explained how, in the early days of the unification, there was no Gauck-Agency (the public agency responsible for the Stasi files and background investigations into Stasi complicity). Mühlfenzl, the West German official tasked with overseeing the import of West German broadcasting structures into the expanded East German public broadcasting system, required that broadcast employees fill out a questionnaire asking them to admit to any previous cooperation with the Stasi. Eichhorn

¹⁹⁶ See the interviews with Spiekermann, Amzoll and Eichhorn in Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 17–23, 100–103, 88.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

reflected that most people with compromised pasts left willingly. Some were able to escape detection, because the need for experienced broadcasters to work in the newly founded regional public broadcasting stations was so great that people turned a blind eye to former Stasi entanglements. Eichhorn remarked that he was lucky and never felt the pressure to cooperate with the massive public surveillance system. He entered the university as a non-party member but suspected that the Stasi would have approached him if he had joined the party at such a young age.¹⁹⁸

Eichhorn noted that he frequently returned to this specific period in his career, trying to understand what the determinants of success were. He explained that there was a division among his colleagues between those who were able to continue within the profession and those who were unable to find the path forward. Eichhorn argued that there were a number of factors that shaped one's ability to adapt to the new conditions. The Wende unleashed new challenges for journalists. It required them to not only be open to dialog, but also to be able to assert their opinion. The socialist system, according to Eichhorn, prevented this independence and conviction in its journalists, because the socialist ideology and propaganda provided all of the answers without the need for independent thought. Eichhorn admitted that he lost many friends among his former colleagues, friends who had become frustrated and combative and resisted the coming changes. These friends considered him a traitor for joining ranks with the "class enemy." Eichhorn, however, did not resent this hostility, and understood how hard it was to cope with and grasp the shifting ideological and cultural environment. It was only those colleagues who were a

¹⁹⁸ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 433

little different, either in their intellect or ambition, who had tried to innovate and challenge the status quo under the old regime that found it easier to work and thrive in the new context.¹⁹⁹

Although Eichhorn was able to find employment after the merger of East and West German broadcasting, there were still a number of challenges adapting to the new working conditions. Once the new structures were in place, Eichhorn found his work frustrating and less rewarding. He was hired at *SFB*, the regional public radio station in Berlin. In order to determine his pay scale within the new broadcasting regime, his new superiors reviewed his resume and career and determined that twenty years of journalism in the GDR were equivalent to four years of experience in the western system.²⁰⁰ A career in East Germany was literally worth one fifth of its western counterpart. Within a short period of time, Eichhorn stopped attending meetings and retreated into his own program. He said that immediately after the *Wende*, he was asked to join ORB, the regional public radio station in Bonn as a program coordinator. He turned down the offer, because he felt that after working for 20 years to build, maintain, and support the socialist state, he could not all of a sudden turn around and supervise the next generation of journalists; it simply could not work. Instead he continued to work for *SFB*. He was given his own program titled, “Forum – die Debatte im Inforadio” that was focused on political debate and discussion. Eichhorn recalled being one of the few journalists who had worked on politics in the old system and who was able to continue to report on politics after the *Wende*. He was given relative autonomy to produce his broadcasts with minimal interference from his superiors.²⁰¹ He continued to host his program until it ended in 2009. He now works as a freelance journalist.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 435

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 438

²⁰¹ Ibid. 439

Alfred Eichhorn was in his mid forties in 1989/90, and he had spent two decades establishing himself within the state-socialist media system. Susanne H, on the other hand was in her mid twenties when the Wall fell. Her cohort at the Karl Marx University was one of the last to finish its training in the GDR. She graduated in 1988 and had worked for a little over a year by the time she went on maternity leave in September of 1989. During her year at home, she closely followed the work and practices of her colleagues so that she would be properly prepared when she returned to work. She listened to her old program, and she visited the station every other month to keep in contact and to learn about how the daily practice of journalism was evolving. Susanne reflected that the timing of her maternity leave ended up being particularly fortuitous. She maintained that prior to her return to work, there had been massive layoffs at *DT-64*, commenting that a disproportionate amount of the people who were fired were women with small children. However, since Susanne was on maternity leave, she could not legally be fired. By returning to work in November of 1990, exactly one year after the birth of her daughter, Susanne remembered slipping through the cracks, and she was able to survive the cutbacks and pick up her job where she left off.²⁰² She portrayed the period when she returned to work as a difficult but good education. She was responsible for the breaking news portion of the broadcast and spent the majority of her day traveling around Berlin, now unified, interviewing officials and reporting on events. She relished her ability to travel between East and West Berlin and described how unusual it was to live your entire life in a city and then from one day to the next, have the city grow by two thirds. “It was like living in an apartment with only two rooms, and

²⁰² H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 578

opening a door to discover that there were three more rooms that had been there the entire time.”²⁰³

Like Eichhorn, Susanne remembered this time as a period of freedom and innovation but it was also a moment of intense professional pressure and upheaval. She relished the opportunity to report on topics that had previously been taboo. She recalled how one young man came to the station, wanting to report on the rise of male prostitution at eastern German train stations. According to the leadership of the GDR, homosexuality did not exist within the GDR, so topics like this had naturally been taboo. However, with the changes in the political climate, young journalists were able to bring new and challenging topics like this to the table, to expand the dialog between the station and its audience.²⁰⁴ Susanne described this period as “enthraling.” She seized this opportunity to push her knowledge base and report on new topics like the environment. She threw herself into this new subject, reporting on environmental scandals and challenging her listeners to think critically about their impact on the environment. In the years after the Wende, she became an expert on the environment, a career development that she remarked would have been impossible under the old regime.

In Eichhorn’s recollection of this period, the regionalization of the radio stations opened up unique job opportunities for East German journalists. The new broadcasting stations needed experienced personnel to build their stations from the ground up. However, for Susanne, this regionalization posed a great challenge for her young family. Susanne worked for *DT-64*, East Germany’s youth radio station. In the GDR, *DT-64* was broadcast nation-wide, but when it came time to restructure and regionalize the radio stations, the decision was made to redistribute the youth radio station’s frequency. In 1993 the station, with its personnel, was moved to Halle,

²⁰³ Ibid. 580

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 582

where it became part of MDR (*Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk*, Middle German Broadcasting). If Susanne had wanted to keep her job, she would have had to move to Halle a city two hours away by car. She had to consider the impact of the move for her family. She had a young child, so a long commute was not ideal. Furthermore, her husband had a job in Berlin, and while no job was secure in the East in the early 1990s, it was a job in Berlin nonetheless. For Susanne and her colleagues, moving to a city like Halle was like moving to the “provinces.”²⁰⁵ She continued to work for the station full time until the official move to Halle in February 1993. Although she was no longer a full-time employee of the station, she continued her work on a freelance basis and spent the weekends broadcasting in Halle (weekends were reserved for freelance journalists, since full-time employees were given the weekend off). She commuted like this for a little over a year until she became pregnant with her second child.

Susanne recalled that very few of her former colleagues made the transition to Halle, but she argued that this had little to do with the city and more to do with the fact that the job had changed. In the immediate Post-Wende period, the station had democratically elected its own leadership, but with the implementation of the public radio structures, a new leadership was imposed on the station from the outside. Susanne remarked that there was no way that the initial Post-Wende period of freedom, spontaneity, and innovation could sustain itself, but it was a difficult transition nonetheless. The new boss, an East German dissident who had worked in East German radio before emigrating to the West, wanted to streamline the radio station to make it more profitable and more similar to the private radio stations in the West. She commented that the work atmosphere went from free and exciting to more and more authoritarian. She believed

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 562

that it was this shift in management that was responsible for so few colleagues making the move to Halle.²⁰⁶

Although the broadcasting institutions were placed under the unique pressure of being absorbed into the public radio system, the print industry experienced a similar trend of immense freedom followed by frustrations and disillusionment. Torsten H's experiences at the *Berliner Zeitung* mirrored that of Alfred Eichhorn in a number of ways. Torsten remembered a number of his colleagues who were swept up uncovering and reporting on scandals and abuses of the previous regime. This however was less interesting to Torsten, who was more concerned with deeper questions about the future of Marxism and communism in the wake of the GDR's collapse. What was someone supposed to do with these ideas and beliefs, for which they would have gladly gone to war? Torsten described this period as a mix of freedom and anarchy. There was one year where the paper answered to no higher authority, the SED had relinquished control, and the new western owners had yet to arrive.²⁰⁷ In this year you could write anything and it would be published verbatim. When the new owners arrived Torsten struggled to adapt to the new working conditions,

Worlds collided, and for certain people, who came to the *Berliner Zeitung*, only the other world mattered, because that was what they knew. The GDR was dead. But as GDR-journalist you couldn't suddenly, naturally and self-consciously play along with this other world. ... It was a problem, to learn these new topics, and it was another problem to transform your self-image. ... On top of that came something that I still struggle with today, that you have to be a hunter for information, a researcher who constantly chases after people, and I come from a different corner. That is why I work better at the science desk, or in features.²⁰⁸

Torsten described this year following the Wende as a complete maelstrom. He struggled to stay afloat amid the massive cultural, political, and professional changes. He estimated that it took

²⁰⁶ Ibid. 564

²⁰⁷ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 525

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 533

him nearly five years to recover; it was only after he took time off for the birth of his second daughter in 1996 that he stopped having trouble at work.²⁰⁹

Frank Herold was hired by the *Berliner Zeitung* right in the middle of this period of awakening. He left *Neues Deutschland*, because the paper was slow to adapt to the ever shifting and expanding professional landscape. With the move to *Berliner Zeitung* in January of 1990, Herold was finally able to report on those topics that had intrigued him for years. He reported on what he had learned in Moscow about Gorbachev and the reform process; he penned commentaries and analyses; he was freed to pursue his own interests. Herold remarked that it was easy for East German journalists to pick up new topics and formats because, “The majority of colleagues had always wanted to write about [these new topics], and that is why they could write about them. The will was already there.”²¹⁰

Herold described the discussions and debates that occurred among the journalists as happening in two waves. The first wave emerged early in the year and involved the discovery of corruption and abuse among the old elite. The journalists debated and discussed using the paper as a form of public justice as a reckoning for the crimes of the previous regime. These debates were followed by a second wave that Herold attributed to the entrance of new West German colleagues to the paper. These debates focused on the colliding worlds that Torsten described in his interviews. The *Berliner Zeitung* hired a large number of West German journalists to join the paper in 1990/91, and the collision of East and West brought with it frustrations but also opportunities for mutual growth. Herold’s frustrations seemed to center on the wage gap between the East German and West German colleagues:

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 532

²¹⁰ Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold. 477

Then the western colleagues came, to earn the big bucks, as it were, in the East. And they came quickly, because the *taz, die Tageszeitung* [a West Berlin daily newspaper], paid poorly, it still doesn't pay all that well today, but they really paid poorly back then. And these new colleagues came from the West as part of a very complicated [salary] structure. They were hired in the West, and paid western salaries. ... they earned triple [my salary]. They did the same work. This meant that in our editorial office we had people earning West salaries and East salaries, and that was the case until 1995. These people were doing the same work.²¹¹

It was not only the salary differential that bothered Herold, but also a certain paternalistic manner in which the new colleagues interacted with the GDR journalists,

There were also discussions with these colleagues. They would sit before you [and ask] 'Tell us about your biography.' That had a paternalistic nature to it, or therapeutic, as if we needed therapy to deal with this rupture, [to deal] with socialism. They lasted for a long time, these discussions, deep into the 1990s, but now they are long over. ... Because there was no other newspaper in Germany that had such a mixed staff of East colleagues and West colleagues, it was said for the longest time that we were 'The *Berliner Zeitung* Project.' We are not a project. We are a commercial enterprise. We are not a therapy group, or the devil knows what. We have to earn money. So I always pushed against that, against the '*Berliner Zeitung* Project.'²¹²

It was clear from Herold's recollections, that there were some structural and communications challenges that emerged as the paper tried to bring together colleagues from East and West.

However, he did remember how vital and important the new Western owners were to the paper's success and survival. Gruner + Jahr built an entire distribution network from the ground up; they provided technical support and educational opportunities for journalists to learn western methods and strategies. The new publishers re-structured the paper so that it could compete in the open market.²¹³

When I asked Herold if he needed to relearn his job as a consequence of the Wende, he responded that in terms of methods, not at all. The daily practice of journalism differed only slightly from one system to the next. There was, however, still so much to learn. The Wende

²¹¹ Ibid. 479

²¹² Ibid. 479

²¹³ Ibid. 480

brought with it access to books, scholars, and literature that had been censored under the SED leadership. Reading became the focus of his professional re-education.

I had so much to learn after the Wende. And I am still learning even more today. I cannot say 'I have been at this job for 30 years, so no one can tell me anything.' Every day I discover things that I find interesting, and they are new to me, and that is the best part of this job, it is the very best part of this job.²¹⁴

Both Frank Herold and Torsten H came to the new *Berliner Zeitung* with careers established in the East. For them this period at the paper involved both personal and professional adjustments and challenges as they made their way from one system to the next. Abini, however, came to the *Berliner Zeitung* in 1991 after working for only one year. Her career began with the Wende, and she came to the paper with a unique perspective.

Abini began her career as a journalist on January 1, 1990. She was assigned to the letters department of *Junge Welt*, which brought her special insight into the transition between the two systems. She described how the readers were learning to speak their minds, and change the way that they thought about things. Working in the letters department taught her the basic craft of journalism. In addition to learning how to read and write articles, she established an understanding and a relationship with her audience. Within a few months, one of her colleagues became pregnant and Abini was able to temporarily take over her job at the Life Style desk. This promotion, while temporary, gave her the opportunity to prove herself, and she did so very quickly. Within a year Abini had made the move from the letters desk to become a full-fledged correspondent, and by November 1990, she was recruited to work for the *Berliner Zeitung*. Indeed she relished sitting across the desk from the same woman who had denied her a job

²¹⁴ Ibid. 480

nearly one year before, only this time she was a desired recruit.²¹⁵ On January 1, 1991 Abini was where she had always wanted to be, working as a journalist for the *Berliner Zeitung*.

Abini described the process of transformation as slow: for her there was not a shift from one day to the next, but a long process that mirrored the transformation of the society as a whole. When she reflected on this period, she framed it around the different experiences of the various generations.

It was all a question of the generations. The young generation saw a bunch of opportunities that appeared suddenly. They wanted to discuss and to talk it out. The older generation, who had defended their work for so many years, they saw their lifestyle crash into pieces. ... Everything fell apart. Then all of a sudden, nothing was like it had been before. Some tried to go with the new times, because they wanted to. Some allowed themselves to be convinced of the new arguments. Some were more like ‘wrynecks’ [*Wendehälse*]; they were only in the job to have a certain status, not because of any belief or conviction. And they continued to work in the job to have a certain status, and not because of any belief or conviction. As diverse as humans are, that is how diverse the reactions were.²¹⁶

Abini recalled being hired with a wave of new West German colleagues who came to the *Berliner Zeitung* in 1991. For her, this period was a moment of great cooperation and partnership as two cultures came together and collided. For her, this collision was by-and-large positive as parties from both sides tried to encourage and help one another. She was inspired by her West German colleagues to return to school to learn more about the practical elements of journalism, only this time she attended a school in Hamburg to learn the West German style of journalism. She stated that it was by no means necessary for her to go back to school: she was a journalist, and had been hired by the paper, but she realized that her Western colleagues approached the practice of journalism differently.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner. 393

²¹⁶ Ibid. 394

²¹⁷ Ibid. 396

I realized, that we as East-journalists were naturally more inhibited in our research. I also realized just how broadly we could actually do research, how many rights we had vis-à-vis government agencies. This was not the case in the East. Everything relied much more on relationships. I learned how to interact with sources. I didn't know much about that that before. And above all, what had a very strong influence on me was that the stylistics of journalism were completely different. You can boil it down to one simple point. In the East, many nouns were used, and in the West, many verbs. Therefore the Western journalism was much easier to understand, because the sentences were similar to how I am speaking now, and in the East there were simply an extremely large amount of nouns.²¹⁸

Abini made sure to note that most East German journalists did not need to go back to school. They made the transition from one system to the next on their own. But going back to school allowed Abini to make the adjustment very quickly.

During this period from the fall of the Wall until the early 1990s, the profession of journalism underwent a rapid transformation, and the reflections and memories of this period are either tied to the joys of unbridled freedom or the disappointment of the new reality that came with unification. One journalist interviewed by Angelika Holterman characterized this period as “the short period of illusions.”²¹⁹ And many journalists struggled to adjust to the new reality.

Mosebach interviewed a journalist, ‘B,’ who confessed,

I was depressed for a long period of time, depressed about the collapse of an idea that I thought could succeed as a societal concept. I was unhappy about the fact that I did not realize that I was also to blame for conforming. At the same time [I thought]: you have to correct this, if you get the chance, you cannot make this mistake again. It was a mentally stressful process that took a very long time.²²⁰

The euphoria of freedom was laced with the frustrations of defeat, loss, and uncertainty for the future. The *Berliner Zeitung* is one of the papers that made the transition successfully, but many journalists lost their jobs during this period, and a successful transition from old to new required as much luck as skill. Susanne reflected that you could identify the fact that there was some

²¹⁸ Ibid. 396

²¹⁹ Holterman, *Das Geteilte Leben*, 225–284.

²²⁰ Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 163–169.

broad cultural psychological trauma from the fact that many families postponed having children. It took five years for her family to be ready to have another child, and she remembered many of her peers exhibiting a similar gap in the birth of their children.²²¹

The entrance of West German capital, oversight, and journalists posed particular challenges for the East German media professionals. It is clear from the interviews that some resented the entrance of “*Besserwessis*” (West German know-it-alls), who swooped in, earned more and stole jobs from others. Others resented being made to feel guilty for what had happened under the old regime.

And then came a very horrible time as *NDR* came here. New leadership came, everything that we had before meant nothing. They had a primordial mistrust of us. And I had great difficulties coping with that in the first year. Now I have done it. [But] the things that they accused us of after the *Wende* that we had unconditionally subordinated ourselves, and that was the first thing that they expected of us, unconditional subordination. In the meantime, there is a different climate. We have both backed off, but for me that was horrible.²²²

The interviews conducted in the early 1990s seemed to characterize this period on the more negative side of the scale. The resentments and frustrations were still fresh, and the uncertainty for the future was clear in the interviews conducted by Schubert in 1991.²²³ Journalists detailed the struggles of their papers to become profitable and compete on the open market.²²⁴ The journalists interviewed by Mosebach, some of whom are quoted above, also share this unease and frustration about the transitional period. Euphoria was mixed with fear, insecurity, and depression. Holterman’s subjects, interviewed in the mid 1990s, shared some of these reflections, but by and large her interviewees were more disappointed that the freedom established in the early days of the transition did not last. Since Meyen and Fiedler focused their interviews

²²¹ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 599

²²² Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*

²²³ See for example the interview with Amzoll in Schubert, *Ohne grösseren Schaden?*, 100–103.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 57–60, 100–103.

primarily on journalistic work prior to the Wende, their subjects had little to contribute to the nature and process of the post-Wende transformation.

It is clear from the interviews, that the passage of time has diminished some of the pain of the process of transformation. The journalists interviewed in 2013 survived the turmoil of the early 1990s, and while they were able to identify the major challenges they faced, the sense of loss and fear for the future was diminished. The narratives are much less volatile, and emphasize the similarities and continuities throughout a long established career in German journalism.

The Enduring Value of Socialist Journalism

In the paradigm of the Cold War, socialist journalism was diametrically opposed to western journalism. Peering over the Iron Curtain, it was hard to see what East and West journalists had in common. The East German journalist was a banner-waving functionary of the socialist regime, whose job consisted of furthering the socialist cause and shielding the state from the dissemination of enemy information. In the West, the journalist was the power behind the fourth estate, protecting democracy and shielding the public from government over-reach and authority through the revelation of information. However, for the journalists who lived and worked in both systems, the differences in the daily practice of the profession from one system to the next were surprisingly minor. The practice of journalism was relatively constant, with one major and obvious change, freedom. Nearly a quarter century after the Wende, the journalists described a continuity and similarity between the old system and the new. Beside the undeniable observation that journalists in the Post-Wende period had the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press, each journalist highlighted only a few small nuances between socialist and capitalist journalism.

Abini focused primarily on language, mentioning the shift from nouns to verbs, as well as the ability of capitalist journalists to be more forthright and clear.²²⁵ For Eichhorn, there was a marked difference in style. In the GDR, stories needed to be “nice, effective, and properly constructed.” Now, in the new style of public broadcasting, stories needed to be “cool, exciting, romantic.”²²⁶ Frank Herold remarked there were still differences in socialization that shaped the way that Eastern and Western journalists approached their profession. One’s formative experiences shaped one’s perspective, which he saw reflected in the way that East and West German journalists approached their topics. Similarly, Torsten reflected that growing up in the GDR did leave him with some deficits vis-à-vis his Western colleagues. Languages were an area where the East German journalist lagged behind, because the East German training underemphasized languages from the non-socialist-west, and language study focused primarily on translation rather than conversation and interaction.²²⁷ Susanne noticed a fundamental change in the role and function of journalism. Previously the journalist had been the gatekeeper to information, and now the journalist was only there to sell you something.

Throughout the interviews, the journalists made it clear that the training they had received in Leipzig—and for Abini, in Berlin—had provided them with essential tools for their profession, tools that remained helpful today. Frank Herold stated the case plainly.

The technical differences of journalism between East and West do not exist. The methodology of a commentary is the methodology of a commentary; in the West, as in the East. The methodology of a report is the methodology of a report; in the West, as in the East. The methodology of an interview is the methodology of an interview. And [we] learned that from the bottom up.²²⁸

²²⁵ Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner. 396

²²⁶ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 441

²²⁷ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 547

²²⁸ Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold. 469

Susanne confirmed that she still used strategies and lessons that she learned in her training in Leipzig on a daily basis when constructing a story, for example, ensuring that before writing she clearly identified the topic and purpose of her story.²²⁹ Methods and practices like this were drilled into the students at Leipzig, so that they became second nature. The East German journalists saw the tools that they amassed at the KMU as part of the handicraft of the profession, and were thankful for the focus on skilled writing and construction. This was something in which they differentiated themselves from their West German colleagues, most of whom they saw as having limited technical university journalism training. Nearly all of the journalists agreed that there were elements of their education that could be discarded. Susanne, for example, pointed to the countless hours she spent translating articles from the formerly Soviet newspaper *Prawda* that would have been better used elsewhere.²³⁰ Abini was thankful not to have wasted her time on the ideological components and wished that she had been trained to be more assertive and original in her writing. Herold, on the other hand, discovered a way to learn even from those elements of his education that he found harmful or useless—like the ideological components of his education—by turning them into a quasi “negative dialectic” they became useful again, “because I know [the ideology] does not work”.²³¹ Eichhorn spoke less favorably about his education than did the other journalists. He conceded that while he learned some practical skills at the university (how to write a news report or a commentary), he believed that journalism was not something that a person could “learn” but was something that required natural-born talent.²³² However there was overwhelming agreement that when boiled down to its essential components, journalism remained journalism.

²²⁹ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 588

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Herold and Guzman, Appendix 4: Frank Herold. 487

²³² Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 428

Frank Herold, in his interview, touched on an interesting paradox of socialist journalism. When defining his understanding of freedom he argued, “I am a journalist. For me, the freedom of speech is an existential freedom. When I don’t have that, I cannot really be a journalist. That was the situation in the GDR.”²³³ When I pushed him to define or describe socialist journalism in the absence of free speech he gave the following answer.

Yes, oh yes, that is exactly a very important question. I became a journalist because I wanted to tell stories. And I still want to do that today. I of course know, after thirty years in the business, that telling stories is not the extent of journalism. Rather, you must produce a newspaper, with its technical elements. As an editor, you have to bring all of the stories from other colleges together into the newspaper. Now there is the question of course, when we are discussing freedom of speech, I knew from the very beginning that I could not tell every story in socialist journalism. I still cannot tell every story, but the reasons for that are different. Now the reasons are that some things just do not sell, and [for that reason] there are stories that I cannot tell, even though they interest me.²³⁴

Socialist journalism resembled western journalism in many ways, and many of the central practical components varied only slightly. However, at its essential core, socialist journalism did lack the central tenant of its western counterpart, freedom of speech. This paradox, of broad similarity and continuity masking a single essential variation, coursed through the heart of the interviews and was difficult to define and explain. Journalists spoke of broad similarities and continuities, but still understood a basic discrepancy between the old role and the new. This tension was more palpable in the interviews conducted in the early 1990s. In these interviews, the differences between the GDR and the West were cast in black and white, good and evil. Mosebach’s interviews are clear on this matter. Mosebach set the function of socialist journalism and democratic journalism as diametrically opposed, as oppositional “functional consciousnesses.” These functions were so incompatible that the old was deemed immoral in the context of the new. He asked his journalists to contemplate their guilt and responsibility for

²³³ Herold and Guzman, Apendix 4: Frank Herold. 458

²³⁴ Ibid. 459

supporting and maintaining the authoritarian regime and speak to their ability and willingness to “come to terms with the past.” In his analysis, Mosebach found his subjects lacking.

As the result of the completed journalist survey, a deficient and thereby incomplete rehabilitation of the past has been detected among the selected journalists. ... It reveals, that those questioned only selectively enumerate their individual position as a journalist, they qualify and justify their behavior, they insufficiently analyze the structural sources of their behavior, and to a large extent, they displace their responsibility and guilt respectively.

If one translates the consequences of an incomplete processing of the past to the illustrated results, one comes to the conclusion that the subjects only complete their function of a journalist in the system of political communication in the German Federal republic in a limited (self-) conscious manner. A new function (broker of information) is only tentatively accepted, in which this behavior can be interpreted as an offshoot of an old (partial) function, but not as an active acceptance of the new. The limited functional consciousness is thereby a result of the (deficient) examination of the past, in other words construed as an incomplete coming to terms with the past.²³⁵

Mosebach interpreted the journalists’ inability to break with the past as an essential and dangerous democratic deficiency that could endanger democracy in the new eastern German states. What Mosebach failed to understand, however, was the importance of continuity for an individual’s narrative biography.²³⁶ Mosebach expected his journalists to break with the past, to become reborn as democrats and reject all elements of their previous profession. However, it was natural for the journalists to draw continuities between their old and new lives, to learn from their choices and mistakes, and build on an existing foundation, rather than completely discard a life, career, upbringing, and education. The transition took time: for some, it took years to emotionally process the events and changes of the early 1990s.²³⁷ However, after nearly a quarter century in the new democratic world, the journalists were able to identify more lines of continuity than ruptures or breaks. With the exception of Eichhorn, whose career tenure in the

²³⁵ Mosebach, *Alles bewältigt?*, 110.

²³⁶ As identified in the introduction to this chapter, the construction of memory encourages continuity, and people are drawn to justify and explain their acts, and construct a narrative that connects the past to the present.

²³⁷ See for example the comments of Torsten cited earlier in this chapter.

East nearly matched his time post-Wende, the majority of journalists interviewed in 2013 had spent the bulk of their careers in unified Germany. Thirteen years into the new millennium, there was little that differentiated a western-born journalist from one born in the GDR. As Herold pointed out there were slight nuances in socialization and perspective, but Susanne argued that there was little that differentiated a left-leaning western journalist from a left leaning former GDR journalist.²³⁸ Torsten pointed out that the East/West divide in journalism was becoming a relic of the past. For the growing number of journalists entering the profession as part of the younger generations, there was no East/West divide.²³⁹ The journalists identified more troubling or important dichotomies and trends that made more of an impression on their profession than the East/West divide. Many pointed to the rise of tabloid or boulevard media that focused solely on entertainment over cultural or intellectual value. Both Eichhorn and Herold noted the impact of commercial or political interests as a limitation on what could be produced; however, they made a clear differentiation between this and censorship. Eichhorn said, “The fundamental principle of freedom of information prevails ... That in one place or another [information] is repressed, that in one place or another parties or governments exert influence, is another question, however the general freedom prevails.”²⁴⁰

For the print journalists especially, the rise of digital media raised important and fundamental concerns for the future of their profession. What was the role of print media in a world of twitter, Google, and Facebook? The rise of new media had disrupted the profession of print journalism in a number of ways, making the print journalist’s job less secure, more demanding, and more reliant on new technology and innovation. While Torsten and Frank

²³⁸ H. and Guzman, Appendix 6: Susanne H. 600

²³⁹ H. and Guzman, Appendix 5: Torsten H. 493

²⁴⁰ Eichhorn and Guzman, Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn. 448

Herold expressed concern about the future of their profession in the face of the new digital challenge, Abini maintained confidence that there would continue to be a defined and necessary role for journalists. She argued that journalists were the practitioners of a unique handicraft and that they provided an essential service, interpreting and translating information for the public.²⁴¹ These are journalists with their eyes directed forward on the challenges to come, and not faced backward dwelling on the mistakes, missteps, and faults of choices or estimations of their youth.

Conclusion

For the journalists I interviewed, the GDR formed the origin from which their careers followed, and their current successes and lives are indivisible from their pasts. In the intervening years, the political tensions surrounding the GDR have subsided; the fear of a resurgence of the SED or the Stasi has been proven unfounded. As a result, these journalists were able to counter what they felt were misconceptions about the GDR. They saw their lives and careers not as slaves to a party or ideology but as autonomous individuals who made realistic choices based on a given set of circumstances. These journalists did not have the freedoms they do now, but they were active and freethinking individuals who were aware of their reality, functioned within their own code of ethics, and who strived to produce work of which they could be proud.

They did not deny the corrupt and poisonous nature of a profession dominated by authoritarian postulates, censorship, and restrictions, but they nevertheless were practitioners of a unique craft that turned out to be relatively transferrable to the Post-Wende world. The transition between these two worlds was by no means simple or easy. The loss of an ideology, of a guiding principle, took a profound and personal toll, and it took years for many to recover. However the narratives reveal how even in the light of massive economic, cultural, political, and professional

²⁴¹ Zöllner and Guzman, Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner. 410

upheaval, a significant portion of the journalists of the GDR had the skills, willingness, and the opportunity to succeed.

What emerges from the narratives of the five journalists is a success story. However, the interviews with Alfred Eichhorn and Susanne H. point to a significant number of journalists who were unable to make the curve. Within this broad existing continuity, there were still a large number of journalists who for whatever reason were left behind. These stories have by and large been ignored. These journalists were unable to adjust with the changing tides, they were the ones who were lacking in motive, skill, or opportunity to continue in their chosen career path. Their reflections, their valuation of their education, their training and their careers may naturally diverge from those presented above. Their narratives may be dominated more by rupture and disillusionment than by the continuity and success presented above. This is one area where scholarship could benefit from bringing in these alternative perspectives.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the history of East German socialist and post-socialist journalism from the late 1980s through the 1990s. Through this narrow professional and national scope, the analysis has revealed a narrative of a profession in transition as the culture and society around it has undergone a profound and fundamental change. This was a complicated process for the journalists of East to seize the reins and direct the way forward. The nature, shape, and future of the profession has been determined largely by outside forces, and the journalists endeavored to adapt and conform to a shifting media landscape. Within these externally-imposed constraints, journalists tried to carve out areas of independence and influence, within which they could present their own identities and perspectives. However, the political powers outside of the profession established the ground rules. In the GDR, the party dominated the profession, and enforced conformity and obedience through pervasive structures of control and censorship. When the party and socialist authority collapsed, the CDU and politicians from the West were able to establish the path forward. A functioning free press was essential to the democratic legitimacy of the new unified Germany, and the matter was too important to be left in the hands of the former socialist media elite. The journalists themselves were too busy trying to shake off the burdens of lingering problems from the Honecker era—debt and profitability problems, technological obsolescence, distribution and production hurdles, as well as internalized practices of conformity and censorship—to put up much resistance to the economically and politically powerful West German companies and parties. The East Germans were given the established structures and norms of the West, and the journalists could either adapt and prove themselves to be capable of upholding democracy, or exit the profession. A substantial portion of the profession proved capable.

The specific transition and transformation of socialist journalism in East Germany had a distinctly national character. For example, the presence of West Germany, with its shared language and national history, had a profound impact both on the media strategies of the state-socialist government and on the shape and character of the transition through the unification. The location of the GDR on the front lines of the Cold War, made it the target of larger geo-political tensions and influence as evidenced by the “Two-Plus-Four” talks and the unification treaty. Furthermore, the German history of National Socialism and the Holocaust had a profound effect on both the politics of East and West Germany, and the way that historical legacies were processed and treated in the Wende and Post-Wende period. While these and other national details are important to the understanding of the events within the newest German states, it is also important to understand how the events within East Germany fit within a broader pattern that occurred throughout East/Central Europe. Most socialist countries experienced authoritarian control of the media, a brief blossoming of press freedom and liberalization during the revolutionary period, followed by a contraction and struggle with new economic conditions and political influence. Through the comparison to the broader transition out of socialism in East/Central Europe, we can better situate the East German transition into a larger conversation about post-socialist transformations.

Since this is the conclusion of the dissertation, the scope of the observations will naturally be of a broader and comparative nature and will be limited to the immediate pre-and post-revolutionary period.¹ The goal of this endeavor is to re-examine the four themes identified in the introduction—journalistic self-determination, government control of the media, lingering

¹ Should this dissertation become a book project, my goal is to expand on this discussion so that it will be an additional chapter, with more comparative research on the national variations of socialist journalism, and I will expand on the themes identified in this conclusion to more specific findings comparing the various national transitions.

socialist structures, and the impact of foreign media—to understand the similarities and unique national differences of these themes. This analysis relies heavily on three edited volumes published in English that surveyed and compared socialist media in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and the subsequent transitions of those countries out of communism.² Using these and other secondary sources, I will re-examine the conclusions from this dissertation and see how they fit into a broader conversation about the international socialist media transformation.

The tension between external controls and journalistic self-determination

The first theme identified in the introduction was the tension between external controls and journalistic self-determination. The East German journalists traded one externally imposed system for another, one authoritarian determined by the SED and the other democratic imported from West Germany. Although the potential future of the media was of central concern to dissidents, reformers, and external observers, the journalists of East Germany played a relatively passive role in the unfolding of events in the GDR and the future shape of their profession. In the GDR, there was no large domestic underground or dissident press, and the journalists internalized the structures of control in a form of self-censorship they called, “the scissors of the mind.” Although there was a brief period of journalistic re-invention, the eventual shape and character of the post-socialist media was determined from the outside through the unification with West Germany. This was a profession that allowed events to happen and that struggled to define its own action.

² These edited volumes brought together scholars with specific expertise both in a specific country and its socialist media. David L Paletz, Karol Jakubowicz, and Pavao Novosel, *Glasnost and after: Media and Change in Central and Eastern Europe* (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1995); Jerome Aumente et al., eds., *Eastern European Journalism: Before, during and after Communism* (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1999). Karol Jakubowicz and Miklos Sükösd, *Finding the Right Place on the Map: Central and Eastern European Media Change in a Global Perspective*, European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) (Bristol, UK; Chicago: Intellect, 2008).

Across Eastern Europe journalists experienced the phenomenon of self-censorship and struggled with their own internal censor. In systems of repression and control, self-censorship served as a form of self-preservation, and allowed journalists to maneuver and operate within the prescribed norms and evade reprimand. This was not a practice unique to the journalists of East Germany, and it affected both journalists and intellectuals throughout the Soviet bloc.³ The premise of socialist journalism as defined by Lenin was predicated on the fact that the journalist served the party and functioned as a weapon in the perpetual ideological struggle. As such, the journalistic profession was co-opted and integrated into the authoritarian structures of control with varying levels of resistance. In some countries, journalists were able to break free and contribute to the opposition through active participation in revolts and revolutions or through the production of dissident media, but the official profession remained subservient to the state, and struggled to embrace independence once those state structures fell away.

The relative passivity of the East German journalists under single party rule is best understood as part of a spectrum of authoritarian control of the media across East/Central Europe, from the most severe case in Romania, to the comparatively free media of pre-martial law Poland and Hungary under the leadership of János Kádár. By the end of the 1980s in Romania, the domestic socialist media were completely under the authoritarian thumb of the country's leader Nicolae Ceausescu, resulting in what one émigré called, "a defiled profession."⁴ Due to the swift and pervasive action of Romania's secret police service, known as the

³ Jerome Aumente, "The Role and Effects of Journalism and Samizdat Leading up to 1989," in *Eastern European Journalism: Before, during and after Communism*, ed. Peter Gross et al. (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1999).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 57. Referencing, Peter Gross, *Mass Media in Revolution and National Development: The Romanian Laboratory* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1996).

“Securitate,” underground or *samizdat*⁵ media were nearly non-existent, and the official journalists within Romania practiced their profession with severe external and self-censorship controls.⁶ By the end of the Ceausescu era, journalism within Romania had become largely irrelevant for the average Romanian citizen.⁷ The profession had become a “black hole” with a press whose main task was to worship the party and state leader Nicolae Ceausescu.⁸

During the 1980s, the Czechoslovakian leadership shared the East German’s and the Romanian’s hardliner stance against the Soviet reforms introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev, and as a result the socialist media of Czechoslovakia was less free than its neighbors to the north (Poland) and south (Hungary). The Czechoslovakian media in the later stages of socialist rule most closely resembled East Germany in comparison to the other European socialist media systems; however, there were national variations. The Czechoslovakian journalists shared the East German journalists’ hesitation when it came to popular revolution, according to the journalism scholar Owen Johnson, the Czechoslovakian media did not play a dominant role in any of the country’s four revolutionary periods.⁹ Similarly, there was no dominant underground press, especially when compared to Poland and Hungary.¹⁰ This more authoritarian control of the

⁵ The word *samizdat* pertains specifically to the underground media in the Soviet sphere, and refers to censored publications and documents that were copied and disseminated hand to hand.

⁶ Aumente, “The Role and Effects of Journalism and Samizdat Leading up to 1989,” 58.

⁷ Peter Gross, “Romania,” in *Glasnost and after: Media and Change in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. David L Paletz, Karol Jakubowicz, and Pavao Novosel (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1995).

⁸ Owen V. Johnson, “The Roots of Journalism in Central and Eastern Europe,” in *Eastern European Journalism: Before, during and after Communism*, ed. Jerome Aumente et al. (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1999), 31.

⁹ Aumente, “The Role and Effects of Journalism and Samizdat Leading up to 1989,” 61. Referencing, Johnson, Owen V., “Czechs and Balances: Mass Media and the Velvet Revolution,” in *Media and Revolution* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Rudolf Prevratil, “Czechoslovakia,” in *Glasnost and after: Media and Change in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. David L Paletz, Karol Jakubowicz, and Pavao Novosel (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1995).

media was established after the Warsaw Pact invasion following the Prague Spring. With the shift in government came more authoritarian controls over the media, and “hundreds perhaps thousands” of potentially critical journalists were expelled from their jobs and were replaced with young journalists who were lured into the profession through pay and perks.¹¹

The severity of the socialist media structures in Romania, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia stood in strong contrast to the experiences of journalists in Hungary and Poland in the late 1980s. Both countries were home to a robust domestic underground media. By the late 1980s the underground media networks in Hungary were so strong that they even contained illegal publishing houses.¹² Although the government tried to inhibit the growth and influence of the samizdat press in the 1970s through surveillance, raids, and fines, the Hungarian government was incapable of disposing of the threat, and the underground media grew so powerful and confident that underground Hungarian editors and writers would sign their texts with their full names and addresses.¹³ The Hungarian samizdat media was allowed to flourish under the leadership of János Kádár, who was installed by the Soviets, and who argued to his overseers on behalf of Goulash Communism under the motto, “He who is not against us, is for us.”¹⁴ However, in spite of the flourishing underground press, the official journalists of Hungary were still limited by authoritarian controls. Under Kádár control over the media shifted from formal control to more informal methods that enforced ideological consistency.¹⁵ Journalists were

¹¹ Aumente, “The Role and Effects of Journalism and Samizdat Leading up to 1989.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Johnson, “The Roots of Journalism in Central and Eastern Europe.”

¹⁵ Ildiko Kovats and Gordon Whiting, “Hungary,” in *Glasnost and after: Media and Change in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. David L Paletz, Karol Jakubowicz, and Pavao Novosel (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1995), 99.

funneled through an educational and promotional system that encouraged conformity.¹⁶ Editors and supervisors were chosen based on party loyalty rather than journalistic talent, and control and censorship practices were enforced inconsistently, leaving journalists unsure and vulnerable to repercussions.¹⁷ The Kádár government harbored a strong mistrust of the profession, stemming from the important role that journalists played in the 1956 revolution. Hungarian journalists helped articulate the problems that led to the uprising, and were an important component of the dissident intelligentsia who participated in the revolt.¹⁸ This leeriness of the profession lasted long after the transition out of socialism.¹⁹

The Polish press of the 1970s and 1980s resembled that of Hungary in a number of ways. Like Hungary there was a large underground media network, which flourished in Poland thanks in part to the Catholic Church. The Church was very powerful within Poland due to the country's majority (90 percent) Roman Catholic population, and it provided a haven for journalists and established alternative pathways of communication.²⁰ The media in Poland played an important role in the events of the 1980s. When the shipyard workers of Gdansk banded together and formed the independent trade union, "Solidarity" under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa, reforms to the media were central among their concerns and the Solidarity movement found great support from the profession. When the movement was crushed and martial law imposed in 1981, nearly 2,000 journalists lost their jobs or quit in protest.²¹ These journalists joined the growing underground press network, which became increasingly powerful and resistant to government

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 100.

¹⁸ Kovats and Whiting, "Hungary."

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Aumente, "The Role and Effects of Journalism and Samizdat Leading up to 1989."

²¹ Ibid., 49. Referencing, Jane Leftwich Curry, *Poland's Journalists: Professionalism and Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

interventions. With the political reforms of the late 1980s, these journalists returned to the public sphere to participate in the Round Table discussions about the future of Poland, and a significant number of the journalists entered the political arena in post-1989 Poland.²² Although the official socialist media of Poland was subject to censorship and controls, these were relatively mild when compared to its East/Central European brethren. Certain topics remained taboo including any reporting on “environmental threats, any negative reports of Polish history from 1939 onward, and anything that would besmirch the image of the communist party,” and journalists could be imprisoned for offenses against the state.²³ While Poland’s media system was the most liberal in Eastern Europe, it was still a system that relied on external and internal censorship and pervasive mechanisms of control.

The Centrality of the Media to Government Authority, Identity, and Legitimacy

In both pre- and post-Wende East Germany, the symbolic role of the media was central to the government’s self-understanding and legitimization. As either the “sharpest weapon of the party” or the “fourth estate,” the media was crucial to the government’s understanding of a functioning society. As a result, political concerns dominated the discussions about the nature, history, legacy, and future of the profession, and these concerns took the matter of professional self-determination away from the journalists themselves. While these debates were important to the history and the development of the media in East Germany, they also had a profound effect on the shape of the post-socialist media of East/Central Europe in the 1990s.

²² Ray Hiebert, “Transition from the End of the Old Regime to 1996,” in *Eastern European Journalism: Before, during and after Communism*, ed. Jerome Aumente et al. (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1999); Aumente, “The Role and Effects of Journalism and Samizdat Leading up to 1989.”

²³ Aumente, “The Role and Effects of Journalism and Samizdat Leading up to 1989.” Johnson, “The Roots of Journalism in Central and Eastern Europe.”

Government control of the media was particularly important when it came to broadcasting. In the post-1989 period, the East/Central Europeans followed the model of Western Europe and treated broadcast media like a public utility. While the East Germans adopted the West German model, the other former socialist states found the complex legislative structure of the West German broadcast model too cumbersome and complicated to adopt. Instead they turned to the French model of broadcasting with its “Supreme Audiovisual Council” as a main broadcasting authority, which served as a “respectable solution that still allowed them to retain control over broadcasting.”²⁴ The level of control over the broadcast media naturally varied from country to country.

In Poland, the government maintained a monopoly over broadcasting until 1993, however as many as 70 pirate radio stations and 20 pirate television stations were in operation before the law came into effect.²⁵ Although there were some privately owned radio stations prior to 1993, the government did not issue any broadcasting licenses to private television stations until the 1993 law was approved. The new law contained controversial provisions that required that radio and television adhere to a “Christian value system” and prohibited the promotion of acts that violated “the law or the interests of the state or opinions that conflict with morality and the public good.”²⁶ The Hungarian government waited even longer and held on to its broadcasting monopoly until 1996. Ray Heibert argued in his chapter on the transition of Eastern European media that in the six years following the collapse of socialism, the Hungarian government pressed its officials within the Magyar broadcasting institutions to adhere to the party line.²⁷

²⁴ Jakubowicz, Karol, “Media Legislation as a Mirror of Democracy,” *Transition* 2, no. 21 (1996): 19. Cited in Hiebert, “Transition from the End of the Old Regime to 1996,” 87.

²⁵ Hiebert, “Transition from the End of the Old Regime to 1996.”

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

Compared to the Poles and the Hungarians, the Czech and Slovak governments were relatively quick in their liberalization of broadcasting structures. Both governments passed laws in 1991 to allow for private broadcasting, and immediately dozens of private entities applied to receive frequencies.²⁸ Broadcasting in the Czech Republic was left primarily to market forces, while Slovakia maintained the public structure of the broadcasting institutions. Although Romania technically removed its monopoly on broadcasting in May of 1992, it only issued licenses to local and regional private broadcasters, leaving national broadcasting in the hands of the post-communist government. This quasi-monopoly of national broadcasting remained in place until the mid 1990s when a private broadcaster, PRO-TV reorganized and became the most popular television station in the capital Bucharest and its surrounding areas.²⁹

The prolonged battles over government control of broadcasting institutions that were waged across East/Central Europe show how important the medium was to government control and legitimacy even in the post-communist period. The new powers that emerged after 1989/90 had a conflicted relationship to the media. Freedom of the press was central to the reform programs of the revolution, but the new post-communist governments saw broadcasting as a potential threat, a threat that they found easy to mitigate.³⁰ Even countries that had a comparatively free press under communism had post-communist governments that remained mistrustful of the press and broadcasters, and many of the reform and revolutionary leaders who came to power through the transition (including Václav Havel, József Antall, and Lech Wałęsa), found themselves attacked by the new media.³¹

²⁸ Ibid., 98.

²⁹ Ibid., 99.

³⁰ Ibid., 98.

³¹ Hiebert, "Transition from the End of the Old Regime to 1996."

While it was clear that the government intervened in the practices of journalism in the communist period, in the former Soviet bloc the continued intervention of the government into the practices of the media raised concerns throughout the 1990s. While old structures were dismantled quickly in the former GDR, due to the swift adoption and implementation of the West German model, the process was more protracted for the GDR's former socialist neighbors, who did not have similar structures at the ready. The countries of East Central Europe did not have the option of integrating into a democratic state. Furthermore, even though the East Germans had democratic models available, it took the *Einrichtung* until the end of 1991 to complete the overhaul of the former socialist broadcasting system. In his 2008 chapter on the media transformations of Poland, China, and Russia, Colin Sparks argued that the media system that had emerged in post-communist East/Central Europe could be characterized by a relatively partisan press, and a broadcast industry aligned with the state.³²

Studies conducted in the early 2000s revealed that while there was less press freedom in post-Communist Europe compared to Western Europe, the situation was improving. Peter Bajomi-Lazar, in his chapter on media freedom in post-communist countries, utilized the Freedom House's 2006 quantitative survey on press freedom as the data for his analysis.³³ The Freedom House survey analyzed three categories of possible interference in the media: the legal environment in which the media operated, political influence on reporting and access to information, and economic pressures on content. This information was collected and scored in a range of 0-100 where scores of 0-30 indicated a free media system, 31-60 indicated a partly free

³² Peter Bajomi-Lazar, "The Consolidation of Media Freedom in Post-Communist Countries," in *Finding the Right Place on the Map: Central and Eastern European Media Change in a Global Perspective*, ed. Karol Jakubowicz and Miklos Sükösd, European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) (Bristol, UK; Chicago: Intellect, 2008), 74.

³³ Bajomi-Lazar, "The Consolidation of Media Freedom in Post-Communist Countries."

system, and a score of 61-100 was categorized as a media system that was not free.³⁴ Both Poland and Hungary scored a 30 in 1994, and brought that number down to 21 by 2006. Although there was some variation over the years in the Czech Republic, the country scored a 20 both in 1994 and 2006, averaging a score of 21.15 over the course of the 12 years. Slovakia started out with a score of 47 in 1994, qualifying as “partly free” and in a dramatic decline their score reached 20 by 2006; Romania received the worst score for press freedom in 1996 with 55, but that number came down over the years reaching 44 in 2006. In comparison Germany was given a score of 11 in 1994, and that number rose to 16 by the end of the period in question.³⁵ The challenge that these countries faced in establishing a free and democratic press came from lingering structures and practices from the communist period that were difficult to jettison.

Lingering Structures and Practices

In the second chapter of this dissertation I identified a number of lingering structural, professional, and economic problems that continued to plague the East German media institutions long after the party relinquished its hold on journalism. It was one thing to grant freedom of information, but that freedom did not solve the economic hurdles of transitioning to a market economy, it did not create paper resources where there were none, and it did not restructure distribution networks so that they could function and respond to the new needs of the industry. Nor did freedom of information address the journalists’ struggle to push past internal forms of self-censorship and the old practices of socialist journalism that were established by the authoritarian state. While these lingering problems created a difficult hurdle for East German

³⁴ Karin Deutsch Karlekar, “Press Freedom in 2006: Growing Threats to Media Independence” (Washington, DC; New York, NY: Freedom House, 2007), <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTP%202007%20Full%20Release%20Booklet.pdf>.

³⁵ Bajomi-Lazar, “The Consolidation of Media Freedom in Post-Communist Countries.”

journalists and media institutions, it turns out that in comparison to other journalists in Eastern Europe, the East Germans were in a relatively good position to tackle these issues.

Across Eastern Europe journalists struggled with the economic challenges of transitioning to a market economy. Some countries began this transition with better economic circumstances. Czechoslovakia, for example, had relied on Western technology, so the technological foundation of the profession was strong in the early days of the transition.³⁶ However, the shift from a state-sponsored media with heavy subsidies and support to an independent media that could compete on an open market was a difficult challenge throughout the region, and frequently the only options that remained available were either continued state patronage or financial support from foreign media companies. In many countries, the government continued to subsidize the press in both overt and covert forms, resulting in the relatively partisan media described in the last section.³⁷ However, for those who wanted independence, the only option was to turn to a number of willing foreign benefactors who were eager to invest in the emerging Eastern European market (this will be discussed in more detail in the next section).

In addition to financial and economic hurdles, the journalists of Eastern Europe needed to adapt professionally to the new democratic paradigm. While the East Germans were able to learn alongside West German journalists and editors who came to the new states in large numbers, the journalists of Eastern Europe were left to push forward on their own. In eastern Germany the media profession was diluted—though more in some regions, and less in others—by the newly arrived West German colleagues, and when the media markets merged, it was the job of the East Germans to conform to the example set by the West German colleagues. In countries like

³⁶ Prevrtil, “Czechoslovakia.”

³⁷ Hiebert, “Transition from the End of the Old Regime to 1996.”

Romania, where there was no underground press, and very strict authoritarian controls, there was no reservoir of democratic journalists standing in the wings ready to show the way forward.³⁸ The result, argued Peter Gross, was a journalistic profession that continued to rely on propagandistic strategies, with a lack of professional standards and ethics.³⁹ Although a large number of young journalists joined the profession after 1989 in Romania, in an attempt to push back against the old guard, these new journalists lacked an academic background in the profession. In the words of Walery Pisarek, this young “pampers generation” of journalists were, “confident, thinking they are better than anybody else, but totally ignorant professionally.”⁴⁰ This new generation of journalists defined themselves more in opposition to the “old-guard” and less in Western ideals of journalism. While surveys revealed that the young Romanian journalists saw themselves as part of the “fourth estate”, the journalists had trouble defining what the role of that “estate” was.⁴¹ Without training and without a large presence of foreign media or journalists, the new generation of Romanian journalists had few examples to follow and was left on its own to define the role and practice of journalism in Romania.

Even countries that harbored a robust samizdat network, with a large number of formerly underground journalists who could enter the profession once the system was liberalized, found difficulties in shaking off the old practices and structures of the past. In Hungary, the media landscape of the post-communist period was dominated by “media wars” where the conservative government took aim at the press, resorting to old tactics to control the media. Large numbers of

³⁸ Aumente, “The Role and Effects of Journalism and Samizdat Leading up to 1989.”

³⁹ Mihai Coman, “The Media Lanscape in Romania,” *SEER: Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* 4, no. 1 (April 2001): 183. Referencing, Gross, *Mass Media in Revolution and National Development*, 94.

⁴⁰ Coman, “The Media Lanscape in Romania,” 184. Referencing, Walery Pisarek, “A la recherche des journalistes polonais,” in *Tele-revolutions culturelles: Chine, Europe Centrale, Russie*, ed. N. Pelissier (Paris: L’Harmattan, n.d.), 206.

⁴¹ Coman, “The Media Lanscape in Romania,” 183–184.

critical broadcast journalists were fired in the run up to the 1994 nation-wide elections.⁴² And in Poland, political groups fought to control newspapers even as they were being privatized.⁴³

Another lasting impact of the communist era was the reputation of the journalism profession among the broader population. Decades of authoritarian Leninist media had eroded the public's trust in journalism as a profession, and journalists struggled in the post-communist period to regain that trust. For example, in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the most popular print titles were tabloid papers that emphasized entertainment over news and public affairs.⁴⁴ In describing the challenges of adapting to the new post-communist world, Adam Michnik, a prominent Polish journalist who was one of the founding leaders of Solidarity and is now the editor-in chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza* said,

It is difficult to change one's views; it is difficult for a dissident, a member of the underground to become the editor in chief of the most popular newspaper in a democratic state. The reality of democracy is so different from the world of dictatorship in which I lived from the day I was born. That world was inevitably a black and white one: Goodness struggled against evil, the truth struggled against lies, freedom staged a battle against enslavement.

In the world of democracy, the prevailing color is gray. This world is ruled by arguments, which are divided and not complete, by partial and contradictory interests.⁴⁵

In the decades that followed the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, journalists struggled to shake off the structures of the past. These old media practices, either imposed from the outside by politicians who took a page out of the old communist playbook, or from within by journalists who fell back on familiar strategies and practices, continued long after the

⁴² Dean Mills, "Post-1989 Journalism in the Absence of Democratic Traditions," in *Eastern European Journalism: Before, during and after Communism*, ed. Jerome Aumente et al. (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1999), 129.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 138–139. Referencing, Johnson, Owen V., "Czechs and Balances: Mass Media and the Velvet Revolution," 12.

⁴⁵ Adam Michnik, "Samizdat Goes Public," *Media Studies Journal*, Summer 1995. Cited by, Mills, "Post-1989 Journalism in the Absence of Democratic Traditions," 140.

authoritarian communist and socialist parties left the scene. In East Germany, the West Germans created the expectations and norms for the new journalism profession, but in the rest of Eastern Europe the path forward was less clear, and the process of transformation was, as a result, more gradual as each country tried to make its way forward. However, these countries were not alone, many appealed to foreign companies for financial and professional aid.

The Role of Foreign Media

One of the most distinctly national traits of the East German experience of both socialism and the post-socialist transition was the presence and influence of West Germany. In the history of the media transition, the presence of West German broadcasts defined much of the socialist media strategy, and the information that East Germans received from those broadcasts helped shape the revolutionary movement in 1989. In the months and years following the collapse, it is impossible to ignore the influence of the Federal Republic in shaping the ultimate trajectory of the GDR by way of the unification. However, foreign media also played an important role in communist East/Central Europe, as well as the revolution and post-communist transformation.

In Romania, where the media was under strict authoritarian control, the public relied heavily on foreign broadcasts for reliable information. Peter Gross argued that thanks to Ceausescu's repressive media policies, "by the end of the 1980s, city dwellers at least consumed one of the, if not the most diverse, media menus in East/Central Europe."⁴⁶ Romanians with satellite dishes were able to receive Sky News, CNN, or Austrian broadcasts, and antennas could pick up broadcasts from Russia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia.⁴⁷ Peter Gross argued that these foreign broadcasts had a profound effect on shaping Romanian public opinion. They provided not only information, but they also served as "socializing agents," allowing Romanians

⁴⁶ Gross, "Romania," 205.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

to inhabit an entertainment world outside of their repressive borders. In a case similar to East Germany, the presence of foreign news helped further the disconnect between the domestic media and the people and eroded the legitimacy of the country's communist leadership. As a result, the foreign media arguably provided a catalyst for the revolution and the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime.⁴⁸ However, after the revolution, the foreign media companies did not enter the Romanian media market. Foreign investors, who reached out to other post-communist countries, by and large, steered clear of Romania due to the violent overthrow of Ceausescu and fears of political instability. The only influx of foreign capital that came into the media market in the immediate post-communist period came from Romanian expatriates.⁴⁹

The informational role of foreign media was experienced across East/Central Europe during the communist period. Countries relied on foreign broadcasts for information not available through the domestic socialist media. These foreign broadcasts came either from the domestic media of Western European countries like Austria and West Germany, or through Radio Free Europe (or Radio Liberty in the Soviet Union). Radio Free Europe was set up by the American government to supply information behind the Iron Curtain and destabilize communist governments.⁵⁰ These broadcasts utilized émigré and exiled journalists, political leaders, and activists to directly address the populations of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania (and in the case of Radio Liberty, the Soviet Union) in their own native tongue.⁵¹ In Hungary, 20 percent of the population could receive broadcasts from Austria through antennas, and more than 40 percent could receive Western broadcasts via satellite. Others relied on VCRs

⁴⁸ Ibid., 214.

⁴⁹ Hiebert, "Transition from the End of the Old Regime to 1996," 106.

⁵⁰ Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom the Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 36.

⁵¹ Ibid., 2, 17.

and robust black marked in VHS recordings of Western news and entertainment.⁵² In Czechoslovakia, satellites and antennas could also receive broadcasts from West Germany and Austria. In July 1989, the impact of foreign media in Czechoslovakia was made especially clear when the Secretary General Miloš Jakeš was secretly recorded during a closed speech in Western Bohemia. The recording captured the Secretary General's "plaintive" voice as he spoke with regret about the arrest of Václav Havel, predicting, "the more we persecute him, the greater a hero he will be." Jakeš also lamented that he felt as "lonely as a stake in a fence." The recording was repeatedly broadcast back into Czechoslovakia by Radio Free Europe, and copies circulated to the amusement of many, and the humiliation of the government.⁵³ Not only did the foreign broadcasts provide an alternative news source for citizens of communist Europe, but as opposition movements and revolutions spread across the Soviet bloc, images of peaceful protests, and information about perestroika and glasnost helped generate an international conversation about the future of socialism and the possibilities of change in countries closed off to reform.

With the exception of Romania, the revolutions and transformations opened up the Eastern European media landscape to foreign capital, and many Western firms leaped at the opportunity to expand eastward. East/Central European journalistic enterprises relied heavily on this foreign investment to stay afloat during the difficult transition to the market economy as prices skyrocketed and circulations declined. Some of the major contributors of foreign capital were the German firms of Axel Springer, Heinrich Bauer, and Gruner + Jahr. The Springer publishing house moved quickly to acquire majority ownership of nearly a dozen Hungarian regional newspapers, and it was joined by Gruner + Jahr and Bauer to nearly cover the Polish

⁵² Kovats and Whiting, "Hungary," 102.

⁵³ Pevratil, "Czechoslovakia," 156–157.

weekly newspaper market by 1996. The Czech Republic found a benefactor in the Swiss company Ringier, which purchased seventeen publications including *Lidove Noviny*, one of the country's largest daily papers.⁵⁴ British, French and Italian companies followed the Germans and the Swiss, each carving out a share in the East/Central European media market.

While foreign capital was essential for enterprises that wanted to break away from party control, many eastern European journalists and media observers raised concerns about the possible impact of foreign capital. The French journalist Bernard Margueritte warned, "The press [in East/Central Europe] has routinely gone directly from the hands of the local communist elite to those of foreign media giants."⁵⁵ In Hungary, the backroom dealings of the Springer publishing company led some to fear that they had "made a pact with the devil." The foreign companies were snatching up publications at rock-bottom prices, and they worried about the potential for the foreign owners to exert influence over journalists and publications.⁵⁶ These fears echoed concerns raised by the East German observers who feared the West German takeover of the East German print market. Although there was a special nature to the relationship between East and West Germany that shaped the events in Berlin and across the former GDR, it is clear that Western media also played an important role in the broader transition that took place across East/Central Europe. Although there were national variations, broader contours were shared as the socialist media competed with alternative foreign voices, and relied on foreign capital to fund the transformation of the press.

⁵⁴ Hiebert, "Transition from the End of the Old Regime to 1996," 103–106.

⁵⁵ Bernard J Margueritte and Politics and Public Policy Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, *Post-Communist Eastern Europe: The Difficult Birth of a Free Press* ([Cambridge, Mass.]: Joan Shorenstein Center, Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, 1995), 9. Referenced in Hiebert, "Transition from the End of the Old Regime to 1996," 104.

⁵⁶ Kovats and Whiting, "Hungary," 111.

Final Thoughts

One of the central arguments of this dissertation is that the former socialist journalists of the GDR had little autonomy to determine the trajectory of their profession both under socialism and in post-socialist unified Germany. The themes outlined above demonstrate the many ways that outside influences shaped the trajectory of the profession. Because the media was a central component of pre- and post-socialist government identity and political strategy, journalists were limited in their actions and self-determination by external controls and actors, from either the Socialist Unity Party, or from the negotiators of the unification. Even after the media system began to liberalize, the East German journalists struggled with lingering problems and structures that prevented an immediate or fundamental professional transformation. Finally, in both eras the East German journalists were out-matched by their West German counterparts, who were able to act quickly and decisively to determine the ultimate shape of the East German media landscape. By looking at these themes in the context of the broader transformation of socialist journalism across East/Central Europe, certain additional insights come into focus. The East German journalists shared many similarities with the socialist journalists of East Central Europe. The model of Leninist socialist journalism was employed relatively consistently across the Soviet bloc, and socialist journalists as a whole struggled with internal and external censorship. However, the shape of the media landscape varied nationally and over time, with varying degrees of censorship, intervention, and resistance. The difficulties of the transition to a market economy and democratic media system were also shared across East Central Europe and success (in the form of media freedom and independence) hinged largely on each country's access to foreign capital and expertise. Through the unification, the West Germans provided the journalists and citizens of the former GDR with a fast track to democratic reform. While there was a missed opportunity to address some of the flaws in the West German system, journalists did benefit

compared to their eastern European counterparts from having a structure and model at the ready. We will never know what would have happened if the East Germans had been able to push for greater autonomy and preserve more of their institutional and professional identity in the unification process, but the interviews in Chapter Five have shown that the journalists who were able to make the transition were thankful for the opportunities that unification provided.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Outline

- Family Background
 - Opening Question:
 - Please tell me about your family and upbringing.
 - Possible Follow-up:
 - When and where were you born?
 - What did your parents do professionally?
 - What were the political perspectives of your parents? Were your parents politically active?
 - How many children were there in your family? What was your place in the birth order?
 - Did you have family in the West? Did your family have contact with them?
- Growing up in the GDR
 - Opening Question:
 - What was it like to grow up in the GDR?
 - Follow-up Questions:
 - Describe for me your childhood. What was school like for you?
 - What did you do with your time outside of school?
 - What were your favorite subjects?

- Journalism in the GDR
 - Opening Question:
 - How did you come to journalism?
 - Follow-up Questions:
 - What made you want to be a journalist?
 - Did you study journalism?
 - What prerequisites were necessary to study journalism?
 - What was it like at the University?
 - What topics did you cover in your journalism education?
 - When did you graduate?
 - What was your first job after graduation?
 - Did you stay in this job, or did you change jobs?
 - Opening Question:
 - What was it like to be a journalist in the GDR?
 - Follow-up Questions:
 - Which parts of your education were most important, or least important for your job as a journalist?
 - In your opinion, what was the role of the VDJ for journalism in the GDR?
 - What, in your opinion, what the role of journalism and journalists in the GDR?
 - How did the daily practice of journalism fulfill this role?

- What was the status of the journalist in the society of the GDR?
 - What was the role of the state and the SED in the daily work life of journalists?
 - How autonomous, or independent were you in your daily professional life?
 - Was there an “ethics” or “behavioral norm” for journalism in the GDR? How would you describe it?
- Wende
 - Opening Question:
 - Tell me how you experienced the Wende.
 - Follow-up Questions:
 - When did you notice a change in your daily work life?
 - What happened with your job, or your company during the Wende period?
 - Before the Reunification was a known reality, were there debates and conversations among the journalists about how to transform the media landscape?
 - Were there institutions (for example, VDJ, Round Table, MKR, West German newspapers/publishers) that had a noticeable impact on the shape of the media landscape?
 - What happened to your job during the Wende period?
 - Did you have to re-learn your job?

- Did you have to learn new competencies? How did you learn them?
 - What was the impact of the Reunification on your professional life?
 - What was the impact of the economic transformation (privatization, market competition) on your daily work life?
 - Did you get new colleagues from the West? What was your relationship to them?
- Transformation after the Wende
 - Opening Question:
 - What, in your opinion, were the largest changes to journalism as a profession since the Wende?
 - Follow-up Questions:
 - How did your daily work life change as a result of the Wende?
 - What were the structural changes to the profession after the Wende? (Earnings, job security, daily responsibilities)
 - Did you have more or less autonomy in your job after the Wende?
 - Do you think that there are elements from your GDR-education that are still helpful in your Post-Wende work life?
 - What, in your opinion, is the role of journalism and the journalist in Germany today?

- What is the status of journalism in German society?
- What was the impact of the Wende on your professional self-image?
- Do you work under a new professional ethic?
- What was the biggest challenge of your career?
- Do you see a difference between your self and your West German colleagues?
- How has your job evolved over the last 20 years?
- When you look back, what was the impact of the Wende on your career?

Appendix 2: Abini Zöllner

Abini Zöllner was my first interview partner. I had discovered her while reading the biographies of journalists on the Berliner Zeitung website. She responded to my inquiry, and was eager to participate in the study. We met in her office at the Berliner Zeitung on March 19, 2013, and over the next hour and a half we discussed her unique experiences growing up in the GDR with a Jewish mother and absentee Nigerian father. She was jovial, candid, and open, and our conversation was warm and informative. At the end of our interview she recommended additional colleagues who might be willing to participate.

March 19, 2013 from 12-2pm.

(00:03:29)

Zum Anfang wurde ich gerne Fragen ... Wurden Sie mir ein bisschen erzählen über Ihre Familie, über Ihren familiären Hintergrund?

Ja, ich bin 1967 in Berlin Lichtenberg geboren. Meine Mutter war Jüdin gewesen, und Jahrgang 1925 und ist 1937 nach China immigriert, mit ihrer Familie. Und ist 1949, 1950 glaube ich, zurückgekommen aus der Immigration. Ist wieder in die DDR gekommen. Also da war es schon die DDR, die wurde 1949 gegründet. Weil sie einfach, weil sie das trotzdem als Heimat empfunden hat, und der Meinung war, dass die Menschen aus ihren Fehlern auch lernen können. Viele aus der Immigration sind ja dann nach in Schanghai und Tianjin die sind dann nach Amerika oder Israel gegangen, aber meine Mutter kam nach Deutschland zurück.

Und dann hat sie ein wenig später, also Jahre später mein Vater kennengelernt. Der kam aus Nigeria, aus Lagos. Er war hier Journalistikstudent. Mein Vater war ein ganz überzeugter Kommunist gewesen. Und der wollte unbedingt in Moskau studieren, und war ganz enttäuscht, dass er es nur nach Leipzig geschafft hat. In Leipzig war damals die Journalistenschule der DDR, wo auch Ausländer ausgebildet wurden. Die Karl-Marx-Universität [würde] auch das „Rote Kloster“ genannt weil die Leute dort alle auf Linie gebracht wurden. Ja da hat mein Vater dann 4 Jahre studiert. Und dann auch lange Zeit noch in der DDR als Journalist gearbeitet, bei der *Magdeburger Volksstimme* und unter anderem auch bei der *Berliner Zeitung*. Und also wir haben 10 Jahre zusammengelebt und dann hat mein Vater dann aber doch relativ enttäuscht die DDR verlassen. Denn er war ein sehr überzeugter Kommunist, der auch fließend Russisch sprach und schon sein erstes Kind in Afrika Juri genannt hat. Nach Juri Gagarin. Also der war wirklich total überzeugt. Und er war so wahnsinnig enttäuscht, wie der Sozialismus in der Praxis funktioniert. Also als Idee stand der nach wie vor noch dahinter, aber in der Praxis eben nicht mehr. Er hat es ja in der DDR erlebt, und hat eben gesagt, Sozialismus funktioniert nicht, so lange Menschen daran beteiligt sind. Also er meinte eigentlich es ist eigentlich nur eine Theorie.

Ja, und mein Vater war Yoruber, das ist eine Religion eine große Religion in Nigeria. Da gibt's ja viele Religionen, meine Mutter war Jüdin. Und dann haben sie überlegt was sie mit mir machen, und dann haben sie sich nach einem Jahr entschlossen mich taufen zu lassen. Protestantisch, also evangelisch. Und dann wurde ich nach einem Jahr getauft, in Berlin Lichtenberg. Also habe [ich] wieder die eine Religion noch die Andere angenommen. Und im Prinzip bin ich mit dieser Vielfalt an Kulturen von Anfang an groß geworden.

Meine Mutter war auch nicht eine typische DDR-Bürgerin, weil sie ja so 12 Jahre in China gelebt hat und schon auch in der ganzen Welt herumgekommen war, zwangsweise. Aber

sie war sehr sehr offen. Mein Vater war sehr sehr offen. Und dann bin ich eigentlich in einem sehr lockeren Haushalt groß geworden. Es war keiner von beiden orthodox, und so ganz streng religiös, überhaupt nicht. Und deswegen nutzt mir das eigentlich bis heute noch, dass ich diese Vielfalt an Religion und Kulturen kennenlernen könnte. Also ich fühle mich dadurch nicht zerrissen. Für mich ist das eher ein Reichtum. Man kann sich auch immer das beste Aussuchen für seine Argumentation.

Jedenfalls bin ich dann in der DDR groß geworden. Hat 10 Jahre erstmal die Oberschule besucht. Sollte dann Abitur machen, und habe mich dann aber in die Sommerferien entschlossen, Friseur zu werden. Meine Mutter ist fast wahnsinnig geworden. Ich hab dann die Friseurlehre angefangen. Also ich hab mir den Job selbst gesucht, und meine Mutter hat einfach darauf bestanden, dass ich die [Ausbildung] eben jedenfalls zu Ende machen muss. Diese hat mir nämlich relativ schnell nicht mehr gefallen, aber dann musste ich dann den Abschluss machen. Das war eigentlich gut von meiner Mutter, dass sie so darauf bestanden hat. Und als ich mit der Lehre fertig war, da wusste ich doch, dass ich was anderes machen möchte. Und bin eigentlich selbst auf dem Journalismus gekommen, gar nicht durch meinen Vater. Also ich wusste, dass er Journalist war, aber ich war 10 [Jahre alt], als er gegangen ist. Es war noch zu wenig als das ich davon etwas mit gekriegt hätte. Aber vielleicht war es auch die Neugier oder so. Schreiben konnte ich eigentlich immer so ganz gut. Die Neugier hat mich eben zu Recherchen bewogen. Sodass ich dann auf eigene Faust Journalismus gelernt habe, und zwar in Berlin Friedrichshain gab es eine Abendschule, also eine Volkshochschule. Und dort wurde der Journalismus groß angeboten, der selber der in Leipzig war, der ging aber nur zwei Jahre, weil da hat man rein Journalismus gelernt. Stilistik usw., aber nicht den politischen Fächern gehabt. Und das war

natürlich toll! Denn in Leipzig haben die 4 Jahre studiert und hatten praktisch die Hälfte davon Marxismus-Leninismus, da hatte ich alles nicht. Das war Super!

Dann wollte ich gerne Journalistin werden. Und es hat einfach nicht auf Anhieb geklappt, weil da passierte etwas Eigenartiges. Ich durfte nicht als Journalist arbeiten, weil mein Vater aus dem nicht sozialistischen Ausland kam.

Obwohl er selber Journalist war?

Obwohl er eben selber ein Kommunist war. War er eben nicht aus den Ostblock Ländern, Sowjetunion oder Bulgarien oder so, sondern er war eben aus dem westlichen Ausland. Und deswegen habe ich keine Arbeit bekommen als Journalistin. Daraufhin hab ich dann meinen Sohn bekommen. Und ich habe noch vor dem Stadtpalast getanzt, hat dann mein Sohn bekommen, habe dann aufgehört und in dem Babyjahr habe ich dann angefangen Musikgeschichte zu studieren, weil die Musikhochschule und die Schauspielhochschule waren die einzigen Hochschulen in der DDR, wo man kein Abitur brauchte, um ein Hochschulabschluss zu machen. Da ich aber selber schon 5 Jahre auf die Musikschule war, also vorher, habe ich dort Musikgeschichte gemacht, hat meinen Abschluss gemacht. Und dann kam die Wende.

(00:10:24)

Ich würde gern mal ein bisschen zurückgehen und fragen, wieso haben Sie sich für eine Friseurausbildung entschieden? Wieso haben Sie nicht das Abitur gemacht und sich stattdessen dieser Ausbildung ausgesucht.

Also ich hab ja auch schon als Kind getanzt. Und bin dann oft in Fernsehsendungen gewesen. Und mich hat es aber fasziniert was die Maskenbildner da gemacht haben. Und ich

wollte eigentlich Maskenbildner werden, aber man musste dafür erst mal die Friseurausbildung haben. Und dann hätte man noch 3 Jahre Maskenbildner. Aber weil ich nach zwei Jahren so bedient war, hab ich das gar nicht mehr weiter verfolgt. Und deswegen habe ich auch die, nachdem die Frisurlehre zu Ende war, habe ich gleich alles fallen lassen, und aufgehört.

Und gab es Probleme an diese Fachhochschule [sic] zu kommen, bei Journalistik, oder was musste man machen, um in dieses Programm hereinzukommen.

An der Abendschule gab es keine Probleme. Weil die Abendschule ist ja so freiwillig, für Leute, die noch ihrem Abitur nachholen wollen. Oder die EDV, die Einfache, das ist der zweite Bildungsweg für Leute. Die war eigentlich offen für alle. Ich weiß nur, unsere Lehrer, der dozierte dort schon 10 Jahre, und in den 10 Jahren sind nur 5 Leute tatsächlich bei Zeitungen untergekommen. Also 4 Leute ... 4 Leute und das fand ich sehr wenig. Also sehr sehr viele haben dann als freie Journalisten gearbeitet, oder dann doch wieder abgebrochen. Es war ja auch anstrengend. Ich saß dann da und dachte, ich möchte gern die 5. sein.

(00:12:02)

Okay, dann kommen wir zu der Wendezeit. Zuerst würde ich gern zurückgehen. Sie haben diese Fachhochschule [sic] gemacht. Was dachten sie über Journalismus, was war das für einen Beruf für sie? Was war eine ostdeutsche Journalistin, ihre Meinung nach, damals ...

Also ich habe Volkshochschule gemacht. Ich war ja von Anfang an schon immer kulturelle interessiert. Ich muss ehrlich zugeben, ich war nicht politisch interessiert. Und kulturell war Journalismus in der DDR natürlich auch politisch beeinflusst, aber das war, sagen wir mal, noch so die Oasen oder die Insel, wo man wirklich sich auf das Thema konzentrieren konnte. Man hatte Künstler mit den man sich auseinandersetzten konnte. Das war für mich das

Interessanteste. Also dadurch, dass ich selber ein Instrument gespielt habe, an der Musikschule war, und selber auch getanzt habe, war ich sowieso schon in dieser Kulturrichtung. Und das hat mich einfach interessiert, darüber zu schreiben. Ich kann gar nicht sagen, dass ich mich dafür andere Menschen interessiert habe oder so, aber mich hatten eigentlich die Materiellen an sich, die Kunst hat mich interessiert.

Ich habe dann natürlich bald gemerkt, dass es auch bei der Kunst ganz unterschiedlich Faziten gibt, und dass man das es dort viele Fachredakteure gibt. Also man kann nicht Theaterredakteur sein und gleichzeitig über ein klassisches Konzert schreiben. Oder Literaturredakteur sein und gleichzeitig Musicals besprechen. Das war mir aber damals noch nicht bewusst, mich hat alles interessiert. Ich hab erst mal alles aufgesucht.

Aber politischer Journalist wäre ich nicht geworden, das hätte mich nie interessiert. Weil, das habe ich auch in meinem Buch eine Stelle. Ich bin ja der Meinung, dass die Mauer gefallen ist, weil Schachtelsätzen in den Zeitungen standen, dass man einfach überhaupt nicht mehr wusste worum es geht. Die politischen Korrespondenten haben auf Linie geschrieben. Sie haben nie kritisch hinterfragt, es war ja in Prinzip eines Verlautbarungsjournalismus. Es war eigentlich eine verlängerte PR-Abteilung der Regierung. Und das fand ich extrem unspannend.

Noch viel unspannender fand ich ja dann, als ich mein Mann kennengelernt habe der auch Rockmusiker war, der sich ja auch bei Neuen Forum engagiert hat, was so eine Burgbewegung, oder Gegenbewegung war. Das war ja das erst mal, dass ich überhaupt politisch gedacht habe. Da wurde mir klar, dass ich ganz definitiv kein politischer Journalist werden möchte. Ich muss zwar eine politische Haltung haben, aber als Beruf möchte ich nicht Journalist sein in der Richtung.

(00:14:56)

Wie haben Sie die Wende erlebt?

Denn Tag selbst oder allgemein?

Denn Tag selbst, wir fangen damit an ...

Am 9. November habe ich ja mein ... ehrlich gesagt ... Das war ein ganz langweiliger Tag für mich. Ich hab mein Kind, meinen Sohn damals von meiner Mutter abgeholt. Und mein Mann hatte an dem Tag ein Konzert, im Haus der Jungen Talente. Also hier in Berlin Mitte, gleich hier drüben. Und ich hab noch überlegt, ob ich da vorbeigehe. Aber ich war so müde und schlapp, und bin mit meinem Sohn nach Hause gefahren. Und dann haben wir es uns gemütlich gemacht. Dann hab ich ihn ins Bett gebracht. Und wenig später bin ich auch ins Bett gegangen. Ich habe noch ein Buch gelesen. Ich hatte keinen Radio, keinen Fernseher an, und deswegen habe ich gar nichts mitgekriegt.

Um Mitternacht kam mein Mann nach Hause, und hat gesagt, dass er das schlimmste Konzert seines Lebens hatte. Es war ganz schlimm, weil die Leute während seines Konzertes gegangen sind. Er wusste überhaupt nicht, was passiert ist, Wir wussten beide nicht, was passiert ist. ... Wir wohnten damals in der Habersaatstraße. Das war zwischen zwei Grenzübergängen, zwischen Invalidenstraße und Chausseestraße. Wir wohnten genau da in der Mitte. Er sagte die Straßen seien voller Trabis und Autos, und es ist alles ganz gruselig draußen. Und die Leute sind eben beim Konzert gegangen, während er gespielt hat. Das war ganz furchtbar. Wir haben noch eine Flasche Wein getrunken und sind ins Bett gegangen.

Das war unsere 9. November. Und am nächsten Morgen rief dann ein Redakteur von SAT 1 an. Das war Westfernsehen. Und der sagte eben, Dirk soll in seine Sendung kommen. Und dann sagte Dirk, „Wie stellen Sie sich das denn vor, das geht doch gar nicht.“ Dann sagte er, „Doch, die Mauer ist gefallen.“ Der konnte gar nicht glauben, dass wir es nicht wussten. Und

durch diesen Redakteur von SAT 1 haben wir erfahren, dass die Mauer gefallen sein soll. Aber wir haben es nicht geglaubt. Wir haben uns dann angezogen. Ich wollte zur Arbeit fahren. Es kam gar keine Straßenbahn. Es kam gar nichts. Dann bin ich wieder nach Hause gegangen und dann wurde mir so langsam klar, auf den Straßen ist doch irgendwas los. Und da haben wir dann langsam, ganz langsam mitbekommen, dass was passiert ist. Und natürlich auch Radio und Fernseher angemacht und dann war das klar. Aber wir haben aber noch nicht geglaubt, dass die Mauer tatsächlich so gefallen ist, wie sie da schon gefallen war. Das war nicht vorstellbar.

... Mein Mann [hat dann] mehrere Anrufe an den Tag bekommen, und ist dann am nächsten Tag bei SAT 1 aufgetreten, also tatsächlich in Westberlin und abends im Palast der Republik. Und das war so typisch für diese Zeit. Dass man morgens in Westen war, und abends dann in Palast der Republik. Und da weiß ich noch ganz genau. Da war ein großes Konzert mit mehreren Bands, und dann wurde am Abschluss des Konzertes der Nationalhymne der DDR gespielt, und dann haben mein Mann und ich uns angeguckt und wir haben geweint. Und wir wussten nicht warum. Aber heute glaube ich, dass wir ahnten, dass wir es da zum letzten mal hörten.

Also, wir waren nicht so begeistert über den Mauerfall. Der ging so schnell, das war so Koitusinterruptus. Es war einfach so. Wir wollten ja, auch durch dieses Neue Forum und so. Wir wollten eine DDR damals, wir wussten dass die DDR so, wie sie war, wollten wir sie nicht mehr behalten. Aber wir wollten eigentlich die DDR verändern, und auf einmal war die DDR nicht mehr da. Und das war uns ein bisschen zu schnell, wir hätten uns auch nicht für so schnell für die Westmark entschieden. Deswegen standen wir so ein bisschen unter Schock. Aber wir haben schon begriffen, dass das eine neue Zeit ist, und eine neue Aufbruchstimmung, die am Ende für uns auch beide sehr gut war.

Was hätten Sie gerne gehabt als eine zweite DDR, oder für was haben sie gearbeitet im Neuen Forum usw., in welsche Richtung sollte das gehen?

Da ging es darum, dass man mehr Bürgerbeteiligung hat, das ging um Meinungsfreiheit, um Informationsfreiheit, um Reisefreiheit. Also es gab ja so ein paar Errungenschaften im Sozialismus. Die waren ja toll, es gab keinen Grund ... wir hatten Angst vor Arbeitslosigkeit, Obdachlosigkeit und solchen Sachen. In der DDR gab es eben Krankenkasse, Gesundheitswesen für alle, Bildung für alle, und so. Es waren ganz wichtige Sachen, aber sie war so eben restriktiv. Und uns war einfach wichtig, dass die Bürger mehr Freiheiten bekommen. Also Freiheit war eigentlich das große Wort. Aber es hätte eben einfach eine neue Regierung ... eine komplett neue Regierung. Das waren alte Männer, und da sollte eine junge Generation nachwachsen, das war unser Traum gewesen.

(00:20:09)

Und ich würde gern jetzt zurückkommen zu ihrem Beruf als Journalistin, wie das angefangen hat. Nach dem Studium, nachdem sie das absolviert hatten, was war ihr erster Job als Journalistin, wann war das?

Also ich hab mich gleich nach dem Mauerfall, bei der *Berliner Zeitung* beworben ... hier. Und ich hatte bis dahin schon eigentlich nur so ein paar Probereportagen und so was geschrieben. Mit dem, was ich da von der Schule hatte, und mit meinem Lebenslauf, und da stand eben drin Friseur, Tänzerin, alles Mögliche. Und dann hat die Personalchefin wirklich gesagt, es sei eine Unverschämtheit mich mit dem Lebenslauf mich hier zu bewerben, und dann hat sie mich raus geschickt. Also sie, der hat gesagt, „Das wird nichts.“ ... Ich hatte in meinem

Leben bis dahin nur Erfolg gehabt. Es hat vieles immer geklappt. Und es war so meine erste Niederlage, die ich zu verkraften hatte, also im November 89.

Und dann bin ich runter gegangen in die Kantine, und hab dort erst mal ein Tee getrunken. Dort setzte sich ein Mann zu mir, und der kriegte mit, dass ich sehr traurig aussah. Also das war wirklich purer Zufall. Und der fragte mich was los ist. Und ich habe gesagt, „Ja, ich habe mich grade bei der *Berliner Zeitung* beworben. Und das hat gar nicht geklappt also so gar nicht.“ Für mich ist alles zusammengebrochen. Ich wusste auch in dem Moment, dass ich kann nie wieder Journalistin sein kann oder so. Und dann hatte ich hatte ja die ganzen Bewerbungsunterlagen noch in der Hand. Wir haben uns eine halbe Stunde unterhalten. Der sagte dann, „Geben sie mir doch dann ihre Bewerbungsunterlagen.“ Das war jemand von der *Jungen Welt*. Das war eine Zeitung, die auch hier im Haus saß. Und das war damals die größte Zeitung in der DDR. Die hatten 1,7 Millionen Auflage pro Tag, also traumhaft. Das war so die Zeitung von der Freien Deutschen Jugend, also die Jugend Tageszeitung der DDR praktisch. Die war ein bisschen jugendlicher. Aber natürlich auch total „auf Linie.“

Und der nahm meine Unterlagen mit, und lud mich zwei Wochen später zu einem Vorstellungsgespräch ein, und stellte mich ein. Das heißt, wäre ich nicht in die Kantine gegangen, wäre mein ganzes Leben anders gelaufen. Und dann stellte er mich ein, und dann habe ich ab dem 1. Januar 1990 habe ich bei der *Jungen Welt* dann gearbeitet. Und dort hatten die keinen besonderen Job für mich, die haben mich als Erstes in die Leserbriefabteilung gesteckt, und das fand ich eigentlich sehr ernüchternd. Aber andererseits es war eine Festanstellung, und ich war erst mal bei der Zeitung drin. Ich habe die Chance natürlich ergriffen. Und das war das Beste, was mir passieren konnte, weil die Leser natürlich auch umdachten, anfangen offen ihre Meinung zu sagen. Wir mussten eben für diese Briefe recherchieren, und die Briefe beantworten.

Und es gab, glaube ich, nie wieder so viel zu tun in der Leserbrief-Abteilung wie damals. Und eigentlich habe ich dort das ganze Handwerkzeug gelernt für den praktischen Journalismus. Also jetzt stilistisch, wie man eine Reportage schreibt, sondern einfach auch wie recherchiert man, wie geht man mit den Lesern um, wie bleibt man an der Basis dran? Was bewegt eigentlich unsere Leser ... wie sind unsere Leser, was denken sie? Das war wahnsinnig interessant. Und das ist bei mir auch bis heute so, das für mich der Leser das alle Wichtigste ist. Mir ist ganz ganz unwichtig, was in der Zeitung hinter den Kulissen abläuft. Ob die Kollegen sich vertragen oder ob man selber ein großer Aufmacher ist, oder nur einer kleinen Meldung oder so. Mir ist einfach immer nur wichtig den Leser zu erreichen.

Und dann war ich da, und nach wenigen Monaten, wurde eine Kollegin schwanger. Und dann habe ich von der die Schwangerschaftsvertretung übernommen und bin ins Lifestyle Ressort gekommen. Das war aber damals eigentlich ganz toll, weil, wir waren bei dem *Prêt-à-porter* Show in Paris. Ich habe Karl Lagerfeld getroffen. Und wir hatten für nichts eine Eintrittskarte, weil wir kannten das gar nicht mit der Akkreditierung und so, und dann ... „Wo kommt ihr her?“ „Aus Berlin, aus Ostberlin.“ „Ja, kommt rein.“

Also wir sind überall umsonst hereingekommen, das war perfekt. Also auch das man gleich ein Interview mit Karl Lagerfeld kriegt, der einfach auch interessiert war das, da Ostjournalisten da waren. Also ich weiß in Paris, da war ich ein paar Wochen, und da haben uns alle Türen offengestanden. Dann habe ich noch ein paar Wochen als Korrespondentin in Niederlanden gearbeitet, in Rotterdam und Amsterdam. Ich hatte also in diesem einen Jahr von der Leserbrief-Abteilung eine Karriere gemacht bis zur Korrespondentin. Vor allem könnte ich gar kein französisch. Und ich musste mich überall auf Englisch verständigen. Und die Franzosen sprachen nicht so gerne Englisch, aber bei mir war es, oder bei mir und meinen Kollegen aus

Ostdeutschland war das völlig okay. Mit uns haben sie gerne Englisch gesprochen. Ansonsten reden die ja lieber französisch. Ich muss mal sagen, dieses Jahr war das spannendste Jahr in meiner Arbeit.

So und dann, im November 1990 wurde ich von der *Berliner Zeitung* abgeworben. Da baute der *Berliner Zeitung* dann hier neue Ressorts auf und fragte mich, ob ich kommen will. Und dann wollte ich nicht, weil ich dachte, ich hab der *Jungen Welt* zu viel zu verdanken. Meine ganze Karriere, die ich bis dahin hatte, hatte ich der *Jungen Welt* zu verdanken. Und ich wollte die nicht verlassen. Aber andererseits wollte ich ja damals gleich als Erstes zu Berliner Zeitung. Also es hat bestimmt drei Anläufe gebracht. ... Also ich sollte zum 1. Januar 1991 eingestellt werden, und kurz vor Weihnachten sagte er dann, „Also wir müssen jetzt die Entscheidung haben.“ Und das war sehr witzig. Ich war dann unten im Personalgespräch, und saß genau die Frau die ein Jahr zuvor sagte „das ist Unverschämtheit, dass ich mich da ...“ Und der Chefredakteur und der Ressortleiter von der Berliner Zeitung, die saßen dann da sprachen über meine Artikel und sagten, dass sie ihnen sehr gut gefallen und so jemand wie mich möchten die mich dann haben. Ich habe immer gedacht, mir würde schon reichen wenn die Hälfte davon wahr ist. Sie haben so toll über mich gesprochen. Jedenfalls haben sie sich sehr bemüht mich einzustellen, und dann habe ich mich praktisch überreden lassen. Und die blöde Zicke von damals, die musste mich einstellen. Und am 1. Januar 1991 habe ich dann bei der *Berliner Zeitung* angefangen. Also vor 22 Jahren.

(00:20:20)

Ich würde gern mal ein bisschen mehr fragen, was innerhalb der Zeitung passiert ist, in dieser Zeit. Also zwischen Mauerfall und Wiedervereinigung. Was ist in den Zeitungen, was waren die Gespräche unterhalb der Journalisten? ... Wie has sich der Job „Journalist“ gewandelt?

Also, das war ein sehr langer Prozess. Der war nicht von heute auf morgen. Und ich fand, dass in der Zeitung eigentlich nichts anderes passierte als in der Gesellschaft auch. Es gab einfach ... also ist jetzt meine ganz persönliche Meinung, es gab einen riesengroßen Unterschied zwischen den Generationen. Es war alles eine Generationsfrage. Die junge Generation, die sah plötzlich ganz viele Chancen, die sich auftraten, und wollte diskutieren, und wollte reden und so. Und die ältere Generation, die schon so lange praktisch, das verteidigt hat was sie seit Jahren geschrieben haben. Die sahen, dann plötzlich, so einem Lebensentwurf zusammenkrachen. Ich glaube ehrlich gesagt, für die war das ihrer innerlicher [11.] September. Muss ich ganz ehrlich sagen. Da brach alles zusammen, dann auf einmal war ja nichts mehr so wie vorher. Einige versuchten mit der neuen Zeit mitzugehen, weil sie es wollten. Einige versuchten mit der Zeit mitzugehen, ... also einige ließen sich überzeugen von den neuen Argumenten. Einige waren so eher Wendehälse, die haben damals schon diesen Job nur gemacht um bestimmten Status zu haben, und nicht aus Überzeugung. Und machten eben den neuen Job auch wieder um einen bestimmten Status zu haben, und nicht aus Überzeugung.

Also so unterschiedlich, wie die Menschen waren, so unterschiedlich waren auch die Reaktionen. Aber wenn man es so klassifizieren will, dann würde ich sagen ... Im Großen und Ganzen die jüngeren Generationen sah die Chancen, die alte Generation sahen Lebensentwürfe in sich zusammenbrechen. Die junge Generation hat diese Wende sehr viel besser überstanden als die Älteren damals. Sind auch viele depressive gewesen, viele haben auch freiwillig, nee nicht viele, aber einige haben freiwillig das Handtuch geschmissen. Für die fest angestellten Redakteure änderte sich sehr sehr viel, aber sie waren ja täglich am Austausch mit den Lesern auf den Redaktionskonferenzen. Das heißt, die waren in der Redaktion mit der Zeit gegangen. Für die Freien war es noch viel schlimmer. Weil die waren außen vor und bekamen ja nicht alles

mit. Sie bekamen die neuen Richtungen nicht mit. Sie bekamen ja nur Fragmente von Debatten mit.

Hier in dem Haus wurde ja sehr viel diskutiert auf den Fluren und überall, sehr sachlich. Aber sehr intensiv. Und da waren ja die Freien von vorneherein ausgeschlossen. Und für die war glaube ich, die Veränderung noch viel massiver. Deswegen sind von den Freien extrem viele abgesprungen, die mit der neuen Zeit einfach nicht mehr mithalten könnten. Und von den Festen, nicht so viele. Und dann haben es sehr viele eigentlich in die neue Zeit geschafft. Und dann war es eine sehr sehr schöne Zeit. Die *Berliner Zeitung* bekam dann auch West-Redakteure dazu. Also als ich eingestellt wurde, am 1. Januar 1991, wurde ich mit so einem Schwung West-Redakteure eingestellt. Viele sind heute noch da. Und wir hatten relativ schnell das Verhältnis 50 : 50. Und das war bei der *Berliner Zeitung* ganz besonders, denn die anderen waren Westzeitungen, die *Morgenpost*, die *Tagespiegel* die *BZ* und so. Und dort kamen ja kaum Ostjournalisten rein. Aber wir waren eine Ostzeitung, und bei uns kamen sehr viele Westjournalisten. Deswegen wir als Zeitung auch sehr spannend. Weil bei uns konnte es passieren, dass wir zu einem Thema zwei Kommentare hatten, zwei völlig unterschiedliche Kommentare und so. Und ich war damals eigentlich zur richtige Zeit am richtigen Ort. Hier sind also die beiden Kulturen aufeinandergeprallt und haben eigentlich versucht miteinander zu arbeiten. Und das waren zwei, das war so ein Menschenschlag. Wir wollten alle miteinander arbeiten.

Also es war kein Gegeneinander. Natürlich war auch manchmal, dass man sagte, Besserwessi. Das, da Westkollegen waren, die wirklich nicht viel könnten, und einfach ein sehr großes Selbstbewusstsein hatten. Aber das war wahnsinnig interessant, und eine extrem schöne Zeit, die mich dann dazu bewogen hat ... aber das haben nur ganz wenige gemacht. Ich war dann

19, wann war das eigentlich, 1993 nachdem meine Tochter geboren worden war. Bin ich noch mal an einer Westjournalistenschule gegangen, in Hamburg. Und habe noch mal Westjournalismus studiert.

(00:32:15)

Und was war der Unterschied zwischen diesem Westjournalismus und dem was Sie in auf der Volkshochschulen gelernt haben?

Ich sag es mal so: Erst mal war es für mich die beste Entscheidung noch mal ... es war völlig irre eigentlich, und nicht notwendig, weil ich war ja Journalist, und ich war ja hier fest angestellt. Mir hätte nichts passieren können. Aber ich selber habe gemerkt, dass die Westjournalisten anders an die Sachen herangehen. Also ich habe gemerkt, dass wir natürlich auch sehr als Ostjournalisten manchmal gehemmt waren in den Recherchen. Ich habe auch gemerkt, wie breit wir eigentlich Recherchen können, wie viele Rechte wir haben auch gegenüber Behörden. Das war ja im Osten nicht so. Da war ja viel mehr von Beziehungen abhängig. Ich habe gelernt, wie man mit Informanten umgeht. Das habe ich vorher auch so nicht gewusst. Und vor allen Dingen, was mich sehr sehr stark beeindruckt hat, die Stilistik war eine komplett andere. Man kann es ganz einfach auf dem Punkt bringen. Im Osten wurden ganz viele Substantive verwendet, und im Westen ganz viel Verben. Dadurch war aber der Westjournalismus viel einfacher zu verstehen. Weil die Sätze waren so, wie ich jetzt spreche, und im Osten gab es einfach so extreme viele Substantive, dass man den Satz immer noch [unklar] lassen musste.

Des Weiteren hat man auch als Ostjournalist viel versucht zwischen den Zeilen zu schreiben. Sowie mein Mann, als Sänger, viel versucht hat zwischen den Zeilen zu singen. Also

man hat ja Dinge angesprochen aber nie ausgesprochen. Und ich lernte, auf einmal Dinge klar auszusprechen. Also so richtig auf dem Punkt zu bringen. Und das war für mich eine neue Erfahrung. Also, viele Ostjournalisten haben es auch ohne die Journalistenschule dann prima bewältigt. Aber ich hatte es dadurch sehr schnell bewältigen können. Und das war einfach schön. Stilistik, Recherche, Bewusstsein einfach. Das waren für mich die drei neuen Erfahrungen, die ich da gesammelt hab.

Ich bin auch ganz froh, dass ich das gemacht habe. Inzwischen bin ich selber Dozentin an dieser Schule, aber ja das war für mich auch eine neue Erfahrung. Ich war dann schon wenig später, vielleicht 4-5 Jahre später, Dozentin an der Schule. Und da war ich so ende Zwanzig, vielleicht 28-29 und hatte meinen ersten Unterricht dort. Und dann saßen eben Schüler und Studenten, die waren so alt wie ich. Und das war ganz komisch. Also ich stand da, und war schon mehrere Jahre im Beruf. Und die studierten noch. Und da hab ich natürlich auch gemerkt, dass sie ... wie behäbig und langsam dieses Westsystem ist. Mit 13 Jahren Schule, und dann erst mal weiß ich, Politikwissenschaften studieren, und Publizistik dranhängen, usw. und wie schnell man da 28 - 29 Jahre sein konnte, ohne ausstudiert zu haben. Das war im Osten nicht so. Man war mit 22 – 23, spätestens mit 24 fertig. Und das war ganz erstaunlich als ich Gleichaltrigen gegenüberstand. Und ich hatte auch schon zwei Kinder, und die waren kinderlos und hatten noch keinen Job. Es war auch eine neue Erfahrung, aber das hatte weniger mit dem Beruf zu tun, dann wieder mit der Bildungsart im Westen.

(00:35:38)

*Ich würde gern mal ein bisschen mehr hören, wie Sie den Westjournalismus schildern würden.
Oder was für eine Rolle spielt der Journalist in der Gesellschaft im Vereinigten Deutschland.
Und was ist der Unterschied zwischen dem ostdeutschen Journalisten, Ihre Meinung nach ...?*

Also heute glaube ich gibt es keine Unterschiede mehr. Keine Großartigen glaube ich wirklich nicht mehr. Also wenn wir jetzt von richtigen professionellen Journalisten sprechen. Das hat sich total verwischt, kann man nicht mehr.

Also heute, nur mal noch ganz kurz erwähnen ... Heute gibt's einen großen Unterschied zwischen dem Journalisten und den Online-Journalisten. Wo sehr viel oberflächliche Sachen eigentlich sehr schnell hinaus [unklar] werden. Während unserer Zeit, erstmal lange recherchiert hat, bevor er sich getraut hat etwas an die Öffentlichkeit zu geben. Aber ich würde sagen es gibt keinen Unterschied zwischen Ost- und Westjournalisten grundsätzlich. Die arbeiten gewissenhaft, im Großen und Ganzen. Natürlich gibt es, es gab fast für mich neue war die Boulevardzeitung. Also die Boulevardmedien. Also ... Ja, ich würde sagen es gibt keinen Unterschied zwischen Ost und Westjournalisten, sondern es gibt den Unterschied zwischen Boulevardmedien und seriösen Medien. Das ist für mich der Unterschied.

Ich meinte ... Und was ist mit dem damaligen Ostjournalisten, also der Journalismus vor der Wende und jetzt dem Journalismus nach der Wende. Was waren das für Rollen? Ich weiß, dass Sie erst mit der Wende Journalistin geworden sind, aber wie hat sich der Journalismus geändert?

Geändert hatte sich insofern für die Ostjournalisten, dass sie danach eben Dinge wirklich aussprechen konnten, und nicht mehr zwischen den Zeilen schreiben mussten. Geändert hat sich auch die Stilistik, die ich eigentlich wahnsinnig interessant finde, und geändert hat sich ... also zum Beispiel die Art und Weise Kommentare zu schreiben, ich bin schon der Meinung, dass es im Osten ziemlich stark verbreitet war ... also wie gesagt diesen Verlautbarungsjournalismus zu machen. Diese PR-Abteilung für den Staat zu sein. Es gab natürlich immer Journalisten, die

versucht haben, auf ihre weise, ein bisschen etwas dagegen zu setzen. Aber sie könnten ja nicht wirklich viel dagegen tun.

Und ich glaube ganz platt gesagt: Vor der Wende hat man sagen wir mal für die Regierung gearbeitet, oder im Sinne der Regierung gearbeitet. Und nach der Wende arbeitet man eher im Sinne der Gesellschaft und dadurch auch öfter gegen die Regierung. Jetzt wird die Journalisten heutzutage am [unklar] viel mehr und Recherchieren viel mehr gegen Politiker, stellen Dinge auf dem Prüfstand und so. Jetzt nimmt es zwar gerade wieder ab, das merkt man ganz deutlich, dass Dinge seltener hinterfragt werden, und einfach auch wieder abgeschrieben werden. Ich finde im Moment gibt es gerade so eine Wende wieder, weil es Journalisten gibt, die weniger Zeit haben. Und an den Redaktionen knapp besetzt sind, merkt man, dass Dinge jetzt wieder seltener hinterfragt werden. Aber jetzt kommt viel mehr auf dem Prüfstand als vorher.

Was würde ich noch sagen? Ja, und wie gesagt die Kommentare also das war, die Kommentare waren ... der Kommentar ist eine ganz spezielle Form eines Artikels. Also in der Reportage, und in einem Porträt ... in der Reportage beschreibe ich eine Situation so, wie sie ist, und beim Porträts Menschen so wie er ist. Aber beim Kommentar beschreibe ich meine Haltung. Da kann man sich hinter niemanden als Journalist verstecken und sagen, ich nehme das Zitat von dem und dem und das ist nicht meine Meinung, sondern in einem Kommentar ist es meine Meinung. Und da mussten viele Ostjournalisten natürlich auch noch mal umdenken. Und ich weiß, dass anfangs viele Kommentare von Westjournalisten geschrieben wurden.

Aber das haben die Ostkollegen natürlich auch schnell nachgeholt. Und aufgeholt, und sind jetzt alle gleichrangig.

(00:39:50)

Also einige Fragen haben wir jetzt schon beantwortet. Was war die Beziehung zwischen den neuen Westdeutschen Kollegen, und den ehemaligen Ostdeutschen Kollegen die hier waren. Also sie haben gesagt es war 50:50 Westen ...

Ungefähr ja, ich glaube heute sind sogar mehr Westkollegen als Ostkollegen. Heute sind es nicht mehr so viele. Ja, also ganz oben über allem stand die gegenseitige Neugier da. Also Kollegen aus dem Westen, die in den Osten gekommen sind, waren natürlich auch am Osten interessiert. Das hat sie von vielen Leuten aus der Gesellschaft unterschieden. Denn die Westler waren nicht so am Osten interessiert, die Wende ist halt passiert. Und die Westler haben sie so hingegenommen. Aber die Kollegen, die dann auch wirklich in den Osten gekommen sind, die wollten auch wirklich wissen wie der Osten tickt. Also von daher ... und wir wollten sowieso wissen, wie der Westen tickt. Weil wir wollten ja schon immer mehr wissen, als uns gesagt wurde. Von daher steht über allem die gegenseitige Neugier da.

Trotzdem gab es natürlich auch irgendwo untereinander auch gegenseitiges Misstrauen. Und das war teilweise auch berechtigt. Auf der einen Seite waren Westkollegen die wie gesagt, da würde ich halt sagen die waren Schaumschläger, die einfach sehr sehr selbstbewusst waren, aber eigentlich nicht besonders professionell waren, und nicht so wahnsinnig gute Dinge abgeliefert haben. Auf der anderen Seite waren auch ein paar Ostkollegen, die natürlich auch eine Vergangenheit hatten, die auch mit Stasi zu tun hatte und so. Und die einfach immer noch weiter hier beschäftigt waren. Also ich spreche jetzt nur von vereinzelnden Gruppen. Die Neugier war wirklich 100% und hier reden wir über 20% ja.

Und das war auch für die Ostkollegen, die jetzt eine neue *Berliner Zeitung* machen wollten, und in die neuen Zeit wollten, auch eine Belastung. Also diese Stasi Geschichten es war eine ganz schlimme Sache. Und wir hatten zweimal diese Überprüfung der Kollegen, und es sind

beim ersten Mal sehr viel ausgefallen, und beim zweiten Mal waren aber immer noch mehr die erst später entdeckt worden, weil die Akten dann 10 Jahre später noch mal ganz anders ausgewertet waren. Und das war für uns ein Schock, mit Leuten teilweise zusammenzuarbeiten die so eng früher mit der Stasi gearbeitet hatten. Und da konnte ich auch das Misstrauen der Westkollegen teilweise verstehen. Also das war dann auch ein Misstrauen, was sich auf ein paar Ostkollegen übertragen hat, dass man da nicht ganz sicher war wie sehr war der eine in der ... damals in die Machenschaften der Regierung oder des Staates involviert [war].

Obwohl wir mit dem Stasi Sachen sehr unterschiedlich umgehen. Also das ist nicht per-se jemand der für die Stasi gearbeitet hat ein schlechter Kollege ist. Sondern, wir haben hier schon in dem Haus ganz genau ausgewertet, was hat er dann getan? Denn es gab Leute die wussten gar nicht, dass sie für die Stasi arbeiteten, weil einfach nur ein Protokoll über sie geführt wurde. Es gab Leute die sind aus ganz blöden Umständen als informelle Mitarbeiter erpresst wurden, weil ein Familienmitglied in den Westen gegangen ist und so. Dann musste man sich ... auch manchmal ... man musste sich auch die Berichte durchlesen.

Manche Kollegen sind da reingerutscht und haben ganz belanglose Sachen aufgeschrieben, also wirklich niemandem geschadet. Aber es gab eben auch Kollegen die waren sehr sehr ehrgeizig, und haben sehr viel auf geschrieben auch Dinge, die hätten sie nicht schreiben müssen. Und da muss man einfach trennen. Unter welchen Umständen hat jemand mit der Stasi zusammengearbeitet und wie hat er mit der Stasi gearbeitet. Und ich sag mal, die wirklich ganz unangenehmen Fälle, die sind sowieso alle weg. Da ist niemand mehr im Haus.

Und was war der Grund gegeben um die jetzt zu entfernen von der Zeitung. Also man hat eine Stasibelastung in seiner Vergangenheit, und als Journalist durfte man nicht mehr arbeiten weil...?

Die Zeitung wollte es. Das hat praktisch die Zeitung entschieden. Es war ja so, in den öffentlichen Behörden gab es ja auch diesen Stasi-Überprüfungen. Und dort war ja klar, wer belastet war, musste gehen, für die war es Pflicht. Für ein Privatunternehmen wie unsere Zeitung, war es keine Pflicht, sondern die Kür. Also man konnte, und wir wollten, uns der Vergangenheit stellen, und das hat dann die Chef-Seite einfach entschieden, dass den Leuten Abfindungen angeboten wurden, und dass die praktisch dann aus dem Betrieb irgendwie ausscheiden. Weil man einfach nicht mehr wollte, dass sie die Zeitung belasten.

Denn es sind auch einige Stasi Fälle dann öffentlich bekannt geworden, von unseren Journalisten und das hat die ganze Zeitung belastet.

Und das hatte dann Folgen für die Zeitung? Dass man da mitbelastet worden ist ...

Ja und deshalb sind wir so offensiv damit umgegangen, aber ich glaube, dass unsere Leser uns das auch sehr goutiert haben. Also, dass sie es sehr gut fanden, das wir so offen damit umgegangen sind. Denn unsere Zeitung war nicht anders als viele andere Betrieben auch. Und die anderen Betriebe hatten aber nicht die Möglichkeit das öffentlich zu machen. Und wir haben dann eben, hatten wir mal Öffentlichkeit und hatten die eigentlich keine Wahl, wir konnten damit nicht hinter den Kulissen hantieren, sondern mussten damit nach draußen. Aber wir haben möglichst vermieden Namen zu nennen oder so, sondern haben einfach gesagt der Redaktion hat sich neu aufgestellt.

(00:45:56)

Sie haben jetzt eine ostdeutsche Ausbildung und eine westdeutsche Ausbildung ...

Ja, genau.

Ist noch was von der ostdeutschen Ausbildung noch hilfreich in Ihrem alltäglichen Beruf? Oder kommt alles jetzt, ist das einer neuer Journalismus jetzt mit dem Sie jetzt arbeiten?

Nein, das ist eine Mischung aus beidem. Obwohl ich sagen muss, hätte ich nur die Westdeutschausbildung gemacht, hätte sie gereicht.

Aber ich bin eigentlich dankbar, dass ich beide kennenlernen durfte. Und für mich war natürlich, für mich war dies die Einführung in den Journalismus ... die Ostdeutsche Ausbildung war ja sehr seriös und hat ein wirklich gutes Fundament gelegt. Ich hab einfach ganz rudimentäre, ganz grundlegende Sachen dort gelernt. Die verschiedenen Formen von Artikeln, die Herangehensweise an Artikel ... Also ich würde mal sagen die Ostdeutsche Grundausbildung ... die ostdeutsche Ausbildung war das Fundament, die Grundlage, und die Westdeutsche Ausbildung war wie das Salz in der Suppe, also die hat alles noch mal verfeinert. Das war dann die Stilistik und die Recherche.

(00:47:25)

Was würden Sie sagen ist der Stand der Journalist in der Gesellschaft in Deutschland?

Also, Entschuldigung, mir fällt noch was ein. Also in der Ostdeutschen Ausbildung, da war es oft so, dass man am Ende doch das geschrieben hat, in dem man wusste, dass der Lehrer das erwartet. Man hat seine fertigen Arbeiten oft so geschrieben wie man, wie der Lehrer sie gerne gelesen hätte. Und in der Westdeutschen Ausbildung hat man einfach sein Ding gemacht. Die Lehrer haben einen eigentlich dazu ermuntert. Man wusste manchmal gar nicht, was den Lehrern gefällt. In der Westdeutschen Ausbildung war man viel mehr „Ich“ -bezogen, und man selbst beim Schreiben der Artikel. In der Ostdeutschen Ausbildung war man mehr so ein Spiegel des Lehrers.

Würden sie sagen, sie hatten mehr Autonomie?

Absolut, genau, mehr Selbstständigkeit in der westdeutschen Schreibe. Aber es gilt nur für mich.

Dann die Frage, wegen des Standes oder der Journalist in der Gesellschaft, wie war der ...

Verstehen Sie, was ich meine? ...

Ja, ja. Also in der DDR, hatte der Journalist einen sehr guten Stand. Also er gehörte in der Hierarchie schon zu den oberen angesehenen Berufen. Der war ja wirklich etwas sehr sehr Seltenes. Also man muss Mal sagen, in der DDR wurde man nicht so einfach Journalist. Im Westen hat der Journalist auch ein sehr guter Stand, aber er ist so ein ungeschützter Begriff. Es ist einer Verwendung, also eine Berufsbezeichnung, jeder kann sich Journalist nennen. Es war im Osten gar nicht ohne Weiteres möglich. Und im Osten musste man immer so Papiere nachweisen, um bestimmte Bezeichnungen tragen zu dürfen. Also selbst ich als Tänzerin musste vor ein Komitee für Unterhaltungskunst um eine Einstufung machen. Oder als Moderatorin musste ich mich vom staatlichem Unterhaltungskomitee praktisch schriftlich holen, dass ich überhaupt als Moderatorin auftreten darf. Und so wäre es als Journalistin eben auch so gewesen, dass ich nachweisen musste. Hier im Westen kann jeder kommen und sagen ich bin Journalist. Und das ist es so ein ungeschützter Begriff, der sich gegen seine Verwendung nicht wehren kann. Jeder kann damit machen, was er will.

Der Stand des Journalisten im Westen ist so zwiespältig finde ich. Einerseits ist er gesellschaftlich sehr angesehen. Es gilt auch als die 4. Gewalt und ist politisch wahnsinnig stark angeordnet. Andererseits ist er auch im Westen der Schmutzfink. Also, nicht immer ein vertrauenswürdigen Wesen. Ich meine, das war im Osten auch nicht vertrauenswürdig. Aber er ist im Westen so ... zwiespältig. Sowohl angesehen, als auch trotzdem mit einer gewissen

Abwertung, aber in beiden Gesellschaften war der Journalist immer so auf der Ebene der Ärzte, der Juristen, also eine gehobenen Ebene, finde ich nach wie vor.

Was ich nicht verstehe ist, das habe ich nie verstanden, dass der Journalist im Westen so viele Vorteile bekam. Also das einfach nur, weil man Journalist ist, dass man eine Presse-Rabatt bekommt, wenn man ein Auto kauft, oder Möbel kauft, ja kann man 10 bis 15 %, wer mit der Bahn fuhr, oder mit dem Flugzeug Flug, aber wenn man privat flog, einfach nur, weil man Journalist war. Und das fand ich komisch. Weil man ja objektiv und unabhängig sein sollte. Und es gibt diese Vergünstigungen teilweise bis heute. Also letztes Jahr haben die Telekom, also drei große Unternehmen, die Deutsche Bahn und AirBerlin, also ein Flugunternehmen, die haben die Presse-Rabatte abgeschafft. Aber es gibt immer noch zig Firmen die Presse-Rabatte anbieten. Und das finde ich eigenartig. Warum kriegt ein Journalist ein Auto 15% billiger, als jeder andere. Eigenartig. Muss man nicht verstehen.

(00:51:47)

Was war der Einfluss der Wende auf Ihr berufliches Selbstbild. Ich weiß, dass Sie Ihren Beruf jetzt nach der Wende angefangen haben, aber wie ...

Wie sie mich beeinflusst hat? ...

Also die Wende hat mir eigentlich ermöglicht dort anzukommen, wo ich hin wollte. Ehrlich gesagt ... bei mir ist es so ... ich hatte eben vorher viele Berufe. Und ich war mir eigentlich ganz sicher, dass mein Leben immer so sein wird, dass ich immer alle drei Jahre etwas Anderes mache. Aber durch die Wende bin ich in einen Beruf geschlittert, der mir so viele Abenteuer und Erlebnisse beschert, dass ich in dem Beruf seit 22 Jahren bin. Also für mich ist

Journalismus immer so mein Hafen, und die Redaktion ist auch mein Hafen, aber ich schwärme gerne mal aus. Und mach auch gerne andere Sachen.

Ich schreibe auch mal für ein Musical, oder mach Dozentensachen, oder schreib ein Buch, oder geh in die Schulen. Also ich kann mich verwirklichen auf verschiedenen anderen Hochzeiten, aber die Zeitung ist für mich die Basis. Und ich glaube deshalb, dass ich mich gefunden habe.

Aber ich bin der Meinung, dass jetzt gerade alles wieder im Umbruch ist und, dass es nicht so bleiben wird. Aber es ist für mich schon eine tolle Sache wenigsten 22 Jahre lang das gemacht zu haben, was ich wirklich machen wollte. Also 3 Mal im Jahr war ich der Meinung ich möchte nicht mehr ich höre jetzt auf. Aber 250 Mal im Jahr war ich der Meinung es ist einfach ein Traumjob. Und 250 zu 3 ist ein tolles Verhältnis, das ist okay. Und von daher habe ich jetzt 22 Jahre lang wirklich das gemacht, was ich unbedingt machen wollte. Genau so, wie ich es mir vorgestellt habe, eigentlich noch viel interessanter. Ich bin in der Welt rumgekommen, ich hab interessante Leute kennengelernt. Und das ist für mich das Wesen des Journalismus, gerade wenn man ein neugieriger Mensch ist, man ist nie fertig.

Es gibt zwei Sachen, erstens ist man ein ewiger Schüler, weil man immer wieder neu dazu lernt. Es ist nie vorbei, man muss immer wieder dranbleiben. Ich bin heute noch auf Abendschul-Kursen, um mich in bestimmten Sachen weiter zu bilden. Um die Dinge zu verstehen, über die ich schreibe, also besser zu verstehen. Ich will auch nicht 22 Jahre lang immer dasselbe machen. Deswegen war ich in der Lokalredaktion und dann im Feuilleton. Deswegen schreibe ich mal für die Politik oder für was Vermischtes. Also mir ist ganz wichtig, dass ich diese Vielfalt habe.

Also das ist mir wichtig, und die zweite Sache ist, ich habe immer noch Respekt vor dem weißen Blatt Papier. Also es ist nie so, dass ich von einem Termin komme und sofort an den Computer gehe und schreibe. Sondern ich habe immer noch richtig Angst und Respekt dafür nach 22 Jahren und bin inzwischen so dass ich sage, den Respekt den pflege ich mir einfach. Ich pflege diese Angst, weil sie eben ein Zeichen von Respekt ist. Ich möchte nicht Routinet haben, ich glaube, dass Routine in diesem Job tödlich ist. Die Routine natürlich manchmal ... also Routine kann sein, wenn eine Nachricht verfasst. Weil man dann sagt: wer, wann, wo und hat was gesagt, aber es sind Nachrichten. Alles Andere, da muss immer ein bisschen Leidenschaft rein, und da muss man immer so ein bisschen bluten. Und deswegen habe ich immer Angst vor jedem Artikel, den ich schreibe nach 22 Jahren.

Ich würde auch gerne wissen wie Sie, ... Also Sie haben jetzt gesagt, dass Sachen sich ein bisschen ändern. Und wie Sie sie sehen ... wie hat sich der Beruf sich in den letzten 20 Jahren geändert, also nach der Wende? Was sind jetzt die neuen Herausforderungen?

Also, die neuen Herausforderungen sind natürlich die neuen Medien, das ist völlig klar. Ich bin auch selber hier Blogger dieser Zeitung und schreibe meine Blogs. Aber einige Zeitungen haben die neuen Medien schon früher mit ins Boot genommen, andere Zeitungen wie wir etwas später. Ich betrachte die neuen Medien überhaupt nicht als Feind, oder so. Ich finde es total spannend und finde es ganz wichtig, dass wir es machen. Was ich aber schade finde, ist dass es so viele neue Plattformen gibt. Und dann kommen wir wieder zu dem Punkt, das der Beruf eben Journalist nicht geschützt. Dass inzwischen so, News und solche Sachen veröffentlicht werden, die nicht einfach nicht journalistisch gemacht sind, sondern man kann heutzutage kaum noch unterscheiden zwischen PR und Journalismus. Und, das finde ich wirklich sehr sehr schwierig, weil natürlich Verlage darauf angewiesen sind, Geld zu verdienen. Und ich finde es aber

schwierig wenn nicht klar ist, dass manche Dinge gekauft wurden, und manche dingen journalistisch ausgebreitet wurden. Es verschwimmen die Grenzen zwischen PR und Journalismus. Das Handwerkliche wird jetzt immer öfter vernachlässigt, weil die neuen Medien schnelle Medien sind, und es geht darum wer hat die Information als Erster. Twitter hat sie immer als Erste.

Und deswegen wurde ich mir lieber 5 Minuten Zeit nehmen ... mehr ... auch wenn ich dann erst die 5. 6. die damit in die online geht, um noch mal bei der Polizei anzurufen, oder dort anzurufen und noch mal eine ordentliche Stellungnahme zu kriegen. Mich noch mal eine Minute zurück zu lehnen, und auch Verknüpfungen herzustellen und die Dinge, die dort gerade im Parlament passieren, oder auf der Straße passieren einzuordnen. Und das passiert heute nicht mehr. Heute wird einfach nur noch gesagt, das und das ist passiert. Aber es wird kaum noch erklärt, was es bedeutet.

Und das ist dieser „Fastfood-Journalismus.“ Und den, empfinde ich als Bedrohung. Aber niemals die neuen Medien. Denn Leute wie Torsten und ich, wir sind doch Handwerker. Also Journalismus bedeutet für mich, und dass sage ich doch immer meinen Schüler, wir sind Dienstleister. Wir sind einfach nur Dienstleister, wir sind Nichts Besonderes. So viel auch zum Stand in der Gesellschaft. Eigentlich sind wir nur Dienstleister. Was ist unsere Dienstleistung? Wir sind Dolmetscher, wir müssen komplizierter Sachverhalte übersetzen, in einfache simple Texte, damit sie jeder versteht. Damit jeder weiß, der und der Beschluss bedeutet das und das. Das ist eine handwerkliche Sache. Mehr ist es eigentlich nicht. Es ist viel mehr Handwerk. Da kommt es erst mal nicht darauf an, wie schön ich schreiben kann, sondern wie gut, und wie nachvollziehbar ich den Artikel an die Öffentlichkeit gebe.

Das macht der „Fastfood-Journalist“ eben nicht. Ich persönlich finde, es ist ja völlig egal, ob ich online schreibe oder im Print ... Und dann gibt es jetzt die Unterscheidung, ob ich auf eine Internet Seite schreibe oder für die App, oder ob ich natürlich ganz kurz nur Twitter, oder auf Facebook poste. Es gibt im Prinzip diese vier Bereiche. Klar die Überschriften müssen anders sein, damit man im Internet besser gefunden wird usw. aber dann kann mir dann immer einer der online Redaktion helfen. Ich kann erstmal eigentlich versuchen, gut ein Artikel aufzuschreiben. Ich verstehe auch, dass der online vielleicht nicht mehr lang sein kann. Dann macht man online eher aus einem großen Artikel drei Kleine. Damit man sagt, das ist der Hintergrund, so was ist schon mal passiert, und so wird es in Zukunft sein wie auch immer. Aber mein Handwerk ändert sich doch nicht.

Deswegen habe ich keine Angst vor den neuen Medien. Ich finde die sogar sehr gut, weil ich viel mehr Leute damit erreichen kann. Aber ich habe eben Angst vor diesem ... vor dieser Schnelligkeit, die einem gefordert wird, und von der wenigen Zeit, die man hat. Und dadurch glaube ich, dass sich der Journalismus jetzt in Richtung Oberflächlichkeit verändert. Deswegen glaube ich, dass am Ende ... dass Printzeitung, ich gehöre zu den Leuten, die glauben, dass Print immer eine Chance hat, weil, es einer Flut an Information gibt. Die Leute wissen, können es nicht mehr überschauen, und wenn sie eine Zeitung haben, der sie vertrauen, das ist der Filter, die haben für mich die wichtigsten Themen des Tages einfach gefiltert. Die Nachrichtensendung berichtet nicht über alles, sondern über die gefilterten scheinbar wichtigsten Nachrichten. Ob wir, ob der Leser mich mit den Ipad in die Hand nimmt oder auf gedrucktem Papier ist mir eigentlich egal. Von daher, finde ich die neuen Medien, sehr inspirierend und auch erfrischend. Ja, nur die Herangehensweise, wie gesagt, die lehne ich ab.

Ich gucke jetzt ob ich irgendwelche Fragen verpasst haben ...

Also bei den neuen Medien, da kann ich natürlich noch eins sagen. Es ist der Journalist war früher, und das hat sich auch geändert, früher saß der so in seinen Elfenbeinturm, und er schrieb und hatte eigentlich immer recht. Und wenn ein Leserbrief, kam der andere Meinung war, dann konnte der Journalist entscheiden, ob der gedruckt wird oder nicht. Er war so wie ein kleiner Papst. Und das hat sich auch mit dem neuen Beruf ... mit den neuen Medien geändert. Heute stellt man ein Blog oder ein Artikel in das Medium, und die User kommentieren, und zwar sofort, und zwar ungefiltert. Dann kann niemand mehr sitzen und großartig moderieren. Und da muss ... der Journalist bekommt auch öfter natürlich ein positives Feedback aber auch öfter Negatives. Am Anfang hat mich das sehr gekränkt manchmal, so wenn mal negativen Kommentaren drin stand ... jeder kriegt negative Kommentare ... dass ist klar. Die haben mich viel mehr gekränkt, als die Positiven mich gefreut haben. Ich hab mir das wirklich total zu Herzen genommen. Aber dann habe ich auch gelernt, dass man aus diesen Kommentaren wieder lernen kann. Da bleibt man dann auch ein ewiger Schüler, nämlich in der Korrespondenz mit seinen Usern, dass man selber vielleicht Dinge schwergewichtiger [findet], die die User nicht sehr wichtig finden, aber andere Dinge, die man so nebenbei gemacht hat, haben ein totales Echo.

Und so ist man erst, man ist immer gezwungen sich neu zu navigieren, man muss täglich navigiert man sich neu. Und das war früher nicht so. Früher war man da, und saß da und war der Papst. Und das ist man heute nicht mehr, man muss viel mehr in Interaktion treten, was ich aber gut finde, weil auch da bildet man sich weiter.

(01:03:16)

Also wenn wir schon bei diesem Thema sind, würde ich gerne fragen, wie sich die Leserschaft sich umgewandelt hat? Ist das genau dieselbe Leserschaft wie vor 20 Jahren oder hat sie sich mit der Wende und den neuen Medien auch geändert?

Also bei der *Berliner Zeitung*, da haben wir jetzt zum Beispiel 50 : 50 in der Redaktion Ost West, sag ich jetzt mal so in etwa, und von den Lesern werden wir 70 : 30 haben, also 70 % aus dem Osten und 30 % aus dem Westen. Und das ist viel, weil wenn man die anderen Tageszeitungen sieht, *Tagesspiegel* und *Morgenpost*, die haben keine 30% im Osten geschafft. Also die sind nicht so stark in den Osten eingewachsen, wie wir in dem Westen eingewachsen sind.

Ich glaub das hat wirklich mit diesen gemischten Redaktionen zu tun. Ansonsten hat sich natürlich ... unsere Leser werden älter, aber sie sind nicht so alt wie immer behauptet wird. Das merke ich auch. Also die sind nicht alle 60 plus, sondern sie sind auch 30 plus und 40 plus. Ganz schwierig wird es unter 30. Da erreichen wir nicht so Viele, vielleicht noch durch Schulprojekte und so. Aber ansonsten, es gibt viele Schulen, die sich für die Zeitung interessieren. Aber es ist nicht so, dass die Schüler zu ihren Eltern sagen, „Abonniert die mal für mich.“ So ist es.

Also, haben wir die Verschiebung auch innerhalb der Generation, aber es ist doch, es ist nicht so viel, jüngerer Publikum nachgewachsen aber es ist noch Publikum nachgewachsen. Und es ist ganz klar die ganz Jungen müssen wir, über die Medien abholen, die können wir nicht mehr über die Zeitung bekommen. Das ist auch okay.

(01:05:01)

Und hat sich mit die ... Wenn wir jetzt zurückgehen, auf die Wende, hat sich die Leserschaft ... also sie haben von ihren Umwandlungen, neuer Schreibstil und Recherche usw. Hat sich die

Leserschaft mit Ihnen auch umgewandelt? Oder sind die an den alten DDR Journalismus gewöhnt? Hat die Leserschaft auch gewandelt?

Also ich glaube, dass die Zeitung immer nur ein Spiegel der Gesellschaft ist. Als wir die Stasi Aufarbeitung hatten, ist hier in dem Haus das passiert, was draußen auch überall passiert ist. Natürlich sind hier alles nur Menschen am Werk, und so wie wir uns hier verändern, so haben sich unsere Leser auch verändert. Wir haben viele Leser, die sehr sehr viele Umbrüche erlebt haben. Also bei den Ost-Lesern hat sich eigentlich fast bei jedem etwas geändert.

Deswegen glaube ich, dass die *Berliner Zeitung*, im Übrigen auch eigentlich ganz spezielle Leserschaft hat, wir hatten so viel Eigentümerwechsel, und die Leser haben immer zu uns gehalten. Weil wir so eine Insel für sie sind, also etwas noch, wir haben uns weiterentwickelt. Nicht ein Relikt aus alten Zeiten, wir haben uns weiter entwickeln. Und wir gehören bei denen, einfach zum Haushalt dazu. Die finden es gut, dass wir uns weiter entwickelt haben, weil sie haben sich auch weiterentwickelt. Sie würden uns nicht gut finden, wenn wir uns weiterentwickeln, wenn sie stehen geblieben wären. Und wenn wir über Umbrüche berichten usw. dann finden sich die Leser einfach wieder.

Und wir merken natürlich, dass unsere Leser, extrem gut informiert sind. Sie nehmen uns natürlich auch nicht mehr, also so wie früher war es einfach so, wenn etwas schwarz auf weiß in der Zeitung stand, dann war es Gesetz. Und das habe ich selber noch so erlebt. Und jetzt ist es natürlich so, wenn etwas schwarz auf weiß in der Zeitung steht, dann sind doch immer wieder die Leser die Dinge noch mal hinterfragen. „Sind sie sicher?“ „War es nicht, no?“ „Ich hab ein Einspruch“ „Da habe ich es anders erlebt.“ Also jetzt kommt viel mehr Widerspruch von den Lesern. Aber auch viel mehr Ermunterung. Wenn man zum Beispiel mal einen Kommentar, beispielsweise schreibt, der von dem Mainstream abgeht, aber eine gute Argumentation hat, dann

sind doch viel Leser, die der Sache folgen. Die sagen „So habe ich es noch nicht gesehen, aber vielen Dank für ihren Kommentar, ich werde die Sache jetzt anders betrachten.“ Sagen wir mal die Leser haben auch gelernt viel mehr zu Diskutieren und sich einzubringen. Das finde ich total gut.

Okay, ich denke ... da haben wir die meisten Fragen jetzt schon beantwortet. Ich würde sagen ... haben Sie noch was zu ergänzen? Oder haben Sie noch was, dass Sie gerne sagen wollen?

Hmm, erst mal, No, musste jetzt mal überlegen. ...

Ich weiß, also Ihnen geht's ja nur um die Wende. Ja ich könnte zum Beispiel noch ... was ich ganz interessant finde ist, die Familien von Journalisten. Das habe ich mitgekriegt nach der Wende. Im Osten war es eigentlich relativ unproblematisch wenn man ... Journalist ist, ja ein Beruf den man, wo man nicht sagt, ich hab um 18 Uhr Schluss, es kann was passieren, und dann kommt man erst um 20 Uhr oder so. Aber im Osten war es trotzdem kein Problem nachher. Die Frauen haben die Kinder gekriegt und sind danach wieder zu Arbeit gekommen. Und was mir sehr stark aufgefallen ist, ist, dass mit unseren Westkollegen auch viele Frauen kamen, aber wenig Kinder. Also die Frauen, die dann kamen, die haben sehr selten Familien gegründet. Und so nur Frauen wie, zum Beispiel [B****] die grade reingekommen ist, oder ich oder so, für uns ist es ganz normal ein Kind zu bekommen oder zwei, und dann wieder Arbeiten zu gehen. Und dann gibt es aber Frauen aus dem Westen die entschieden sich gegen Kinder wegen dieses Berufes. Weil man wirklich nicht weiß, wann man Schluss hat usw. Weil sie sagen, sie möchten Karriere machen. Also sie entscheiden sich für Karriere und gegen Kinder. Und das ist ein grundsätzlicher Unterschied bis heute, der Ostler und Westler unterscheidet.

Ich habe meinen Kindern eigentlich meine Karriere zu verdanken. Ich finde überhaupt nicht, dass meine Kinder mir im Weg gestanden haben, sondern sie haben mich viel mehr dazu

beflügelt diesen Weg zu gehen. Denn ich habe Verantwortung für sie übernommen. Ich wollte, dass sie stolz auf mich sind. Ich wollte mich mit ihnen immer austauschen, und da dranbleiben. Ich habe mich weiter entwickelt und meine Kinder konnten sich weiter entwickeln. Und wenn es mir gut ging, geht's den Kindern auch gut. Deswegen gab es keinen Grund für mich jemals zu denken, dass Kinder mich hemmen könnten oder stoppen könnten in meine Karriere. Aber ich merke, dass Westfrauen ... Also es gibt hier viele Westfrauen die sind jetzt auch über 40-50 und werden noch keine Kinder mehr bekommen, die haben wirklich wegen dieses Berufes gegen Kinder entschieden. Aber ich finde es schade, weil sie haben genau dieselbe Karriere gemacht wie ich auch.

Woher stammt das, Ihrer Meinung nach?

Ich glaube das ist ein Rollenverständnis. Die Emanzipation war im Osten einfach viel viel weiter als im Westen. Und das merkt man auch im Journalismus Beruf einfach, ganz stark. Am [unklar] kann man es erklären anhand der Familiengründungen. Hier gibt es manchmal Debatten ... wir haben jetzt eine aktuelle Debatte gehabt mit Reiner Brüderle, eine Sexismusdebatte. Ob ein Politiker einer Journalistin ansprechen darf ... Also er hat da so eine Bemerkung gemacht zu eine Journalistin wegen ihrer Oberweite. Es wurde auch gut in ein Dirndl passen. Und dann gab es hier einer RIESEN Sexismusdebatte in Deutschland an der ... mit der die ostdeutschen Frauen überhaupt nichts anfangen könnten. Weil, wenn ich mich als Frau belästigt fühle, von einem Mann, es sei, egal ob er jetzt Politiker ist oder Bauarbeiter, dann sage ich ihm denn das, in dem Moment wo er mich belästigt. Dann sagt er zu mir, irgendwas: „Hmmm?“ Und dann sage ich: „Hhm!“ Ja? Und denn drehe ich mich doch um und die Sache ist für mich erledigt. Aber die hat nichts gesagt, und hat danach einen großen Artikel geschrieben. Und dann schrieben alle Frauen hinterher. Und man muss einfach sagen diese Sexismusdebatte, die da geführt wurde, in den

Medien, auch in unsere Zeitung, wurde von Westfrauen gemacht. Nicht von, also keine Ostfrau könnte sich damit identifizieren, wir haben es nicht verstanden.

Und wir verstehen auch nicht so was, im Westen sagen zum Beispiel auch viele Journalisten aus dem Westen sagen, man muss immer schreiben: von den Bauarbeitern und den Bauarbeiterinnen von den Kindergärtnern und Kindergärtnerinnen, immer dieses „-innen.“ Und man merkte sehr oft Ostfrauen bezeichnen sich meisten auch in der männlichen Position. Ich sag manchmal, „Ich bin Journalist“ und nicht „Ich bin Journalistin“ Mir ist dieses „in“ dahinten überhaupt nicht wichtig. Das ist nicht wichtig, aber dann merken wir manchmal also in den Emanzipationsdebatten, dass von Westkollegen Dinge debattiert werden, die wir nicht nachvollziehen können. Und deshalb würde ich sagen, es gibt in dieser Redaktion kein großer Ost/West Konflikt, so abschließend. Aber es gibt den ganz normalen Konflikt der Generation, und den Konflikt der Geschlechter, und der Geschlechterrollen, aber diese Konflikte sind weitaus größer, als der Ost/West Konflikt, so würde ich sagen.

Und das finde ich einfach schön, weil ich mir sage dann sind wir in der Gegenwart angekommen. Denn die Konflikte gehören einfach dazu, es ist okay, aber ich finde es wunderbar, dass es keine Ost/West Konflikte gibt.

Wie viele Frauen gibt es in der [Redaktion]?

Ich würde auch denken Hälfte/Hälfte. Und hier in der *Berliner Zeitung* gibt es auch sehr sehr viele Frauen in Führungspositionen. Es ist jetzt gar nicht so selten ... wir haben auch eine Chefredakteurin und auch viele Ressortleiter sind weiblich, also es ist so halbe/halbe. Also wir haben eine sehr gute Frauen-Quote, aber es ist glaube ich hier auch eher passiert, als das hier auf Quote geachtet wurde.

Es ist okay. Es ist alles okay, und wir haben auch wirklich Frauen in Führungspositionen, komischerweise oft die, die Kinder haben, also deswegen finde ich, da muss ich noch mal drauf zurückkommen, es macht einfach kein Sinn auf Kinder zu verzichten, der Karriere wegen. Das ist Quatsch, also einen Kind wird ein niemals stoppen. Wenn man, wenn die Karriere ins Stoppen kommt, denn weil man es selbst entschieden hat. Das Kind hat nie gesagt: „Mama hör auf.“ Sondern man sagt „ich höre auf für mein Kind“ das ist aber was anderes. Ja und von daher ... ja also diese Familiensache, diese Geschlechtersache, diese Rollenverteilung, das wäre mir noch wichtig.

Aber ansonsten, aus der Zeitung, Ich weiß nicht, wenn sie mir ein Stichwort sagen würden?

Also ich denke, wir können damit Mal Schluss machen ...

Appendix 3: Alfred Eichhorn

After discussing my project with Jürgen Kocka, a professor who had provided guidance through my career at UCLA, he mentioned the name Alfred Eichhorn, an East German journalist who he knew from his work in Potsdam. I contacted Eichhorn, and he immediately agreed to participate in the project. Eichhorn, a well-known figure in German broadcasting, had been interviewed a number of times regarding his past life as an East German journalist. Eichhorn met me at my apartment in Berlin on March 22, 2013 at midday, and we sat around my dining room table to discuss his career in GDR broadcasting. His answers were relatively concise and clear and we were able to work through the entire interview outline in a little less than an hour and a half.

(00:01:22)

Ich würde gern ein bisschen über ihre familiäre Herkunft hören, also wann und wo wurden Sie geboren, was haben Ihre Eltern gemacht?

Ich bin in der Nähe von Leipzig geboren, ich bin im dritten Reich gewissermaßen noch geboren, also vor Ende des Krieges. In einem Braunkohlegebiet. Wo sehr viele Bergleute gearbeitet haben. Meine Großeltern und meine Eltern hatten ein kleinen Betrieb, eine Kantine, eine Gastwirtschaft und ein Lebensmittel Geschäft. Und das ist dann für mein späteres Leben nicht ohne Bedeutung gewesen. Denn in der DDR wurden zunächst mal Arbeiter und Bauernkinder bevorzugt, und zur gewissen Zeiten auch , Kinder deren Eltern der Intelligenz angehörten. Und Kinder, die aus selbstständigen Bereichen kamen, die waren zum Teil benachteiligt. Oder mussten in besonderer weise ihre Fähigkeiten erwerben, unter Beweis stellen. Im Schulklassenbuch, stand vor Ihrem Namen: Emil Müller, stand entweder ein A, dann waren

Sie ein Arbeiterkind, ein B, dann waren Sie ein Bauernkind, ein I, da gehörten Sie zur Intelligenz, oder ein S, dann waren Sie sonstiger. Also Gastwirtssohn und Fleischerei und so weiter und so fort.⁵⁷

Meine Eltern: Das Ziel meines Vaters, vor allen Dingen, war, der Junge, also ich, der soll hier raus aus dem Dorf, der soll studieren. Und ich bin in die Schule gegangen mit dem klaren Ziel zu studieren. Und das hat auch geklappt. Ich habe mein Abitur gemacht, nicht besonders glänzend. Und ich bin dann durch gewisse Umstände auch und die Fakultät für Journalistik nach Leipzig gekommen.

(00:03:26)

Und was hat Sie zum Journalismus bewogen?

Vielleicht meine Natur, ich weiß es nicht genau. Auf jeden Fall gab es in der DDR einen Sportreporter, eine Galionsfigur, eine richtige Marke, also was sagen wir mal David Letterman ist oder so, so einen hatten wir als Sportreporter. Der hieß oder heißt Heinz Florian Oertel, und dieser Heinz Florian Oertel mittlerweile schon 85, hat nicht nur mich fasziniert, durch die Art und Weise seine Reportagen, durch seine Lautmalerei, durch seine Kunst zu schildern. Und dieser Mann hat in die relativ abgeschlossene DDR, die Welt gebracht. Durch seine Reportagen, aus aller Welt, aus Melbourne und aus Calgary, aus Squaw Valley, und aus Oslo. Wir hörten im Radio, nicht nur ihn aber die Berichte von Sportlern aus der DDR, und es hat mir einfach gefallen.

Und es gab dann in der DDR auch zu dieser Zeit, eine Bewegung das hieß „Junge Talente“. In der Bundesrepublik, heißt es jetzt „Jugend forscht“ oder „Jugend musiziert“. An

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solchen Talentwettbewerben, hatte ich mehrfach teilgenommen. Und ja, und dann ich könnte mir einfach nichts anderes vorstellen zu dieser Zeit als Sportreporter zu werden. Ich vermute, das war auch der Drang oder die Sehnsucht nach draußen, nach der Welt, aber so bin ich ... das war mein Ansatzpunkt Journalist zu werden.

(00:05:03)

Schön, schön, und sie haben studiert an der KMU?

An der Karl Marx Universität in Leipzig, die hieß Fakultät für Journalistik. Und wurde dann später zur Zeit meines Studiums zur Sektion für Journalistik. Es gab eine Hochschulreform, und die Hochschulen wurden ständig geändert.

Ich hab sehr gerne in Leipzig studiert, weil wenn Sie vom Dorf kommen, Leipzig ist eine schöne Stadt auch damals schon, eine kulturelle Stadt das Gewandhaus, die Deutsche Bücherei, und großen Theater. Leipzig war für jemand der aus dem Dorf, schön.

Ja, schön, und gab es ordentliche Grundvoraussetzungen um Journalismus zu studieren? Oder hat man einfach ...

Das war nicht einfach ... Weil das gab sehr wenige Studenten zu meiner Zeit. Man musste vorher ein Praktikum machen, in einer Zeitung oder irgendwo. Und dieses Praktikum, das habe ich in Halle gemacht, Halle an der Saale, bei der damaligen Zeitung *Freiheit*, das war das Bezirksorgan der SED, also der Partei. Und dort wurde mir ein Praktikum ermöglicht. Das habe ich durch Beziehungen gewissermaßen bekommen. Weil ich, das ist wie oft im eben, es war auch in der DDR so, wie es heute auch Gang und Gebe ist. Eine zu geheiratete Tante war Sekretärin dort, und sie hat zum Chefredakteur gesagt: „Du, guck mal, ich hab ein jungen ... der möchte ...“

... und „Ja komm“. Und dann bin ich da in Halle gefahren ins Praktikum, in der Stadtreaktion der Zeitung und die haben mich dann delegiert dann zum Studium nach Leipzig.

Ja und man musste Aufnahmeprüfungen machen. Fragen Sie mich nicht welche, Geschichte, Geografie, Tod und Teufel, und das habe ich offenbar bestanden.

(00:06:59)

Welche Themen beinhaltete Ihre Ausbildung? Was mussten Sie auf der Uni lernen?

Das war sehr vielfältig. Also zum nächst mal, hieß ein Hauptfach „Theorie und Praxis“, „Theorie und Praxis des Journalismus.“ Ich habe da heute noch Lehrhefte und so, dann gab es Pressegeschichte, natürlich es gab neben diesen speziellen journalistischen Fächern auch Spracherziehung, es gab Russisch Englisch und Spanisch. Und wir wurden dann eingeteilt in Radio Journalisten, Fernsehjournalisten, und Bild Journalisten, und Schreibende Es gab für alle Gruppen besondere Seminare. Es gab zig Fächer wie Philosophie, Marxismus-Leninismus Geschichte also diesen ganzen Kanon der gesellschaftspolitischen Erziehung der DDR, den gab es auch an dieser Fakultät.

Das Problem, oder die Interessante dabei war, dass man zu meiner Zeit, ich weiß nicht ob das heute noch ist, immer wieder versuchte den Journalismus als eine Wissenschaft zu konstituieren. Nicht, also, wir sind auch eine Wissenschaft. Ja, wir haben auch eine Fakultät. Ob der Journalismus wirklich eine eigene Wissenschaft ist, das wage ich zu bezweifeln. Es ist aller Dings so, und das war auch der Ausgangspunkt solche Überlegungen. Das der Journalismus wirklich eine besondere Art der Widerspiegelung der Wirklichkeit ist. Anders als die Kunst, zum Beispiel. Das muss man schon sagen, und aus diesem Umstand haben sich viele

Leute, kann man alles nachlesen, bemüht den Journalismus als Wissenschaft zu konstituieren als besondere Widerspiegelungsform.

(00:08:53)

Und gab es eine spezifische Art von sozialistische Journalismus, anstatt Journalismus mit diese Leninistischen Idee von Journalismus.

Es gab NUR sozialistischen Journalismus. Das ist ja klar, nicht, also wenn Sie in der DDR studiert haben ... haben Sie unter der Haube, oder unter der großen Prämisse des Marxismus-Leninismus studiert. Egal ob sie Lehrer worden, Historiker worden, Journalist worden, oder weiß der Teufel was. Bei der Physik vielleicht nicht ganz so, und bei der Chemie. Aber da berühren sie gleich eine ganz wichtige Frage die zu vielen, heute zu vielen Missverständnisse anlässt.

Wir sind natürlich erzogen worden, ausgebildet worden, in dem Prinzip das sie eben schon im Untertext erwähnten. Das leninistische Prinzip des Journalismus war, dass wir als Journalisten der Partei zu dienen haben. Wir sind die Propagandisten oder andersrum die Agitatoren, die Propagandisten und die Organisatoren der Partei. Das war völlig klar, das wurde offen gestanden. Von uns auch nicht hinterfragt. Wir lebten in der DDR. Ich habe studiert Mitte der 60er Jahre. Ob einem die DDR gefiel, oder das Partei-Gefühl, wer da studierte, war sich im Klaren, er dient der Partei. Ja, das muss man einfach mal, von vorne rein sagen. So sind wir angetreten gewissermaßen.

(00:10:38)

OK, und was, wann haben Sie ihren Abschluss gemacht?

Ich glaube 1967. Ich bin ziemlich sicher.

Und was war ihre erste Tätigkeit nach dem Studium?

Ich hatte Glück. Ich habe wirklich mein ganzes Leben lang Glück gehabt. Ich bin, Sie müssen wissen ... oder man muss wissen, die Journalistik Absolventen wurden auch von der Partei eingesetzt. Es gab eine Kommission beim Zentral Komitee der SED ... der Mann hieß [Köhler] oder was Ähnliches. Der kam ein oder zweimal an die Fakultät und da wurde gesagt: 5 gehen zum Fernsehen, 4 zum Rundfunk, 7 zur Presse, 3 zur Illustrierten und 2 zur Nachrichtenagentur. Also sie hatten einen ganz genauen Schlüssel, wo wer hingehet. Das ist einfach, lag einfach daran, dass in der DDR war mehr oder weniger alles geplant, oder. Und das wurde dann auch gemacht und nur in ganz schwierigen Fällen, uns wurde auch gesagt, wohin. Was dort nach sonst wohin. In nur in ganz besonderen Fällen, wenn einer nach Rostock sollte aber die Junge Frau hatte ein Kind, und ihren Mann in Dresden, na dann ist sie auch nach Dresden gekommen. Ich bin gleich zum Rundfunk der DDR nach Berlin gekommen, in die Kulturredaktion. Also besser könnte man es nicht treffen.

Schön. Und wie war es als Journalist in der DDR, wie war ihr Berufsalltag als Journalist?

(00:12:13)

Ja, das ist, es gibt verschiedene Etappen. Wenn Sie als junge Mensch zum Rundfunk nach Berlin kommen: große Augen. Ja, der Rundfunk zu dieser Zeit, 60er Jahre, das war noch ein Kulturinstitut. Da wurden Hörspiele produziert, dort musizierten, 5, 6, 7, Orchester, da gab es 2, 3 große Chöre, also dieses ganze Gebilde Rundfunk war ein Kulturinstitut. Wenn Sie heute an einer Rundfunk Station kommen, kommen Sie an einem Arbeitsplatz, der so groß ist wie diesen Tisch. Da stehen 3 Computer, und Sie haben kaum mehr Kontakt zu der Außenwelt in aller

Regel. Wir hatten zu dieser Zeit, irgendwie Geld spielte, glaube ich gar keine Rolle, im DDR Rundfunk. Wir sind über das Land gefahren, wir haben Reportagen und Veranstaltungen gemacht, überall in der DDR, das war ein sehr lebensvolles Unternehmen.

Und es hat in den ersten Jahren sehr viel Spaß gemacht. Man hat zum ersten Mal eine Reportage gemacht. Ich hatte ... gleich am Anfang habe ich auf eine Bühne gestanden. Ich habe eine ... Weil Sie ... auf eine öffentliche Veranstaltung habe ich moderiert. Das waren ... Die ersten Jahren waren sehr sehr schön. Man ist mit vielen Dingen bekannt geworden. Ich habe wahnsinnig viele Leute kennengelernt, in der Kulturredaktion, Künstler, viele Künstler, so was ich von Peter Weiß, bis Juliet Greco, und von [unklar] bis Udo Jürgens, [unklar], das war alles schön.

Das sind die Anfangsjahre gewesen. Dann war es so, ich bin von der Kulturredaktion, dann in die politische Redaktion gekommen, also ich sag das mal in alle Bescheidenheit. Ich war vielleicht gar nicht mal der Schlechteste, und da haben sie gesagt, du musst an die Front. Du musst in die politische Redaktion. Da war der Alltag natürlich, härter, nicht? Das ist auch gar nicht mit heute zu vergleichen. Wir sind in diese Redaktion früh um halb acht da gewesen. Das ist nicht so wie heute. Das war ein hartes Regime. Aber auch das hat Spaß gemacht. Nicht? Weil Rundfunk ist sehr schnell. Rundfunk ist verbunden mit den Ereignissen. Wir hatten im Rundfunk der DDR, ... verfügten über jegliche Informationsquellen. Wir hatten Telex-Verbindungen zu allen Nachrichten Agenturen der Welt, bei uns lief AP, UPI, Agence France-Press, ADN, TASS, kam. Damals natürlich noch auf einer schwarzen Rolle und nicht am PC. Das stand uns zu Verfügung. Wir hatten im Archiv und auch in der Redaktion jeden Tag einen Satz, einen Stapel Zeitungen aus dem Westen, also wir waren über informiert. Und ich bin dann, natürlich nach ein paar Jahren, bin ich mal stellvertretender Redaktionsleiter der Redaktion Politik geworden, dann

Leiter der Redaktion Politik. Und als der Rundfunk zusammenbrach. Die DDR am Zusammenbrechen war ... bin ich noch der letzte Chefredakteur geworden von Radio DDR, das ich dann zu dieser Zeit umbenannt hat im *Radio Aktuell*. Man wollte schnell das Wort DDR loswerden, und nannte sich *Radio Aktuell*.

Also ich habe in der Zeit selber, in den ersten 15 Jahren, sehr gute Erinnerung. Aber habe dann natürlich doppelt schwer, wie fast alle gespürt ... sagen wir mal, diese Lähmung. Diese Lähmung des politischen Lebens. Das war ja mit Händen zu greifen. Das die Macht wurde sprachlos. Der Druck auf der Straße wurde immer größer, und das hat man natürlich ziemlich atemlos mitverfolgt. Es gab, natürlich im Rundfunk und im Fernsehen der DDR, zu dieser Zeit, ich rede jetzt so von 85, 86, 87, es gab keine, sagen wir mal, Oppositionsbewegung innerhalb der Medien. Wer Ihnen das heute erzählen will, ich bin ein Widerstandskämpfer, und ich war schon immer dagegen, das ist alles Quatsch. Natürlich haben wir ziemlich frei über diese Dinge gesprochen, haben uns beklagt, und haben geschimpft und so, aber ein organisierter oder ein strukturierter Widerstand gab es nicht.

(00:16:55)

Und können, was meinen sie, wieso es kein Widerstand in der Medien gab?

Das liegt möglicherweise an der, an die Disposition jemand von Anfang an hatte. Du dienst der Partei. Und so wurde der Widerstand, um so besser gesagt, das was heute manche als Widerstand nennen, waren Zynismus, zum Beispiel. Ironie und Zynismus waren ungeheuer ausgeprägt. „Ach Scheiße, na gut, machen wir die Scheiße“ also es war ... und jetzt kommt mal ein Strich. Es gab immer schon auch in DDR-Rundfunk Leute, die das Feld des Rundfunks erweitern wollen. Also ich kann mich auch, glaube ich, dazu rechnen. Wir hatten immer wieder

versucht die Grenzen, zu überschreiten die da ... die, die Partei gesetzt hatte. Und das war auch möglich, weil man musste oder man brauchte in der DDR ja nur die Beschlüsse der Partei ernst zu nehmen, wir schauen dem Volk aufs Maul, wir sprechen der Sprache der Arbeiterklasse. Wir sind die Bewahrer alle fortschrittlichen Erbes der deutschen Nation. Lauter solche, zig Postulate gab es, die aber meistens eben oft nur Postulate blieben.

Und unter diesem Mantel könnte man vieles machen. Also ich habe mir zum Beispiel ... ich hatte großes Interesse an Entwicklungen der widerständischen Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik. Ich konnte ab 1979 nach Westdeutschland fahren, ich war zwei dreimal im Jahr im Westdeutschland. Ich habe immer wieder Anträge gestellt, und dann konnte ich fahren als man merkte, der haut vielleicht doch nicht ab. Und ich hab auch das mal in der Stasi-Akte gefunden, und ich habe dann über viele Jahre hinweg, zu meine Freude, zu meinem Vergnügen, aber vielleicht auch für die [unklar]. Ich habe tolle Begegnungen gehabt. Ich habe Rolf Hochhuth kennengelernt zu der Zeit, er lebt jetzt hier in Berlin. Sie wissen von wem ich spreche, Rolf Hochhuth ist der Autor des Theaterstückes: *Der Stellvertreter*. Eine ganze berühmt deutscher Theaterfigur. Ich habe Peter Weiss kennengelernt. Der hier gespielt wurde, und das habe ich ausgeweitete viele [unklar], viele viele Leute, und das hat mir durchaus Spaß gemacht. Und man könnte diese Dinge auch in dem Rundfunk-Programm der DDR kriegen. Aber der Alltag war natürlich trübe.

Der Alltag war trübe. Der Alltag bestand darin, dass Sie jeden Tag Hinweise Anweisungen bekommen, wie Sie sich als Journalist zum Bewegen haben. Es gab eine für uns Journalisten täglich eine Argumentation vor der Partei. Ich habe viele viele solche Argumentationen aufgeschrieben, die ganz unterschiedlicher Art waren. Und die man zu befolgen hatte. Vieles davon war völlig irrsinnig. Vieles davon könnten die Leute die es weiter

trugen, selber nicht erklären. Es ging, ich kann es auch Ihnen schlecht erklären ... sie gingen dann in die Redaktions- ... ach erstens: Bitte keine angriffe auf die Politik Frankreichs. Zweitens: bitte nichts über Kindernahrung. Drittens: usw.

Der Hintergrund war der, wenn wir nichts mehr über Frankreich machen, bestand ein Staatsbesuch irgendeines Menschen in Frankreich vor. So irre war das, oder nichts zur Kindernahrung, weil es vielleicht keine gab. Oder Achtung, nichts zu ... es war immer verbunden mit aktuellen Ereignissen oder die Kohleförderung war nicht in Ordnung, dann standet positiv bitte jetzt verstärkt Reportagen aus dem Kohlebergbau. Also es gab jeden Tag solche Anweisungen.

Und es gab auch des Öfteren klare Verbote. Zum Beispiel, zum Roman XY bitte keine Rezension. Oder das Theaterstück, bitte keine Besprechung. Das war dann der Fall, wenn dieses Theaterstück oder dieser Roman in irgendwelche weise der Parteiführung nicht gefiel. In diesen Anweisungen haben wir uns bewegt. Und dazwischen gab es immer wieder Versuche doch eigenständig zu arbeiten. Also nicht, dass bei Ihnen der Eindruck entsteht, wir waren also keine Hirn-Automaten. Das ist nicht, das sagt man heute gern, aber das ist nicht der Fall. Es gab einer großen Zahl von Leuten, die eben versucht haben, aus dem was vorgegeben war noch das Beste zu machen.

(00:22:21)

Haben sie Autonomität gehabt? Sie sagen, Sie waren kein Automat. Sie haben auch ...

Natürlich hat man das gehabt. Die Frage war nur, das Problem war nur, wie der Einzelne das wahrgenommen hat. Wie er das für sich selbst verwirklicht hat. Das war das Problem. Es gibt wie auch heute, natürlich viele die einfach ihren Stiefel gemacht haben, schieß egal. Es gab immer Leute, die doch kreativ waren, und die versucht haben eigenes und ... wie sagten Sie ...

Freiräume auszuschreiten. Da muss man sagen, es gab im Rundfunk spezielle ... ich spreche jetzt von Radio DDR, es gab zwei Programme, es gab das erste Programm, Home-Service, so normale Information, Politik und es gab das zweite Programm. Es war ein Kulturprogramm. Und dort geschah unwahrscheinlich viel. Es stand auch nicht so in einer Beobachtung. Dort kamen Dichter und Komponisten, zur Wort mit ihre Arbeit, auch mit ihren Werken, die nicht immer auf Linie waren. Das wurde geduldet. Das konnte sein, ja?

(00:23:39)

Und, können sie beschreiben? Gab es eine Berufsethik oder Verhaltens-Normen unter den Journalisten.

Du bist der kollektive Agitator, Propagandist und Organisator der Partei. Und wenn es irgend ein Missverständnis gab ... Genosse ... die Partei kam dann immer vor und der hattest du denn dich zu stellen in jeglicher Form. Also, wenn Sie und der Essen-Ausgabe waren. Und es war eine Riesenschlange. Der Schlange war, weil der Rundfunkchor gerade Pause hatte, und alle standen auf einmal an. Und du sagst: „Scheiß-Chor, kriegt man wieder nichts zum Essen.“ Und das hörte einer besonders, der ging, schwärzte dich an, und du musstest am nächsten Tag gehen und deine, dein Verhältnis zu künstlerischen Intelligenz rechtfertigen. „Wie könnten Sie sagen, dass es ein Scheiß-Chor,“ so etwas gab.

Es gab auch natürlich viele Idioten. Nicht wenige Idioten, aber die Idioten war ein die Minderzahl aber nicht ohne Wirkung. Erfüllungsgehilfen und das gab ... und der Rundfunk war natürlich wie wir jetzt wissen, sagen wir damals zwar auch gewusst, aber es hat nicht so eine Rolle gespielt, war natürlich durchsetzt von Mitarbeitern des Staatssicherheitsdienstes. Inoffizielle Leute, aber wir hatten im Rundfunk der DDR wie in jeden Großbetrieb auch eine richtige

Dienststelle des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit der DDR. Es war völlig normal. Stand draußen dran. Graues Schild. Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der DDR Dienststelle Staatliches Rundfunkkomitee. Also, habe die Leute noch vor mir im Auge, mit den aß man Mittag, und es war, das gehörte eben dazu.

(00:25:47)

Was von Ihrem Studium haben sie, könnten Sie verwenden in ihrem Alltag, oder gab es was von was sie gelernt haben, oder hat man das aus der Praxis gelernt? Oder ...

Ich glaube das hat man aus der Praxis gelernt. Ich bin der Meinung, entweder man ist ein Journalist, oder wird ein Journalist, oder nicht. Das ist zunächst mal eine Begabung, es ist eine Art und Weise, im Leben sich zu bewegen so weiter und so fort. Natürlich hat das Studium eine Rolle gespielt. Weil wir sind auch zu anderen Fakultäten gegangen. In Leipzig und ... wir haben vieles gelernt. Aber ich bin nicht, ich habe da kein Rüstzeug bekommen um diesen Beruf praktisch aus ... Also natürlich hat man zig Vorlesungen gehabt, was ist einer Nachricht, was ist einen Kommentar, wie muss ein Feuilleton aufgebaut sein. Wie baut man eine Reportage auf. Ja, so what, nicht? Ja. Wenn es dann so weit ist, ich glaube, dass ist auch heute so.

(00:27:03)

Sie haben vorhin gesprochen über die Wendezeit, Sie sind dann zum Chefredakteur geworden. Und ich würde gern noch ein bisschen dazu hören. Also wie haben Sie die Wendezeit erlebt? Was sind ihre Erinnerungen?

Zunächst mal habe ich dummerweise kein Tagebuch geführt. Das bedauere ich heute sehr. Also die Wendezeit, das war, ich bin wie, wie ich glaube die meisten Leute, atemlos. Wir

wussten im Moment, gar nicht was geschieht. Also. Das hat sich auch in verschiedene Etappen vollzogen. Aus meiner Sicht war es so, dass man immer wieder Hoffnung schaffte. Es gab zum Beispiel, ich glaube, 85 gab es ein gemeinsames Papier zwischen der SED und der SPD. Also es gab eine Vereinbarung beide Parteien, sich näher zu kommen. Da haben viele Leute auch im Rundfunk darüber berichtet und gemacht. Aber das war alles streng reglementiert. Aber das war ein Stück Hoffnung. Die beiden führenden Parteien kommen aufeinander, reden miteinander. Ist nicht viel draus geworden. Am Ende wirft die heutige CDU, die SPD vor, dass sie überhaupt das versucht hat.

Ein zweiter Punkt war der Helsinki Prozess. In den Helsinki Prozess Korb drei, glaub ich, haben wir alle viele Hoffnungen gesetzt natürlich, weil wir glaubten, dass das Starre im DDR System, was man natürlich erkannte was ich natürlich erkannt habe. Da hatten wir große Hoffnung, dass sich wir hier Dinge bewegen. Jetzt schiebe ich mal so ein ... Das Dritte war, in diesen Zeiten kamen die Ministerpräsidenten aus der Bundesrepublik, Monat für Monat in die DDR, und besuchten Erich Honecker. Der Rote Teppich wurde ausgelegt für alle Ministerpräsidenten der einzelnen Bundesländer. Nah ist da vielleicht doch nicht was im Gang.

Und das ist noch alles vor der Wende?

Alles vor der Wende. Ja, es war alles. Die Politiker der Westen, krochen über viele Jahre vor der Wende der SED-Führung in den Arsch gewissermaßen. Es war eigenartig für jemand, der das beobachtet hat. Dann kam Gorbatschow. Ja. Das war natürlich die Nummer, Glasnost, Perestroika, aha, jetzt wird es anders. Der große Bruder, die Sowjetunion. „Von der Sowjetunion lernen, heißt siegen lernen“. Jetzt bewegt sich da was. Große Begeisterung für Leuten, wie mir und anderen. Die Hardliner sagten da: Moment. Ja. Die Leute, die richtig mit dem Parteidingen vertrat: „Na ja wer weiß was das wird.“ Großer Skepsis. Gorbatschow wie wir wissen verschlug

sich auf, ist heute einer der bestgehassten Leute hier in der DDR, und in die Sowjetunion, und so gab es ein Moment nach dem andern, was immer wieder Hoffnung gemacht hat.

Und dann kam natürlich der Zusammenbruch an sich. Das ging so schnell, innerhalb eines Jahres. Es ist ja wie Sie wissen alles dokumentiert. Man kam gar nicht mit. Runder Tisch, neue Parteien. Umbenennung der Partei. Bürgerrechtler und so weiter und so fort. Atemlos. Eines schönen Tages, war es vorbei. Kam das Geld, das neue Geld, dann kamen die Wahlen. Ich kann mich noch erinnern. Ich habe im März als diese ersten freien Wahlen, haben wir eine 7-8 stündige Sendung aus dem Palast der Republik gemacht ... sind zum ersten Mal auch mit Kollegen aus dem Westen zusammengekommen, gemeinsame Programme, alles Friede Freude Eierkuchen. Das war ... dann begann eine unwahrscheinlich freie Zeit, wo die DDR schon nicht mehr da war. Und der neue Staat noch nicht, das war schönste Zeit.

(00:31:19)

Und in die Zeit, ich bin sehr interessiert an dieser Zeit, und ich würde gern wissen ...

Das waren Zeiten wirklich grenzenloser Freiheit. Weil die Einen kontrollierten nicht mehr, die DDR Leute, und die Anderen bestimmten noch nicht. Das war, was wir alles, wir haben mit große Begeisterung, haben wir, in dieser Zeit, Journalismus gemacht. Journalismus der DDR im Fernsehen im überall blühte auf, weil die Leute waren losgelassen. Sie waren losgelassen und konnten ihrem Affen quasi Zucker geben. Hinzukam, wir hatten plötzlich im Rundfunk auch viel Geld. Weil wir hatten Werbung dann, wie in der alten Bundesrepublik, das spielte unwahrscheinlich viel Geld ein. Das war eine schöne Zeit. Ich selber bin in der Zeit im ganzen Europa gewesen, und hab von dort auch viele Sendungen gemacht. Also alles was man

noch nicht kannte, aus dem Radio Vatikan berichtet. Aus der BBC in London. Von Radio France. Weißt der Teufel wie. Das war eine irre Zeit, aber so richtig begriffen, haben wir was nun eigentlich geschieht. Und wie es weiter geht, das haben wir damals noch nicht realisiert. Es überwog die Begeisterung so zu sagen der Freiheit. Im Schatten dieses Ereignisses kam der Abwicklung des DDR-Rundfunks.

Es kam ein Mann aus Bayern, Herr Mühlfenzl, Rudolf Mühlfenzl. Der hatte eine Crew von knapp 20 Leuten. Und der hat die Abwicklung des DDR-Rundfunks betrieben. Die Entlassung der Leute das Schließen der Programme usw. Musst man wissen. Rudolf Mühlfenzl war das, was man einen „tief Schwarzen“ nennt. Der war selbst in der alten Bundesrepublik als tief schwarzer, konservativer Journalist und Parteigänger von CDU/CSU quasi verschrien. Ein alter Mann, damals schon, und der hat den Rundfunk der DDR mit seiner Crew abgewickelt. Die Crew bestand aus ganz eigenartigen Personen aus der alten Bundesrepublik, alles Leute deren Karriere irgendwie schon beendete, war, aber die ... die noch mal loslegten. Und so sind die Sender liquidiert worden, bis auf einen. Eine nach dem anderen ist gegangen. Ich hatte immer weniger Leute, Radio-DDR hatte mal 126 Journalisten also nur Journalisten den Rest waren Sekretärin und so. Und einer nach dem anderen ging. Zuerst gingen die Unterhaltungsredakteure und suchten sich etwas in den neu entstehenden Sendern in Leipzig Dresden Potsdam, die Landessender entstanden. Dann gingen die Sportreporter, und es wurde immer weniger. Bis dann der Einigungsvertrag vorsah, dass am 31. Dezember 1991 das Programm beendet wird. Da hab ich dann diesen Kommentar noch gesprochen, den ich Ihnen geschickt habe.

Mir hat den schon den neuen Chef nicht mehr gefallen, das war dann einer der Gründer. Mich, ich wurde übernommen für ein Programm von ORB. Und bin in der Probezeit entlassen worden.

Der hatte offenbar Angst vor mir, und was weiß. Ich hatte da natürlich über 20 Jahre Rundfunk hinter mir, und das will ich jetzt nicht etwas abschätzig. Der ist über die Bürgerrechtsbewegung irgendwie auf diesem Posten gekommen. Sicher ein [*unklar*] Mensch den gibt es heute noch, aber von nichts eine Ahnung. Der hat dann, ja, er hat mich dann entlassen, und dann kam mir das nächste Glück. Da hat mich der Intendant des Sender Freies Berlin wieder fest eingestellt, denk ich, wir hatten ein Gespräch zusammen. Ich habe erst dort Probe gearbeitet. Der Ost Bürgerrechtler hat mich aus der Probezeit entlassen, und der andere aus dem Westen der hat mich angestellt. Es sind sehr sehr wenige.

(00:35:36)

Da wollte ich noch Fragen, wie viele von Ihre Kollegen ... ?

Ja das ist unterschiedlich. Direkt hier im Berlin ist der Markt sehr sehr eng gewesen. Ja ist ja klar, viele Sender. Beim Sender Freies Berlin, beim SFB wo ich dann angestellt wurde, waren politische Journalisten sind nicht mehr als 5 vielleicht. In den neuen Landessendern, beim MDR in Sachsen und Thüringen, beim MDR da waren es mehr. Das sind die Leute hin geströmt die ... die haben sich auch nicht um die Stasi-Sachen und so gekümmert die haben die einfach genommen, damit sie diesen neuen Anstalten aufbauen konnten. Die haben dann erst nach und nach geguckt, ja was war den das für einer, was war denn das für einer, gerade beim MDR hat es dann erst später eine große Säuberungswelle gewissermaßen gegeben. Hier in Berlin war es von Anfang an. Von Anfang an, viel mehr.

(00:36:38)

Und war das weil es eine öffentliche Radio war? Wegen dieser Überprüfungen? Was meinen Sie.

Fragen Sie noch mal genauer.

Sie sagten dass bei MDR und bei andere, bei manchen Sendern gab es diese Stasi Überprüfungen. Bei anderen ...

Das ist so. Die Stasi-Überprüfung gab es schon in DDR-Rundfunk, durch Mühlfenzel. Aber das waren, das waren keinen richtigen Überprüfungen, da existierende die Gauck Behörde noch gar nicht. Da musste man irgendwelche Fragebögen ausfüllen, und das war, und das hatte keinerlei Rechtsgrundlage und nichts. Und zu dieser Zeit sind dann in Berlin ganz offensichtliche Leute, die mit dem Stasi gearbeitet haben. Und die sind von selber gegangen. Andere hat man später enttarnt, aber die Leute die aus irgendwelchen Gründen nach Leipzig, oder nach Dresden, oder sonst wo gegangen sind. Die hat man erst mal mit Freude genommen, denn die mussten auch diese Anstalten aufbauen. Der MDR der Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk, zum Beispiel, hat dann eine Führungscrow bekommen. Der Intendant hieß Reiter, Vornahme ist jetzt weg. Udo. Mann im Rollstuhl ... Der hatte 14 Leute, Direktoren um sich, davon war einer aus dem Osten. Die anderen waren natürlich alle aus dem Westen. Dann kommen sie mal aus dem Westen nach Leipzig und machen Radio. Der brauchte natürlich für die Logistik und so. Da gab es große Träumen und dann hat aber, das kann man in der Presse verfolgen, dann hat eben in verschiedenen Schüben haben die Enttarnungen und Dinge eingesetzt. Und ich war Gott sei dann nicht dabei. Ich hatte Glück, weil es war so ... Ich war, als ich studierte, war ich nicht in der Partei. Ich bin als Parteiloser zum Studium gekommen. Wäre ich in der Zeit in die Partei gewesen, hätte man mich sicherlich auch gefragt: „Genosse, willst Du nicht hier in unserem Reihen gegen den Imperialismus kämpfen besonders gegen den amerikanischen Imperialismus.“ Ich bin mir gar nicht sicher, ich hätte sicher auch ja gesagt. Und hätte irgendwelche Dinge, weiß ich nicht. Ich

hab nur gemerkt, die Parteigruppen, wir waren wenige, die nicht in der Partei waren, das war ganz eigenartig.

(00:39:05)

Und waren sie bei der Verband der Journalisten?

Ich glaube ja, das spielte überhaupt keine Rolle.

Keine Rolle? Ich wollte auch dazu fragen, weil jetzt im Archiv habe ich jetzt viel über der Verband gelesen.

Es spielte keine Rolle.

Und auch in die Wendezeit?

Ich glaube nicht, das ist. Es gab zig ... Es gab natürlich solche, es gab der Theater. Der Theater Verband hatte eine wichtige Rolle gespielt. Die Theater Leute haben überhaupt in der Wende sehr progressive Rolle gespielt, haben viel mehr gewagt. Die haben zum Beispiel die großen Demonstrationen am 4. November auf dem Alexanderplatz organisiert. Aber der Journalisten Verband? Ich habe da Beitrag bezahlt, 2 Mark im Monat. Keine Ahnung. Ich habe einer Ehrenadel bekommen Franz Mehring Medaille von, aber der Journalisten Verband hat mich in meiner Arbeit weder gestört noch befördert.

(00:39:59)

Interessant. Und in diesen Monaten, nachdem die Partei zusammengebrochen ist, aber bevor die Vereinigung festgesetzt war. Hat der alltäglichen Praxis der Journalismus geändert? Mit dieser Auflockerung? Diese Freiheit, hat ihr Job dann geändert?

Zunächst mal es gab keine Argumentationen mehr. Die Leute haben sich alle auch freier bewegt. Man hat es ihnen an den Augen angesehen. Man hat, sie könnten plötzlich Dinge machen, wollten was, was sie immer machen wollten. Es wurden Talente plötzlich sichtbar, die vorher geduckt in der Ecke saßen. Aber mit dieser Freude über die Möglichkeiten. Wir haben da neue Programme gemacht, neue Strukturen entwickelt, große Diskussionsforen.

Das geschah alles in dieser Zeit, aber gekuppelt war die Zeit mit der Furcht, mit der Angst, es ist gleich vorbei. Wo bleibe ich, wenn ich schon 55 bin? Was wird aus mir? Und es sind natürlich auch bestimmte Leute, von vorne rein war klar, dass die kommen nicht in die neue Zeit. Weil in der DDR Leben, hat nicht gerade dazu beigetragen, dass man es sehr dialogfähig war. Oder das man sehr konfrontativ diskutieren könnte. Dass man seine Meinung durchsetzte. Dass man sich behauptet. So all diese Dinge, die im Westen bis zum Erbrechen Mode sind. Die waren in der DDR nicht entwickelt weil, wir haben alle Recht. Wir haben den Faschismus besiegt wir bauen den Sozialismus auf. Wir sind das überlegene gesellschaftliche System. Und in dieser Wolke haben sich natürlich relative schwer kämpferische Leute entwickelt. Es sei denn dieser Kampf: „Es lebe der Sozialismus“...Wofür.

Das ist ein Feld, wo ich heute sehr auch noch drüber nachdenke. Weil wir haben noch zum Teil Kontakt untereinander. Wie haben wir uns früher bewegt, warum hat es nicht geklappt, warum hat jenes ... warum ist der weiter gekommen, und der andere nicht. Da gibt es in jedem Fall eine verschiedene Antwort. Und nach der Wende hat auch unter den ehemaligen Kollegen eine klare Spaltung stattgefunden. Die ich verstehe.

Die, die nicht weiter gekommen sind, haben sich zum Teil [*unklar*], sind oder sind dort dann kämpferisch geworden . Ich habe zum Beispiel eine ganze Reihe von Freunden verloren. Weil ich natürlich ein Verräter bin. Ich bin vom Rundfunk der DDR zum Klassenfeind

gegangen. Und dort auch nur fest angestellt worden. Und das haben verschieden nicht begriffen. Das verstehe ich auch, dass sie das nicht begriffen haben. Die haben dann auch eben viele andere Dinge nicht begriffen.

Wie gesagt, wenn Ihnen jemand erzählt er sei Widerstandskämpfer in der DDR oder in DDR-Rundfunk gewesen. Das können Sie vergessen, aber es gab eben Leute, die ein bisschen anders waren. Die gab es schon. Und die Leute, die ein bisschen anders waren, Intellekt, oder ihre Ambition. Ihr Verständnis von gewissen Dingen, schon versucht haben in der DDR einzusetzen die hatten es natürlich leichter in dem neuen Kontext zu arbeiten. Oder es sind Typen gewesen, die überall Volksmusik gemacht haben oder, das gab es auch. Die haben in der DDR: „Hallo hier ist der Thüringer Wald“, und der „Oberhofer Bauernmarkt“ und die machen der gleichen Schrumpf, jetzt mit mehr Farbe und mit mehr Plexiglas im Westen. Das hat es auch gegeben.

Also zusammenfassend, es ist noch heute, zwanzig Jahre danach, sind viele Fragen offen. Wie war es, ich habe ich mich verhalten, warum habe ich mich so verhalten, und hat der Andere sich so verhalten. Das sind, glaube ich, ziemlich tief liegende Dinge, die mit der Veranlagung der Person der Persönlichkeit das Einzelne zusammenhängt.

(00:44:46)

Zurück noch mal zu diesen Monaten, zwischen den zwei Staaten. Ich habe mal gelesen, viele haben die Ideen gehabt, wie eine neue Ostdeutsche Medienlandschaft sich gestaltet ...

Ja, natürlich hatten wir...

Haben sie auch an diese Debatten teilgenommen?

Ja, natürlich. Wir wurden erst mal eingeladen zur großen Medienforen, nach Köln und sonst wo. Wir wussten in der DDR gar nicht, dass es so was gibt. Darum kümmerte man sich ja nicht. Also das war, und sind bis heute, zum Teil auch große Schwatzbuden. Ich war ... gestern Abend gerade, ging es um Neue Medien in der bremischen Landesvertretung. Digitalisierung und Journalismus ein ganz neues Feld und so. Wir sind von Medienforum zu Medienforum gereist, haben den Chefredakteuren in Frankfurt am Main und sonst wo kennengelernt.

Und es gab auch ernsthaft Leute in der alten Bundesrepublik, zum Beispiel den damaligen ARD Vorsitzender, Herrn Kelm, Professor Kelm von Südfunk oder Südwestfunk, die ... die bevorstehende Einigung zum Anlass nehmen wollten das gesamte deutsche Rundfunksystem zu ändern. Natürlich eine Illusion. Weil das ist festgefahren. Und wir, „Ja, können wir da und das“ und die haben uns eigentlich nur ausgelacht im Stillen. Weil wir hatten keine Vorstellungen, davon wie fest gezurrt die Landesrundfunkanstalten sind. Wie jeder Ministerpräsident sein Radio behalten will.

Das, es gab zig, Konferenzen und der gleichen, wo die neue Medienordnung entstehen sollte. Das geschah alles nicht. Herr Mühlfenzl hat dann ... Spontan haben sich in Potsdam ostdeutsche Rundfunk, in Leipzig Radio Sachsen und so, in dieser Zwischenzeit haben sich solche Konstellation gebildet, solche Sender, die auch einige Monate bestanden. Meistens auch von Bürgerrechtlern etc. gegründet. Manche davon waren auch Stasileute, sind dann entarten worden. Aber dann der Schlusspunkt von Mühlfenzl war die Schaffung von 5 neuen Landessendern in den 5 neuen Ländern. Das war Gesetz. Per Gesetz, per Rundfunkvertrag und alle anderen Dinge waren eigentlich Hirngespinnste.

In der Zeit der Wende herausgekommen ist dann der Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk die haben Thüringen, Sachsen und Sachsen-Anhalt zur einen gemacht. Im Norden hat sich der NDR

Mecklenburg und so, gewissermaßen, ich will nicht sagen unter den Nagel gerissen. Und hier in Berlin war die Sache besonders spannend, natürlich, zwischen SFB und der DDR-Rundfunk, und in Potsdam hat sich der ORB gegründet in zwischen, wie sie sicher wissen ist der SFB und die ORB sind die zusammen zum RBB, alle anderen Dinge sind den Bach heruntergegangen. Es gab abenteuerliche Konzepte Nord/Süd Linien. Herr von Lojewki, vom Sender freies Berlin, der wollten eine Achse Leipzig-Berlin machen. München-Leipzig-Berlin. Hat alles nicht geklappt. Zig solche Vorstellungen gab es. Das kann man aber nachlesen.

Das haben wir, wer waren wir denn, wir waren Journalisten, wir hatten doch von den von der Art und Weise, von Medienpolitik keine Ahnung. Medienpolitik gab es in der DDR nicht. Es gab der staatliche Rundfunk das Fernsehkomitee, es gab die Bezirks-Zeitungen der Partei etc. und die Zeitungen der anderen Partei. Und die Medien Politik gab es nicht.

Was war der Einfluss der Wende auf ihre berufliche Entwicklung. Also war das, wie könnten sie das beschreiben?

Ich bin zum SFB gekommen und dort angestellt worden, als in einer Probezeit mit 4 Berufsjahren. Man hat mir, das ist einer Gehaltsfrage. Man hat mir nachdem ich über 20 Jahre in der DDR gearbeitet, 4 Jahre hat man mir angerechnet. Und dann, hab ich mir das so, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Monate angeguckt, was da läuft. Ja, interessant. Habe gemerkt wie offen, die diskutierten ... bis ich merkte, dass da vieles eigentlich nur Schaum ist. Sobald in solchen Diskussionen um einen Arbeitsplatz um eine feste Stelle, um das Gehalt um die Eingruppierung ging, wurden die alle ganz klein. Da wurden sie ruhig. Aber wenn es irgendetwas. Sagen wir mal ... war ein Riesentheater. Aber so bald es um essenziell substanzielle Dinge ... wurden sie klein. Mit andern Wörtern wir kriegten in der DDR Schwierigkeiten, wenn die Bindung zur Arbeiterklasse nicht stimmte, oder die Freundschaft zur Sowjetunion. Im Westen war es, sobald die Fragen der

Loyalität gegenüber der Führung wurden sie Klein. Das habe ich sehr schnell erkannt. Sehr schnell erkannt.

Und dann habe ich am Anfang. Auch an Sitzungen noch teilgenommen bis ich, aber nicht lange. Bis ich merkte, das kann ich überhaupt nicht aushalten. Weil ich hab es 20 Jahre schon gemacht. Und jetzt setze ich noch mal wie im Kindergarten, wo die dann eigentlich Positionskämpfer ausfechten. Mein Gott ... es gibt so viele scheindemokratische Gremien. Also ich weiß, dass es ungerecht ist, und ich weiß das zig viele Leute im Westen Redakteurs reden und Redakteurs Ausschüsse sehr engagieren. Aber das hat für mich nicht mehr stattgefunden. Mit mir nicht. Und ich bin dann auch nicht mehr zu Sitzungen gegangen.

Ich habe dann eine eigene Sendung installiert. Ich hatte das Glück, ich hab dem Info-Radio wo ich war ... hab ich Woche für Woche einer Diskussionssendung gemacht. Ich bin so schon einer der ganz wenigen politischen Journalisten der DDR, die weiter Politik gemacht haben. Und das habe ich jede Woche gemacht in der Öffentlichkeit. Ganz allein. Eine dümmere Person könnten sie gar nicht finden. Und dazu noch ein, da habe ich mein Zimmer gekriegt und nach einige Zeit, auch eine Art Sekretärin. Und ich könnte völlig selbstständig arbeiten. Mich hat keiner gestört, mir hat keiner Auflagen gegeben. Es gab ganz wenige. Ich habe 2/3 Mal Beschwerden bekommen. Einmal das ich zu wenig Frauen habe in meiner Sendung, dann hat mich einmal unbedingt gebeten zu Papstwahl eine Sendung zu machen: „Wir sind Papst.“ Habe ich auch gemacht, warum nicht. Bin an Anweisungen gewöhnt.

Und dann das war, allerdings etwas ernster. Hat einer Hierarchie festgestellt, ich wurde alten Eliten der DDR ein Podium geben. Da habe ich eine Sendung aufgezeichnet in der Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Und das ist ja nun schon beachtlich. Und da hab ich erst mal gesagt, warum soll man den ... die nicht reden lassen. Wollte man sie vergasen, vergasen habe ich

natürlich nicht gesagt. Und dann hat die Friedrich Ebert Stiftung einen großen Brief geschrieben, und sich vor mich gestellt. Aber ansonsten ich könnte völlig frei, völlig frei arbeiten. Ich gebe zu, ein Sonderfall.

(00:53:08)

Wenn sie jetzt ihr Berufsalltag vergleichen wurden vor der Wende und nach der Wende, was ... gab es großen Unterschieden oder war Journalismus ... Journalismus.

Nicht, natürlich gab es ein Unterschied. Bei mir hat sich ja der Alltag sich geändert. Ich habe in der DDR als Leiter der Politik, und dann später auch als Chefredakteur natürlich ziemlichen Stress gehabt. Einfach von den ablaufen her. Arbeits-Ablaufen. Eine Sitzung nach dem Anderen. Ein großes und kleines Problem damit Arbeiter nach dem Anderen. Das war schon, sehr sehr beanspruchend. Das hat sich dann nicht mehr, das hat sich dann im Westen nicht mehr so ergeben weil, wie ich Ihnen schon geschildert habe, ich hatte beschlossen oder intuitive, ich hab an dieser Alltag nicht mehr teilgenommen. Ich habe meine Sendung gemacht, und hatte ... Weil ich den Alltag schon hinter mir hatte. Verstehen Sie. Das Planen, das Konzipieren, der Streit, machen wir heute ein Gespräch mit Herrn Müntefering oder machen wir ein Gespräch mit der [unklar]. Das hat ich hinter mir, das, ich gebe zu das ich egoistisch.

Man hat mir angeboten, man hat mir ein zwei Dingen im Westen angeboten, so einer Funktion. Gleich nach der Wende hat man mir angeboten Korrespondent des ORB in Bonn zu werden, und während der Zeit, während ich bei SFB war, hat man mir angeboten Programm-Koordinator zu werden. Erstens habe ich gewusst, was er beim Programm Koordinator zukommt, diesen Mist habe ich in der DDR gemacht, also im weitesten Sinne. Aber das muss ich

sagen, ich hätte, ich hab beides abgelehnt, weil das gehört sich nicht. Ich kann nicht 20 Jahre DDR Journalismus machen, 20 Jahre den Sozialismus aufbauen, „sehr erfolgreich“ wie wir gesehen haben. Und dann kann ich mich vor einer Crew jüngere Leute stellen und ihnen Ratschläge geben, den Hinweise ... Das geht nicht. Manche haben das gemacht, das könnte ich überhaupt nicht. Ich könnte es natürlich, aber ich halte es für eine moralische Frage. Das kann man nicht machen, ich hatte dann in den letzten Monaten noch bei RBB, noch eine Vorgesetzte, die früher bei mir Redakteurin war. Die hat das mit Freude getan. Eine fleißige Frau, ohne Frage, aber ohne Skrupel, das geht nicht. Also nicht das ich in Sack und Asche rum laufe wie Sie sehen. Aber es gibt irgendwelche Grenzen, nicht?

Das Verhalten, das haben Sie auch heutzutage im Verhalten, von ehemaligen Parteiführung zu ernähren. Manche reden völligen Unsinn, und wenden, und manchen halten einfach die Schnauze. Und das ist, ich glaube auch angebracht.

(00:56:07)

Bei den Journalismus jetzt, heutzutage, im Westen oder im Vereinigten Deutschland, gibt es eine andere Verhaltensnorm, Berufsethik?

Ja, klar. Also ich bin da..

Sie sind nicht mehr Propagandist, Agitator..

Nay Nay. Manchmal muss ich sagen. ... Ja doch, und manchmal auch leider. Also ich bin da in diese SFB gekommen, zu einem speziellen Programm. Und die Beiträge, das was man plante, das was man vor gedacht hat, das muss „spannend sein, geil sein, romantisch „ sein. Ich dachte, wo bist du denn hier gelandet. Es muss spannend, geil, romantisch. Wir müssen weiter drehen. Ja, spannend, Geil und Romantisch, das gab es in der in DDR nicht. Es musste schön

sein. Oder wirkungsvoll oder ordentlich gemacht. Aber spannend geil und romantisch, da hat jemand über mich geschrieben in der Tagesspiegel, das kann ich ihnen vielleicht mal schicken, wenn ich es noch finde. Das ist das Erste.

Das Zweite ist natürlich, heute vor allen Dingen, 20 Jahre danach, hat sich ja da Rezeptionsverhalten, die Art und Weise zu kommunizieren, völlig geändert. Schauen Sie. 1990, kamen in unseren Alltag das Fax, das Handy, drei Tage später der Computer dann das Internet, dann Facebook, dann Twitter, dann Youtube. Und das hat natürlich die Art und Weise der Journalismus zu machen, über Information, und über Unterhaltung nachzudenken, grundlegend geändert, die Junge Leute, ich habe Töchter, die sind so 27, 30 und so, kommunizieren anders, denken anders, bewegen sich ganz anders in den Medien, das ist, das muss man ganz einfach zur Kenntnis nehmen.

Und keiner weiß Heute wie das Enden wird. Die Zeitungen sterben, content bezahlen, oder nicht bezahlen, neue Formen, und das hat sich alles angedeutet, natürlich schon in den letzten 20 Jahren. Die Dinge sind, um von der Technik von diesen Dingen ... es ist alles viel beliebiger geworden. Viel beliebiger geworden. Also das Spuren wir natürlich besonders weil, Agitator, Propagandisten, wir müssten die ... Heute, du kannst das Sagen, du kannst jenes sagen, es bleibt, es ist folgenlos. Es ist oft folgenlos. Das ist, ja, das ist beliebig. Das ist eine Sache, die nicht sehr schön ist. Es wird viel mehr ... Mischen sich Information und Unterhaltung heute, Amerika, Infotainment und all diese Dinge.

Es schwappt in den jetzigen Journalismus, und jetzt in den letzten Jahren Daten-Journalismus, die Trimedialität, die Kollegen heute, das habe ich heute Gott sei Dank nicht mehr machen müssen, die Informationsprogramm, das ist eine wirklich gute Innovation, das muss man sagen, an sich. Das Info-Radio des RBB ist kein schlechtes Programm, es ist ein gutes

Programm, aber die werden ausgebeutet. Die müssen arbeiten wie die Tiere, nicht? Die arbeiten am Computer, die müssen Trimedial denken, für das Fernsehen mitdenken, mit Bilder, Texte, furchtbar, ich kriege ... ich bin da noch sehr oft, weil ich hab da noch ein Zimmerchen, so ein kleines Katzenklo wo meine Posten noch reinkommt.

Also die müssen richtig schwer arbeiten weil dieses Medium ja auch gar nicht mehr haptisch ist, es ist alles virtuell. Die Kommunikation, das war schon in den letzten Jahren. Ist kaum mehr personell. Es wird über Mails, über Sammelmails, Gruppenmails, du kriegst die Hinweise, die Planungen, alles strömt auf dich ein. Und die Recherche alles ist, das persönliche Gespräch findet kaum mehr statt. Die sitzen in ihren großen Räumen, an ihren Computer oder wenige haben überhaupt noch ein eigenes Zimmer. Und das ist sehr sehr belastend. Ich rede jetzt vom Inforadio, wo ich war..

Daneben gibt es noch wie Radio im RBB, Kulturradio die sind noch etwas „old fashioned“. Da hat noch hier, da sitzt hier auf dem Stuhl im Zimmer aber, schon der Umstand, das es kein Tonband mehr gibt, das ist nicht es ist ... früher machte man eine Sendung, die war auf einen Tonband die kamen in einen Karton. Der Karton wurde beschriftet mit dem, dem Karton ging man zum Sender, sagte na hier ist meine Sendung für 18 Uhr, es quittierte man, dann ging man nach Hause. Das alles findet nicht mehr, alles fließt. Der ganze Prozess fließt. In „dacore“ oder wie die Programme immer alle heißen, sind nah zu alle Funktionen im Programm drin. Das archiviert dann automatisch. Die Kontaktpersonen werden gespeichert, es ist eine Riesenwust von Information den sie bewusst oder unbewusst handeln. Das ist wirklich eine völlig andere Zeit. Ich habe zu mindestens noch eine Ahnung davon, wie das geht, und hab es zum Teil auch gemacht, aber wenn ich das eine anderen Kollege oder Kollegin erzähle die noch vor 20 Jahren raus ist, die weißt überhaupt nicht wovon was ich spreche. Das ist völlig anders.

(01:02:06)

Nach der Wende hatten Sie mehr, sie hatten mehr Freiheit.

Ja natürlich.

Sie müssten nicht die Partei...

Es war nicht alles schlecht was die Partei gesagt hat. Weil die Partei, weil wir leben ja auch in einer Zeit wo die DDR und Vorgänge in der DDR dämonisiert werden, das ist auch völliger Schwachsinn. Ich habe sehr sehr viel, zum Beispiel mit der Stiftung Aufarbeitung gemacht. Ich bin mit dem gefahren in alle Welt, nach Bulgarien nach, hab mit denen viele Sendungen gemacht. Ich habe jetzt zum Beispiel innerlichen Abstand davon genommen. Weil es ist eine Zeit gekommen, 20 Jahre danach, die Entwicklungen in der DDR und im gesamten Ostblock im Kontext zu sehen, im gesamten Kontext ... sagen wir mal, das Kalten Krieges, der deutsch-deutsch Beziehungen und so weiter, und so fort. Und ich merke zum Beispiel wenn Leute, ich habe ein paar Freunde in Amerika, die haben von vorne rein so einer Ansatzpunkt die haben natürlich diese deutsch-deutschen Quarrels da, das ist ... ich habe gleich nach der Wende habe ich mit einer Frau die habe ich jetzt in Kalifornien besucht. Die hat zig Leute auch hier interviewt, oder hin mit den Dominik, der ist jetzt in Mexiko der macht was jetzt völlig anders. Ihr habt da einen anderen Blick natürlich ja, aber die Dämonisierung und all diese Vorgänge. Ich habe ihn auch einen Artikel beigelegt. Wer endete der DDR, das habe ich Ihn mit eingelegt, warum viel der DDR zusammen.

Es gibt wenn Sie etwas lesen möchten, oder erfahren möchten über den Zusammenbruch in der DDR oder, es gibt ein Historiker, Peter Bender, haben Sie den Namen gehört? Das mussten Sie mal googeln Peter, Bender, leider tot. War auch einer ARD Korrespondent, Peter

Bender, der hat ein Klaren blick auf der gemeinsamen deutsch-deutsche Geschichte auch. Da kommen Sie weiter in Ihren Nachdenken, der ist vor 3-4 Jahren gestorben. Aber alles andere, vieles andere, wird schon wieder politisch instrumentalisiert, absolute auch diese ... jetzt heißt sie Jahn-Behörde, Stasi Behörde. Mit schöne Regelmäßigkeit, kommen die Stasi-Kontakte von Gysi, das ist alles lächerlich, das ist alles, aber gut, darüber. Da kann man Stunden lang reden.

(01:05:14)

Wenn wir gerade an diese Themen sind, ich würde gern Fragen, ob Sie denken, dass diese Vergangenheitsbewältigung von denen wir reden, nötig ist für Journalismus? Dass man im Journalismus sich offen stellen muss und so weiter, und so fort?

Ja natürlich, ja ohne Frage aber nicht so, dass die Vergangenheitsbewältigung wieder zum politischen Kampfmittel wird. So man muss den Dingen auf den Grund gehen. Historisch, anthropologisch, in allen Facetten. Das muss unbedingt gemacht werden. Wir haben ja gesehen was passiert in der alten Bundesrepublik mit der Nazi Vergangenheit. Da ist ja nichts passiert. Wiederum in der DDR war es auch wieder etwas Holzschnitt artig. Wir haben denn Faschismus besiegt, bei uns gibt kein Faschismus. Und daraus hat den Westen das schöne Wort gemacht von Verordneten-Antifaschismus. Kennen sie den Ausdruck?

Nein.

In der DDR gab es den Verordneten-Antifaschismus die mussten antifaschistisch sein. Da sag ich aber besser ein Verordneter als gar keiner. Natürlich muss die Vergangenheit und auch die Vergangenheit des Journalismus muss aufgearbeitet werden. Sie sehen jetzt, oder man sieht jetzt, jetzt in Deutschland, heißt ja jetzt Deutschland. Sie merken jetzt, dass das Auswärtige Amt, zum Beispiel hat seiner Nazi Vergangenheit aufgearbeitet, es gibt ein Buch, das Amt. Die

deutschen Sportbunden arbeiten ihre braune Vergangenheit auf ... der Fußball ... Der BND der Bundesnachrichtendienst von Punkt zu Punkt kommen sie jetzt an die stelle wo sie über ihre eigene Vergangenheit die sie natürlich Jahrzehnte unter dem Teppich gekehrt haben ... Weil solche Namen wie Globke, ob das ihn ein Begriff ist, eben das war ein Nazi in Kanzleramt, und all diese ... Ich habe mit großen vergnügen jetzt gelesen, die Erinnerungen von Egon Bahr, sagt ihnen etwas, sie müssen bitte Egon Bahr, ich gebe ihnen weiter Anweisungen. Sie müssen Egon Bahr mal googeln, damit sie ein, B A H R, weil der ein intimer Freund und Mitarbeiter von Willi Brandt lebt heute noch, ist 90, frisch verheiratet. Wirklich ja, wie sie es nur machen. Egon Bahr der war der Konstrukteur der Ostpolitik, der Mann, der das Prinzip erfunden hatte, oder gedacht hat, Wandel durch Annäherung. Sie können das übersetzten ja im Kopf, um sich zu Wandeln, muss man sich annähern. Dieses Prinzip hatte er quasi erfunden, ein Prinzip auf, was quasi auch auf Helsinki Prinzip ist, oder so.

Das ist, ja klar muss das aufgearbeitet werden. Es ist auch nun auch so, heute wird im Bundesrat gerade über die Aufarbeitung gesprochen, aber es ist ja mittlerweile, eine regelrechte Aufarbeitungsindustrie entstanden. Es gibt Tausender solche, na ja. Ney das muss schon gemacht werden. Ich gehöre nicht zu den Leuten die sagen, lass es doch in Ruhe, der DDR ... ja klar ... Wie gesagt, das kommt natürlich darauf an ob Sie im System, im jetzigen weiter gedacht weiter gelebt haben, oder ob sie vor 20 Jahren in Rente geschickt worden. Dann fangen sie entweder an zu saufen, oder suchen sich eine neue Frau, oder laufen den ganzen Tag irritiert durch die Gegend. Davon gibt es ja genug.

Es hat ja sehr viele, persönliche Brüche, gegeben, denn auch durch die politischen Veränderungen das ist schon so.

(01:09:21)

Was ist ihre Meinung nach, die Rolle der Journalismus in Deutschland heutzutage? Wir haben gesprochen, von was Journalismus in der DDR war, wie wurden Sie Journalismus in Deutschland jetzt beschreiben?

Das ist auch sehr sehr unterschiedlich. Natürlich soll der Journalismus eine aufklärende und informierende Funktion haben, die er auch in vielen vielen Bereichen wahrnimmt. Ich persönlich höre im Moment Deutschlandfunk, ein relativ konservatives Programm, konservative im Sinne der Darbietung, wie sie es machen. Ein Glück das es so etwas gibt, öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunk, das Ganze wird, wie sie wissen, wie wir wissen, erdrückt von eine Menge Schund im Äther, und das Gleiche gilt natürlich für die Zeitung. Ich lese regelmäßig die *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, die *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, und ab und an *Welt* und noch etwas weniger *Neues Deutschland*. Ich habe alle Zeitungen abgestellt. Ich habe die Möglichkeit das wunderbar in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit liegen überall Zeitungen und so viel kann ich gar nicht zu Hause stapeln.

Ich finde, dass gerade junge Leute sich zum teil Illusionen machen darüber was Journalismus wirklich vermag. Aber das haben wir als junge Leute in der DDR auch getan. Ja das ist schon so, die Wirkung von Journalismus haben schon Grenzen, weil sie ein Teil der Einflussnahme auf den Menschen nur sind. Aber es ist, glaub ich, wirklich ein Segen, dass es den öffentlichen rechtlichen Rundfunk zum Beispiel noch gibt. Trotz der Zwangsgebühren die erhoben werden für Rundfunk Teilnehmer war es ist ein Segen, dass es die großen deutschen Zeitungen noch gibt die alle aber Schwierigkeiten haben. Die in Amerika noch mehr, von der *Los Angeles Times* bis sonst was ... von Regionalen. An welche Grenze man da ist, weiß ich nicht.

Ich sehe, dass sich auch im deutschen Journalismus neuen ganz eigenartig Konstellationen bilden. Sie kämpfen um das Überleben, die Blätter, und sind da, zu ganz eigenartigen Verhalten bereit. Nehmen wir mal an, der Sturz des Bundespräsidenten Wolf. Da sind plötzlich die *Bild Zeitung*, der *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, die *Süddeutsche* alle in einem Boot. Ganz eigenartige Geschichten. Das ist schon ... und ich meine natürlich unter ehemaligen Kollegen die ich habe, nicht wenige: „Es ist doch alle dieselbe, die machen genau ...“ Das ist natürlich Quatsch, der Journalist heute hat, wenn er das will, viele viele Möglichkeiten sich zu äußern, zu den Stellungen zu nehmen, wenn er das will. Und es herrscht vor allen Dingen eben das, was auch viele ehemaligen Kollegen in der DDR nicht begreifen wollen. Es herrscht erstmal, das grundsätzliche Prinzip der Freiheit der Information. Das ist da, nicht?

Dass es in den einen oder andere Stelle unterdrückt wird, das es in den einen oder anderen Stelle Parteien oder Regierungen, Einfluss nehmen ist eine andere Frage, aber es herrscht erstmal diese generelle Freiheit. Das, bitteschön, muss man auch zwanzig Jahre danach irgendwelchen Leuten mal begreiflich machen. Während wir in der DDR ... Wir hatten 20 neh wie viel, 40 Jahre, bitteschön, die Herrschaft der Partei. Die ich wiederhole, noch mal nicht alles schlecht gemacht hat. Aber gegen diese Partei ging nichts. Ging nichts. Gegen dieser Staat geht alles, fast alles auch es zum großen Teil folgenlos bleibt.

Ja, oder ich sehe, ja klar, wenn ich mir die katastrophalen letzten Dinge ... Aber heute kann ich im Rundfunk über Wolfgang Schäuble, der auch eine legender man ist, schimpfen wenn er so kläglich versagt in der Zypern-Krise wie jetzt. Das kann man alles schreiben, heute kann ich über Angela Merkel die jetzt die verhasstesten Frau im Südost Europa wurde, das wurde in der DDR undenkbar. Und diese generellen Unterschiede musste, sollte man auch als Mensch, der im Denken der DDR stehengeblieben ist. Den sollte man doch erst mal wirklich konstatieren.

Und die Vielfalt diesen deutschen Journalismus birgt natürlich eben auch viele Gefahren
Fairness ... nicht wenige Unregelmäßigkeiten. Das alles kann aber besprochen, diskutiert,
geändert werden, das mir persönlich in diesem ganzen Medienzirkus zu viel Halli-Galli ist, Sie
wissen, was ich meine, das ist leider so. Wenn Sie durch einen Zeitungskiosk gehen es wird
einen schwindlig. Und Leute kaufen das offenbar, die Leute, sonst wäre es nicht mehr da. Die
Leute kaufen es, ja.

Wissen Sie was, es ist schrecklich, ich weiß noch wie heute ... in Leipzig zu
Hochwendezeit die DDR gab es noch der DDR-Mark gab es noch, haben auf dem Hauptbahnhof
in Leipzig die schlauen Händler aus dem Westen solche Berge von *Bild Zeitungen* angebracht
und haben sie pro Stück 5 Ost-Mark verkauft, die Leute haben sie die Verkäufer aus der Hand
gerissen. So blöd sind die Menschen für dieser Journalismus. Wenn ich diese Bilder noch vor
mir sehe. Naja es ist ...

Was kann ich noch für Sie tun?

(01:15:35)

*Ja, ich gucke ob ich noch weitere Fragen habe die wir noch nicht beantwortet haben? Was war
denn noch mal die größte Herausforderung in Ihrer Karriere? Was war, größte
Herausforderung?*

Nichts. Also ich habe ... ich glaube, ich habe viel Glück gehabt, ich habe in der DDR
viele Dinge manchen können, natürlich aus einigen Antrieb, die mir Spaß gemacht haben, im
Westen bin ich meiner eigenen Stiefel gegangen eine Herausforderung in dem Sinne. Wenn ich
vielleicht nach der Wende der Chefredakteur von Kulturradio des RBB geworden wäre, das wäre
eine Herausforderung. Das lege zwangsläufig in meine Entwicklung, Karriere, aber daran ist

natürlich überhaupt nicht zu denken gewesen. Und wie vorhin geschildert ich hätte es auch nicht gemacht. Ich hätte, ich war in diesem neuen System nicht so disponiert oder nicht bereit eine führende Funktion ... Der Umstand dass ich Reden könnte, was ich aussuchen könnte, was ich machen könnte was ich wollte, das hat mir genügt, und das war, glaub ich auch sehr sehr viel.

(01:17:03)

Wurden Sie die Wende als Bruch in ihre Karriere sehen, oder war das einfach nur einen Zwischenstopp gewesen?

Das war schon ein Bruch. Der Parteijournalist war zu Ende, der Parteijournalismus war zu Ende. Ich wäre heute, wenn es geblieben wäre der Vorsitzender der stattlichen Komitees für Rundfunk, und seit zwei Jahren in die Pension und hätte den vaterländischen Verdienstorden im Gold bekommen. Vermute ich mal, nicht? Insofern war das natürlich ein Bruch. Und es war um so mehr ein Bruch für jene, die zu der Zeit 10 Jahre älter war. Die intellektuell nicht zum Teil verstanden haben, die auch ehrlicheren Herzen an der DDR gehangen haben. Ich gehöre ja zu einer Generation und auch zu einem Typ, Menschentyp die schon in der DDR gesehen haben, na Hey, das geht doch nicht. Aber vielen Leuten haben da wirklich dran geglaubt. Und ich bin weiter von entfernt mich über die Leute lustig zu machen. Die kannten nicht anders, die haben vielleicht zu Hause nicht anders erfahren. Die haben die falschen Bücher gelesen. Die waren die wirklichen Kinder der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik.

Und da kommen wir auf dem Ausdruckspunkt unseres Gesprächs. Das kommt, glaube ich auch ein bisschen aus das Elternhaus an, wie man, welche, es gibt also Grund Erlebnisse die man ... Mein Vater ist, zum Beispiel, nicht in der NSDAP gewesen, der ist dann nach dem Krieg in die SED eingetreten. Und nach einem halben Jahr herausgeflogen. Verstehen sie, weil er

irgendwie gemerkt hat, so. Solche Dinge, die spielen den Kindern offenbar eine Rolle, oder als Stalin starb, weiß ich noch wie heute 1953, war der abgebildet über alle Zeitungsspalten. Dann sagte meine Mutter, einfache Frau, sagt zu mir, „Junge wenn mal rauskommt was der, also Stalin, auf dem Kerbholz hat, (auf dem Kerbholz haben heißt verbochen hat), schauen Sie mal, man wusste das, man wusste das. Lauter solche dinge, oder als ich heranwuchs und die FDJ gegründet wurde, die FDJ ihre Aktivitäten gemachte ihre Fanfarenzüge, so stand meine Mutter in der Tür und sagte: „Junge das ist ja wie bei den Nazis.“ Ja, und solche Sachen haben mich offenbar sehr beeindruckt.

Und auf der anderen Seite habe ich einen Onkel, der ein gute Genosse war, bis zu seinem Tode, 79 Jahre alt geworden, der Kommunisten versteckt hat bei uns auf dem Boden. Der die *Arbeiter Illustrierter Zeitung*, das ist eine in Deutschland berühmt, von linken Leuten abonnierte hatte. Das war die andere Seite meine verwandtschaftlichen und elterlichen Vorbilder. Ich mein, dass es so ist, merke ich erst heute. Das merke ich erst heute, meine ich als Erwachsener und Älterwerdender. Und da ich es merke, weiß ich auch was ich meinen Töchtern zum Beispiel, heute sagen muss, und wie ich ihnen zu begegnen habe. Es ist für mich sehr interessant, die Eine lebt in England, die Andere ist hier. Weil ich merke, was in ihre Köpfe gepflanzt wird, die ganz andere Köpfe sind als unsere. Die einen anderen Bildungskanon haben, und andere Beziehung zu gewissen Dinge haben. Das ist ja, das bereitet mir wie gesagt viel Freude, der Umgang. Der Eine ist schon 41 und da ist nichts mehr zu machen, die ist auch in die DDR, aber die jüngeren das ist schon, die auch natürlich rückwirkend auf meine Art und Weise zu denken ... und so, das ist ... Weil der DDR-Bürger hat natürlich, der Westen hat natürlich auch viele Verwaltungsweisen, die in der DDR nicht so kannten. Dieses dass man Politik ... das wunderschöne Wort: Political-Correctness. Furchtbar, das gab in die DDR natürlich nicht, es gab, besser es gab

Parteibeschlüsse, aber diese wie einer Monstranz ja, Feminismus und das und das, my God, das ist so was verlogenes.

In der DDR, das habe ich nun mal gesagt im Westen dann auch ein paar Mal richtig, wenn man sich da so etwas rustikal etwas grob äußert, das wird dann, „ja das ist aber feministisch oder wie kommst du den darauf, nein.“ So haben sie, so haben es die Leute, die jungen Leute oder meinen Kollegen im Westen eben gelernt, nicht. Also sie haben sag mal durch die Re-education, das hat sich ja fortgesetzt durch die Engländer was da, nach dem Krieg passiert ist, so sind die halt aufgewachtes korrekt. Na ja.

(01:22:34)

Ich gucke grade für eine Schlussfrage ...

Sie können mir, wenn es für sie wichtig ist, wenn sie darüber noch mal nachdenken, sie können mir gerne noch etwas mailen. Schrieb ich ihnen die paar Zeilen dazu, zu wenn

Appendix 4: Frank Herold

After my interview with Abini Zöllner she gave me the names of a couple of her colleagues who might provide an interesting perspective for my project. I reached out to Frank Herold, and he agreed to participate. We met in his office at the Berliner Zeitung on April 4, 2013. We spoke for nearly an hour and a half, and Herold's responses were refreshingly frank. He spoke candidly of mistakes he had made, and career opportunities that he had "blown."

(00:01:03)

Ich würde gern etwas über ihren familiären Hintergrund und wie sie aufgewachsen sind erfahren etc.

Okay, also ich bin 1959 geboren, und zwar hier in Berlin, aber dann, bis ich zur Schule gegangen bin, bin ich größtenteils in einer Gegend in Sachsen, die sich das Vogtland nennt aufgewachsen, genau also in Klingenthal in Sachsen. In der Provinz, weil meine Eltern waren gerade erst nach Berlin gekommen ... ich mach es kurz ...nach Berlin gekommen und die hatten dann viel ... also mein Vater wollte ein Stück weit Karriere machen, und da bin ich bei meiner Großeltern aufgewachsen, bis ich zur Schule gegangen bin.

Bin aber dann hier in Berlin zur Schule gegangen. Habe in Berlin Abitur gemacht. Habe dann danach überlegt, welchem Beruf ich mache, und da waren eigentlich nur zwei zur Auswahl, also ich wollte entweder in die Außenwirtschaft gehen, also Ökonom, aber so Import/ Export und solche Sachen das hat mich sehr interessiert, und das Zweite, die zweite Schiene war Journalismus. Obwohl mein Vater eher versucht hat mich davon abzuhalten, weil, er selber

Journalist ist. Ursprünglich war er Landwirt aber er hat denn bei einer landwirtschaftlichen Zeitung gearbeitet. Also den größeren Teil seines Lebens war er nicht Landwirt, sondern Journalist. Also ziemlich gelungen.

Also ich bin dann Journalist geworden, und Journalistik hat man DDR Zeiten in Leipzig studiert. Da gab es die einzige Stelle, wo man direkt Journalistik studieren könnte. [...] 1982 bin ich mit dem Diplom zum *Neuen Deutschland* gekommen. Also das war die zentrale Zeitung der SED, also das Zentralorgan der SED. Das war damals so, dass man sich nicht einfach so aussuchen konnte, zur welcher Zeitung man nach dem Studium geht. Sondern, da kam eine Vermittlungskommission, die bestand aus 3 Leuten, eine von Zentralkomitee der Partei, einer von Ministerrat, und dann noch irgendjemand, da weiß ich gar nicht mehr, wer das war. Das waren 3 Leute und da sagte einer dann so und so, und für Sie haben wir *Neues Deutschland* vorgesehen. Dann bin ich zum Neuen Deutschland gegangen. Da bin ich zunächst Nachrichten-Redakteur geworden.

Aber dann sehr, sehr schnell, also innerhalb eineinhalb Jahre nach meinem beendeten Studium, bin ich als Korrespondent nach Moskau gegangen. Das lag ganz persönlich an Schabowski, an Gunter Schabowski, der damals Chefredakteur das *Neuen Deutschland* war, und der sagte dann also, man müsste den jungen Leuten eine Chance geben. Das war vor der Perestroika, wir sind nach Moskau gegangen, im Grunde zeitgleich zur Beerdigung von Juri Andropow. Das war im Februar 1984. Dann kamen erst noch anderthalb Jahre unter Tschernenko, die furchtbar waren, und dann kam Gorbatschow.

Und dann war eine Phase, also dreieinhalb, fast 4 Jahre Gorbatschow, es war eine Phase, die mich aus verschiedenen Gründen sehr verändert hat, weil. Erst mal wegen der Situation in der Sowjetunion damals selbst weil viele Dinge bekannt wurden, die mir auch nicht so bekannt

waren. Also die ganze Aufarbeitung der Geschichte, das war für mich persönlich sehr wichtig. Und das Zweite war der Gegensatz, der genauen Gegensatz dazu, dass ich immer weniger verstand, was in der DDR vorging, und wir waren im Jahr vielleicht 5 oder 6 Wochen zu Hause, hier in Berlin. Und dann hatte man die Gespräche in der Redaktion. Und das wurde für mich immer unverständlicher, und dann in der letzten Phase dieser Korrespondenten Tätigkeit, war es für mich so, dass ich nur noch Themen aus der Kosmosforschung oder der Wissenschaft oder von Sport schreiben konnte, aber nicht mehr über Politik oder Wirtschaft.

(00:04:52)

Wieso nicht?

Weil das keiner wissen wollte. Weil man das in meiner Redaktion gar nicht wissen wollte, dass man darüber ... ja tatsächlich schon über die Anfänge einer ökonomischen Reformbewegung diskutierte. Also diese ganzen Geschichten über Leute wie Beresowski oder Abramowitsch ... wie sie reich geworden sind. Das begann damals. Also dieses ganze System der Öffnung, auch des wirtschaftlichen Sektors. Diese Modelle die da gespielt worden, dass interessierte ... interessierte schon die Stasi oder die Parteiführung aber das durfte nicht geschrieben werden.

Dann sind wir zurückgekommen. Also wie gesagt, Anfang 1989 waren wir wieder da. Dann war ich wieder Nachrichten Redakteur plötzlich, weil ich bin, so ein bisschen auch, da will ich überhaupt keinen Legenden bilden, da war keine Ungnade. Also man hat mich einfach zurückgeholt, und der Nachfolger, mein Nachfolger wurde der Sohn des Bürochefs von Erich Honecker. Aber der war auch Redakteur beim *Neuen Deutschland*. Aber er war einer von der

Nomenklatura, ich war dann überhaupt nicht aus der Nomenklatura aber dann wurden Leute wieder platziert aus der Nomenklatura eingesetzt. Dann ging es auch ganz schnell.

Dann kam der Sommer mit der Grenzöffnung in Ungarn. Dann kam der Früherbst, wo es schon losging. Dann kam der 4. November, mit der großen Kundgebung gleich hier unten, wo wir alle noch sehr, sehr unsicher waren. Also da haben wir unsere Kinder damals bei den Großeltern abgegeben, weil wir nicht wussten, was auf dieser Demonstration passiert, als wir dort hingegangen sind. Und ja, dann war da diese Wende Situation, also diese Umbruchsituation die Sie jetzt besonders interessiert. Und diese Geschichten mit Kontinuität und Diskontinuitäten. Ja, erst mal soweit zu dieser Frage.

(00:06:36)

Ja okay, das ist toll. Ich würde gern ein bisschen zurückgehen?

Gerne.

Ein paar Nachfragen stellen. Also sie haben gesagt ihr Vater war Journalist. Und ihre Mutter?

Meine Mutter ist ... sie hat als Fotolaborantin gearbeitet und als Archivarin. Also sie hatte keiner ... Meine Eltern sind [Teil der] Kriegsgeneration. Die waren mit 14 Jahre alt, als sie aus der Schule kamen, das war 1948, und mein Vater wurde von seinen Eltern auf das Dorf zum Bauern geschickt, deswegen, damit man Essen hatte. Unmittelbar nach dem Krieg. Und dann n ist er eben Bauer geworden. [Erst hat er] eine landwirtschaftlichen Fachschule besucht. Ist dann auch an der Universität. Hat auch landwirtschaftlich studiert. [Dann hat er auch an der Universität, Landwirtschaft studiert] Durch irgendeinen Zufall, gab es eine Zeitung, die sich nur mit Bauern befasste. Und da ist er hin 1953 oder so ... ist egal ... wann auch immer. Und deswegen, wurde Journalist. Und meine Mutter hatte überhaupt keinen Abschluss nach dem

Krieg machen können. Sondern sie ist zunächst in eine Fabrik gegangen, Und hat gearbeitet und mein Vater hat sie dann nach Berlin geholt, und sie hatte keiner Ausbildung und deswegen hat sie immer Jobs gemacht, wo man keine Ausbildung brauchte.

(00:07:48)

Okay, und haben Sie Geschwister?

Ich hab einen Bruder. Der ist, Flugzeugmechaniker von Beruf. Und der baut im Augenblick für Rolls-Royce Flugzeugmotoren.

Ist der jünger oder älter?

Er ist zweieinhalb Jahre jünger

Und wie war für sie das Aufwachsen in der DDR?

(00:08:11)

Das war eine sehr behütete Kindheit, muss man wirklich sagen. Mit einer großen, großen Sicherheit. Man hat sich, Sicherheit im weitesten Sinne, nicht jetzt Sicherheit, als ob mich morgen jemand ausraubt, oder ob mir morgen jemand Gewalt antut. Sondern, man musste sich um nichts wirklich Gedanken machen. Man hatte eine Ausbildung sicher. Und diese Ausbildungen waren gut. Vor allem in den Naturwissenschaften waren sie großartig. Mein großer Sohn ist jetzt Gymnasiallehrer. Sie war besser als in den Schulen, die wir jetzt in der Bundesrepublik haben. Die Ausbildungen in den Naturwissenschaften, finde ich, aus den Gesprächen. Und also insofern meine ich Sicherheit. Weil man spricht, gerne immer über, ja, oder man macht gerne so einen Gegensatz daraus: Warum hat jemand diese Situation in der DDR, wo das System mild repressiv war, aber im Grunde entmündigend war in der DDR? Also

es gab keine echten Wahlen. Das ist richtig. Es gab keine Freiheit des Wortes. Es gab keine Demonstrationenfreiheit. Warum hat jemand das ausgehalten? Dieser Freiheitsgedanke, denn auch Gauck so immer vor, der Bundespräsident, immer vor sich her trägt. Er hat einen ... Gauck hat einem völlig anderen Freiheitsbegriff als ich.

Okay, und was ist ihr Freiheitsbegriff?

Es gibt keine absolute Freiheit. Sondern, Freiheit für jemanden. Also Freiheit ist immer funktional. Freiheit, Sicherheit, braucht jeder, unabhängig von der Funktion. Sicherheit ... Der Sicherheitsbegriff ist eigentlich viel wichtiger als der Freiheitsbegriff. Ohne Sicherheit ist Freiheit nichts. Wenn man sich nicht sicher sein kann ... und wir im Westen ... das ist jetzt ein bisschen provokativ möglicherweise. Wir im Westen reden doch nur über Freiheit, weil wir sie synonym verbinden ... oder weil es sich für uns verbindet mit den Begriffen Sicherheit und Wohlstand. Weil wir frei sind, sind wir sicher und wohlhabend. Aber für jemanden, der aus Osteuropa oder aus dem Osten kommt, ist es nicht so. Da zählen andere Dinge mehr. Was ich meine, will ich so sagen. Ich bin Journalist. Für mich ist die Freiheit des Wortes, natürlich eine existenzielle Freiheit. Wenn ich sie nicht habe, kann ich nicht wirklich Journalist sein. Das war eine DDR-Situation, wenn ich sie [die Freiheit] nicht habe kann ich nicht wirklich Journalist sein.

Meine Großeltern lebten dort in einer Kleinstadt im Vogtland. Für meine Großeltern war tatsächlich die Freiheit des Wortes nie wichtig. Sie hatten völlig andere Berufe. Für sie war die Freiheit etwas völlig anderes. Die Freiheit war was völlig anderes. Sie brauchten ... meine Großeltern brauchten die Freiheit ihr Geld zu verdienen in einem [Betrieb] und nicht herauszufliegen aus einem Betrieb, der Musikinstrumente herstellte. Für sie war Freiheit verbunden damit, dass sie ihren Arbeitsplatz in diesen Betrieb sicher hatten.

Es ist ein völlig anderer Freiheitsbegriff. Und das ist natürlich ein Spannungsfeld, zwischen Freiheit und Sicherheit. Und wir, wir inzwischen sage ich wir, wir neigen inzwischen dazu es für gegeben zu halten, dass Freiheit und Wohlstand und Sicherheit zusammengehören. Aber das ist nicht überall so. Und im Osten war es nicht so. Weil, Freiheit im Osten bedeutete totale Unsicherheit. Wenn man diesen Gedanken vertreten hat, ist man in den Knast gegangen. Und insofern kann man auch niemand verurteilen, der dann gesagt hat, ja ehe ich in den Knast gehen, engagiere ich mich lieber mit dem System. Im Weißrussland passiert im Augenblick dasselbe. Jetzt sind wir ... wir ein bisschen abgekommen. Sie hatten nach meinem Freiheitsbegriff gefragt ...

Ja, weil wir haben von ihrer Ausbildung ... Ich würde ihnen gern, sie haben was gesagt, das sehr interessant war. Ich würde gern noch mal darauf zurückkommen. Sie haben gesagt ohne Freiheit des Wortes, ist man kein Journalist. Wie würden sie dann dem Beruf des Journalisten in der DDR beschreiben, wenn man keine Freiheit des Wortes hatte.

(00:12:20)

Ja das ist o ja, das ist genau eine sehr, sehr wichtige Frage. Also ich bin Journalist geworden, weil ich Geschichten erzählen wollte. Oder will es auch heute noch. Ich weiß natürlich nach 30 Jahren in dem Gewerbe, weiß ich natürlich, dass Geschichten erzählen nicht der ganze Journalismus ist. Sondern, man muss eine Zeitung auch ganz technisch produzieren., Man muss die Geschichten von anderen Kollegen als Redakteur in die Zeitung bringen. Alles solche Sachen. Aber der Ursprung, mein Ursprung war, dass ich gerne erzählt habe. Jetzt ist die Frage natürlich, wenn wir bei der Freiheit des Wortes sind, natürlich war mir von Anfang an, immer bewusst, dass ich nicht alles erzählen kann, im sozialistischen Journalismus. Ich kann

auch jetzt nicht alles erzählen, die Gründe sind aber verschieden. Jetzt sind die Gründe, weil sich manches nicht verkauft, warum ich manche Geschichten gar nicht machen kann, die ich selber für interessant halte. Weil mir mein Chefredakteur sagt „ja mein Gott, es verkauft sich nicht. Okay, das sind völlig anderen Gründe.

In der DDR war es so, was ich ja schon erzählt habe, wie ich da als Korrespondent draußen war. Ich hab zum Beispiel, das war auch zum Teil völlig absurd. Wenn ich jetzt zu sehr abschweife, müssen Sie sagen, aber Sie wissen dann, was Sie verwenden.

Ich war als Korrespondent einmal in Brest, Brest ist die Grenzstadt an der Grenze zu Polen. Brest-Litowsk hieß es früher. Wurde im Frieden nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Die haben dort ein Zollmuseum. Und da haben sie Dinge beschlagnahmt, die aus der damaligen Sowjetunion ausgeführt werden sollten, und stellten die so aus. Und da haben auch viele DDR-Bürger, Sachen geklaut, oder versucht zu schmuggeln. Diese Geschichte konnte ich nicht schreiben, weil mein Chefredakteur damals sagte: Ja was dann entsteht denn dann für ein Bild von unseren DDR-Bürgern, die waren doch nicht kriminell.“

Verstehen Sie? Das ist, ich muss es ein bisschen auf die abstrakt... ich könnte tausende solche Beispiele nennen, wo es ganz klare politische Leitlinien gab. Und wo es auch völlig absurde Dinge gab und man nicht schreiben könnte. Politischen Leitlinien waren schon klar, die Grundlage all dessen, was man schreiben konnte, ... war im Grunde vorgegeben, durch den Rahmen den die ... Ich war bei einer Parteizeitung, und alles war vorgegeben durch den Rahmen der Parteitage, oder die politische Linie, die das Zentral Komitee vorgab. Und da standen dann eben solchen Sachen drin. Weil [Zum Beispiel] deutsch-sowjetische Geschichten, also wir machen gemeinsame Betriebe mit der Sowjetunion.

Wenn ich in so einen Betrieb gegangen bin, in die [*unklar*] beispielsweise in der Nähe von Moskau, also 100 km [entfernt]. Dann musste ich da das Positive, wie das gut funktioniert, der deutsch-sowjetische Zusammenhalt, wie sie gut funktioniert, ... was das schon wieder weggelassen habe, waren die vielen großen und kleinen Schwierigkeiten, Probleme, oder wo es überhaupt nicht funktionierte.

Die Vorgabe war, die deutsch-sowjetische Freundschaft schreitet voran, und so musste der Tenor, sozusagen, auch des Artikels sein. Nun gab es glücklicherweise zum Teil auch Dinge, wo man das machen konnte ohne sich selbst zu sagen, um Gott es willen, was schreibst du da. Aber wie ich schon erzählt habe, in der Endphase meine Korrespondenten Tätigkeit gab es praktisch überhaupt nicht mehr. Und dann war mein Ausweg, meine Insel und viele Leute haben sich ... Günter Grass hat es mal die Nischen genannt ... haben sich Nischen gesucht. Meine Nische, die bis heute hält, ist dann die Kosmosforschung gewesen. Und ich hab also über die sowjetische Kosmosforschung, die wirklich führend natürlich war, auch zu damaliger Zeit. Hab ich im Grunde alles geschrieben, was man nur schreiben konnte. Von den Missionen zu Kometen, bis hin zur bemannten Raumfahrt, ich war also zu allen Stellen, die so interessant sind, an allen Startplätzen im Flugleitzentrum und überall. Das fand ich interessant. Aber ich habe keine Politik mehr gemacht und keine Wirtschaft.

Und das war bewusst, also Sie haben ...

Beides. Es war ... die Themen, die ich aufgeschrieben hatte, wurden bei meiner Hauptredaktion in Berlin nicht mehr angenommen. Und weil sie nicht mehr genommen wurden, hab ich dann bewusst aufgehört, sie überhaupt zu machen. Und daraufhin, weil ich es nicht mehr gemacht habe, das ist die Geschichte der Ablösung. Weil ich also diese Politik und Wirtschaft in dem Sinne, wie sie es wollten, nicht mehr gemacht habe, hat man mich dann abgelöst.

(00:17:05)

Das war der Punkt, Freiheit des Wortes, ja wie kann man überhaupt auf den Gedanken kommen diesen Beruf zu ergreifen, wenn es diese Freiheit des Wortes nicht gibt? Wissen Sie, da spielt natürlich Sozialisierung mit hinein. Und das ist es ist schon sehr , sehr wichtig. Für mich hatte diese, was man gerne abfällig marxistisch-leninistische Ideologie nennt, für mich durchaus positive Vorzeichen. Und ich glaube heute noch, dass man wenn man diese Systeme, diese starren marxistischen-leninistischen ...diesen Gedankenbau, wenn man den [für sich] nimmt, dann ist er in sich logisch. Er hat ja auch viele Elemente, die auf Utopien der Menschheit, soziale Gerechtigkeit und ähnliche Dinge aufgenommen. Und entwickelt sie in sich logisch. Nur, muss man gewisse Prämissen akzeptieren, und die konnte ich dann immer weniger akzeptieren. Also beispielsweise diesen, wenn man so will, der auch [nicht nur] bloße Marxismus oder vor allem Leninismus ist, sondern [den es] auch im Christentum [gibt], dieses Sendungsbewusstsein. Also wir wollen ja, dass es allen Menschen gut geht. Wir haben auch ein Konzept, damit es allen Menschen gut geht. Und wenn die Menschen aber nicht einsehen, dann muss man es ihnen einprägen. Ja? Das war dann der Punkt, den ich damit meine, man muss auch den Prämissen mit akzeptieren. Und diese Prämissen konnte ich immer weniger akzeptieren.

(00:18:38)

Ich könnte niemand, ich kann es heute inzwischen auch nicht mehr ... selbst wenn ich von einer Meinung überzeugt bin, und von einem Konzept überzeugt bin, bin ich heute nicht mehr in der Lage dieses so missionarisch zu vertreten. Also sozusagen, ich kämpfe ja so lange, bis ich dich davon überzeugt hätte, das kostet mich zu viel Kraft. Ich kann das nicht. Andere können das. Aber ich kann das nicht.

Und das war dann gerade mit diesem Erlebnis der Sowjetunion unter Gorbatschow verbunden. Auch viele Leute, die ich dann kennenlernte, die dann später auch zeitweise Perestroika Politiker wurden, also ich war sehr befreundet mit Jegor Gaidar, der inzwischen tot ist. Der war kurze Zeit dann sogar Ministerpräsident von Russland. Und ist mit seinem Konzept vollständig gescheitert. Also, inzwischen, wie gesagt, ist er tot. Aber das waren diejenigen, die in meinem Alter waren, und das waren die Leute, mit denen ich dort zusammenkam. Jegor Gaidar war damals Ökonom bei einem Magazin der kommunistischen Partei. Was auch Kommunist hieß. Und dann wurde er einer der größten Reformökonomen Russlands.

Also das ... ja, und weil Sie sagten, sie haben in keinem anderen Berufsfeld oder in wenigen anderen Berufswegen, so viel Kontinuität, personelle Kontinuität gefunden wie im Journalismus, die ist in den meisten oder in vielen Fällen, die ich auch gut kenne ist sie mit einer großen individuellen Diskontinuität verbunden. Man ist zwar Journalist geblieben, also insofern kontinuierlich, und weiter gemacht, aber auch für mich, nehme ich in Anspruch, dass ich also meine Ansichten, meine politischen Ansichten radikal und grundsätzlich verändert habe.

Und wie?

Wie gesagt ich war überzeugt von dem Gedankengebäude des Marxismus-Leninismus. Vor allem von der Zielsetzung. Soziale Gerechtigkeit. Unbedingt, war ich überzeugt. Aber mich überzeugten immer weniger die Wege die auf diesem ... und vor allem überzeugte mich am Ende nicht mehr, dass es möglich war, das umzusetzen. Also ich halte den Sozialismus inzwischen für unmöglich. Er ist nicht machbar und aus einem ... ich bin wirklich sehr Kopf -Mensch, und nicht so sehr ein Emotionsmensch, weil man ... glauben war noch nie meine Sache. Also ... an den Kommunismus musste man eigentlich auch glauben, wie man an den Katholizismus glaubt. Und das hat mir eigentlich immer gefehlt. Und als meine Analyse zusammengebrochen ist, was meine

Grundlage war, das ist im Grunde meine ganzes ... mein ganzes Weltbild sozusagen zusammengebrochen. Und der Punkt ist, dass ich glaube, dass der Sozialismus keine nachvollziehbare ökonomische Theorie hat. Also mir hat noch niemand wirklich plausibel machen können, dass die sozialistischen Vorstellungen von Ökonomie funktionieren. Die Kapitalisten kann man, da kriege ich dann immer so gesagt, aber beim Kapitalismus sieht man ... doch jetzt gerade, in welche Krisen er hineinkommt. Wie wenig er die Bedürfnisse der Entwicklungsländer erfüllen kann. Ja, ich muss sagen, es ist alles richtig, aber er ist dabei nicht zusammengebrochen. Und das gibt mir zu denken. Ich meine, man darf sich nicht mal wünschen, dass er zusammenbricht, weil inzwischen gar keiner Alternativen mehr dazu gibt. Also der Sozialismus hat sich derartig diskreditiert, dass ihn wirklich niemand haben möchte. Die einzige Alternative wäre dann, ökonomisch gesehen weiß ich es nicht mal.

Ich habe keine. Aber tatsächlich, da ist diese Diskontinuität, also ein richtiger Bruch, in mir. Der allerdings schon da war, als wir 1989 in die DDR zurückkamen. Für mich hat diese innere Wende schon sehr viel früher begonnen. Nämlich eigentlich schon Mitte 1985.

Und was ist da passiert?

Na, da ist Gorbatschow an die Macht gekommen. Und das war dann, nicht er als Person weil er als Person, muss ich sagen meine Erinnerungen an ihn als Person sind sehr zwiespältig. Sehr , sehr zwiespältig es sind vor allem, sehr viele Leute aus seinem Umfeld, die mich also auch damals sehr sehr ... was heißt Umfeld ... also Leute die Anhänger waren. Die genau gesagt haben, Gorbatschow, das musste jetzt kommen, [mit] dieser Reformbewegung. Die auch von ihm auch zum Teil so enttäuscht waren weil er so inkonsequent war. Aber das sind eigentlich diese Geschichten, die mich zum Nachdenken gebracht haben in diesen vier Jahren zwischen 1985 und 1989. Da kommen wir zu einer historischen Diskussion, die dann aufbrach. Also ich wusste nicht

viel über die Repressionen. Aber, was ich seitdem über die Repressionen lernen musste, über diese ganzen schrecklichen Zeiten, das ist natürlich eine Ernüchterung. Um diesen Preis darf man nicht behaupten, eine menschliche Gesellschaft aufzubauen. Das darf man nicht.

Und das Zweite ist, ich bin kein Ökonom von Hause aus. Aber was ich seitdem über Ökonomie gelernt habe, ist, dass der Sozialismus keine funktionsfähige Ökonomie hatte. Er hatte sie nicht. Er ist ... der Sozialismus ist nicht zuerst politisch gescheitert, sondern der Sozialismus ist zuerst ökonomisch gescheitert. Da bin ich fest von überzeugt. Das ist auch ein Irrtum, den vielen unserer Bürgerrechtler, und auch wahrscheinlich einschließlich des Bundespräsidenten Joachim Gauck gemacht haben, dass sie sagen ja, im 1989 hat der Freiheitswillen der DDR-Bürger triumphiert. Das halte ich für totalen Blödsinn. Im Jahr 1989 hat sich ... also ... hat sich aus meiner Sicht herausgestellt, dass ein Gesellschaftsvertrag nicht mehr funktioniert hat. Auch in Diktaturen gibt es Gesellschaftsverträge. Der Gesellschaftsvertrag der DDR war: Liebe Leute wir versprechen euch, es geht euch in jedem Jahr ... oder in jeder Stufe, die wir uns weiter entwickeln, geht es euch ein bisschen besser. Euer Wohlstand steigt, ihr kriegt bis 1989, kriegt ihr alle eine Wohnung. Also wir sichern, [es ist] das putin-istische Modell. Wir sichern euch zu, es wird euch immer ein bisschen besser gehen. Und ihr haltet dafür das Maul.

Das war der Gesellschaftsvertrag der DDR. Die Leute haben das Maul mehrheitlich gehalten, also große Mehrheiten haben geschwiegen, und haben gesagt, okay, wenn ihr uns versprecht uns geht's besser, ist es in Ordnung. Wir hatten das vorhin mit der Sicherheit. Das ist so ein weiter Sicherheitsbegriff. Wenn wir sicher sein können, dass es uns immer ein besser gehen soll, warum brauchen wir denn Redefreiheit. Wozu?

Und in der zweiten Hälfte der 80er Jahre stellte sich heraus, dass die Parteiführung ihren Teil dieses Sozialvertrages, dieses Gesellschaftervertrages nicht einhalten kann. Es ging den

Leuten nicht immer ein bisschen besser. Sondern, die ökonomische Situation stagnierte, das mit den Wohnungen war ein Versprechen, das die Partei nicht einlösen konnte. Und als die Leute gemerkt haben, hört mal, ihr haltet euren Teil des Gesellschaftsvertrages nicht ein, nämlich der Wohlstand wächst, dann brauchen wir unseren Teil des Gesellschaftsvertrages auch nicht mehr einzuhalten, und die Leute rissen das Maul auf.

Und dann kam es zur Wende. Nicht weil der Freiheitsgedanken und die ... persönlich dieses Engagement von Bürgerrechtlern heute ... beginnt wieder so ein Prozess gegen einen Pfarrer in Jena aus einem ganz anderen Grund. Ich halte das, da habe ich hohen Respekt davor. Aber das hat nicht das Ende der DDR herbeigeführt. Sondern das Ende der DDR haben diejenigen herbeigeführt ... Im Zuge der Französischen Revolution, war das eine Gruppe die nannte man die Vendée. Plötzlich war der ganz normale Bauer oder der ganz normale Arbeiter, der eigentlich gar nichts mit Freiheit am Hut hatte. Sondern der einfach nur wollte, dass es ihm genauso geht wie in der Bundesrepublik. Der ist aufgestanden, gar nicht der besonders demokratische überzeugt oder weiß der Teufel was. Die Vendée ist da aufgestanden, 1989.

Das ist das Furchtbare, mir fiel dazu immer so viel ein.

Ja, und wir kommen auch wieder zurück, also alle Fragen zielen irgendwie ...

Wie lange brauchen sie noch [...] eine Stunde noch?

Wir machen so lange wie Sie wollen, und solange die Fragen reichen ...

Ich muss mich dann ein bisschen konzentrieren ...

Dann komme ich zu einer Frage, die ein bisschen weiter zurückgehen, wie kamen Sie zum Journalismus? Sie haben gesagt Ihr Vater war Journalist ...

(00:27:40)

Genau, das ist im Grunde so individuell, das es unerheblich ist. Also ich hatte zwei Berufswünsche, wie gesagt. Ich wollte mich entweder mit Fragen des Außenhandels beschäftigen oder ich wollte Journalist werden. Und der Zusammenhang, oder der Hintergrund von beiden ist: ich wollte sehr gerne reisen. Also das war das Ziel so, und dann ist das System der DDR so merkwürdig gewesen, dass man sich für ein Volontariat beim Journalismus schon in der ... schon etwa zwei Jahre vor dem Ende der Schule, also vor dem Abitur bewerben musste. Und alles andere kam später. Und ich hab mich also schon in der 11. Klasse beworben für ein Volontariat als Journalist und hab das auch gekriegt. Und dann bin ich Journalist geworden.

Was, können Sie ein bisschen dieses Journalistik Studium beschreiben?

Kann ich gerne machen. Also das Journalismus Studium hatte im Grunde zwei Hauptsäulen, wenn man so will, eine politisch-ideologische, da sind wir schon darauf eingegangen, da wurden die Weltanschauungsfragen, philosophische Fragen und solche Sachen gelehrt und geprüft. Wenn man so will. Ob man gut Marx und Lenin gelesen hat, das war die eine wirkliche Hauptsäule, und die zweite Hauptsäule, die war ... beschäftigte sich mit den Methoden den Journalismus. Das heißt wir hatten sehr gute Vorlesungen, die man eher ins Germanistische hineintun könnte, oder wir hatten eine sehr gute Ausbildung der Genre Theorie also, wie schreibt man einen Kommentar, wie baut man eine Reportage auf. Wie führt man eine Recherche, also das Handwerk, das journalistische Handwerk. Diese beiden Säulen gab es vorrangig. Und dann gab es zunächst ein Grundstudium, wo dann alle Journalisten gemeinsam waren. Und dann wurde differenziert, wer will Radio machen, wer will Fernsehen machen und wer will Print machen. Und ich hatte von Anfang an Print, und da haben wir eben dann eben die Spezifika von Print verstärkt gemacht. Ja, und das dauerte vier Jahre, und es war sehr verschult

muss man sagen. Also bei uns, ein Seminar ähnelt eher einer Schulklasse als einem Seminar an einer westlichen Universität. Das war schon sehr ... da saß einer vorne und also ... es war schon eher wie Schule als Universität

(00:30:16)

Und was haben ... sie sind danach Journalist geworden. Was ist an dieser Ausbildung nützlich gewesen? Haben Sie was aus diesem Studium ...

Ja ich will das gern ..., das war eine sehr, sehr gute Ausbildung. Ich will das gar nicht schlechtmachen. Denn selbst das, was ich heute für mich, von der ersten Säule von der Ideologie Säule, sozusagen, selbst das was ich verworfen habe. Was ich für mich jetzt nicht mehr für gültig betrachte, woran ich nicht mehr glaube. Selbst das war wichtig für mich, oder im Nachhinein betrachtet, war es sehr, sehr wichtig für mich, weil ich wusste, was ich jetzt nicht mehr brauche, was ich ablehne. Was ich für falsch halte. Ich hatte mich intensiv auch damit auseinandergesetzt. Und hab auch heute noch viele Erinnerungen an bestimmte Sachen. Beispielsweise bei Marx, denke ich manchmal, ich musste mir den 18. Brumaire, also eine der Schriften von Marx heißt das 18. Brumaire des Luis Bonaparte, das musste ich mir mal wieder vornehmen. Weil er im Grunde da die hegelsche Geschichtsphilosophie aufgreift. Und eine Analyse macht, über die Machtergreifung von Louis Bonaparte in Frankreich ... und also wirklich brillant ... es ist wirklich brillant. Sowohl politisch als ökonomisch, wie er die Machtverhältnisse da analysiert. Komm ich immer wieder dazu, also selbst, was ich kurz sagen möchte. Selbst dieser Teil meiner Ausbildung, der ideologisch war, war nicht vergebens nicht umsonst, und nicht reines [unklar], reines schlimm ... Sondern es hat mir etwas gegeben.

Und der zweite Teil war natürlich extrem wichtig, [wegen der] Unterschiede.

Technischen Unterschiede des Journalismus zwischen Ost und West Journalismus gibt es nicht. Die Methodik eines Kommentars ist die Methodik eines Kommentars. Im Westen, wie im Osten. Die Methodik eine Reportage ist die Methodik einer Reportage, im Westen, wie im Osten. Die Methode eines Interviews ist die Methode eines Interviews. Und das von der Pike auf gelernt zu haben. Also meine Frau beispielsweise, die sich jetzt auch vom Journalismus beinahe verabschiedet hat, hat noch ein Stück aus dem Journalismus übrig. Sie macht Journalisten Ausbildung an der Universität der Künste. Das ist ein postgraduales Studium, und sie bildet Kulturjournalisten aus. Und sie lehrt dort die journalistische Methodik. Und sie lehrt es dort, so gut, wie sie es gelernt hat. Also diese rein technischen, rein methodischen Fragen unterscheiden sich zwischen Ost und West überhaupt nicht. Null.

Und das hat mir, sagen wir mal auch, das ermöglicht sozusagen ... nicht alle Methoden, die man gelernt hat, waren natürlich dann in der Praxis anwendbar. So muss ich das vielleicht sagen. Also wenn ich gelernt habe bei einem Interview, so mit Nachfragen mit kritischer Distanz [zu arbeiten], das habe ich natürlich im Sozialismus gelernt. Es war nur in der Praxis nicht verwendbar. Aber gelernt habe ich es. Oder bei einem Kommentar, da lernte man natürlich schon ... nun lernte man nicht den Sozialismus zu kritisieren, sondern man lernte also die Argumentationslinien, die kritischen Argumentationslinien bezogen sich immer auf die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Westen. Aber man hat natürlich die Mechanik, die Methodik, hat man natürlich gelernt die man in einem Kommentar braucht. Die waren bloß nicht anwendbar auf den Sozialismus.

(00:33:59)

Jetzt komme ich zu einer neuen Frage: Welche Rolle spielte der Verband der Journalisten?

Das weiß ich nicht. Da weiß ich nichts drüber. Ich war, weil alle Mitglieder waren, war ich auch Mitglied. Aber wie gesagt ich bin vom Studium gekommen, war dann 18 Monate in Berlin, und dann war ich einfach weg. Und als ich wieder kam, gab es den Journalisten -Verband eigentlich fast nicht mehr. Ich weiß es einfach nicht. Ich kann nicht sagen. Ich hab da nie etwas aktiv gemacht.

Dann was war für Sie die Rolle des Journalismus und der Journalisten in der DDR? Was für eine Rolle spielte sie?

Jetzt offiziell, oder?

Beides.

Offiziell ist es natürlich ganz deutlich. Das ging auch wieder auf Lenin zurück. Lenin hatte die Drei Begriffe gefunden. Kollektiver Organisator, Agitator, und Propagandist. Das klang dann alles so, und das wurde dann auch im Studium, in dieser ideologischen Säule auseinander differenziert. Auf Deutsch gesagt, wenn man so will, waren wir die Transmissionsriemen, oder die wie soll man sagen, die Übersetzer sozusagen der Parteipolitik in ein etwas verträglicheres Deutsch.

Das waren wir offiziell, und inoffiziell waren die meisten von uns, außerordentlich unzufrieden was zur einer hohen Rate an Alkoholismus geführt hat. Und im geringsten Fall, zu permanentem Kopfschütteln über bestimmte Entscheidungen oder zu permanenter Unzufriedenheit über einen bestimmten Dirigismus. Und dann kommt wieder die Frage, und warum hat man das dann gemacht, wenn man sich unzufrieden fühlte. Weil es eben auch durchaus Positives ... ich schließe nicht aus, dass viele auch überzeugt waren von dem was sie getan haben. Aber ich kenne auch viele, Prozentzahlen kann ich nicht nennen, aber ich kenne

auch viele, die wenig überzeugt waren von bestimmten Teilen. Und warum haben die sich darauf eingelassen, und bis zum Schluss, wie ich zum Beispiel, bis zum Schluss auch mitgemacht? Weil es für mich viele interessante Seiten an diesem Beruf gab. Die sich allerdings auch daraus ergaben, dass ich nie etwas mit der DDR-Innenpolitik zu tun hatte. Nie darüber schreiben musste. Das ich nie etwas damit zutun hatte, über die DDR-Parteipolitik zu schreiben. Sondern ich bin von der Ausbildung her, vom Fach her immer Außenpolitiker gewesen. Hab auch nebenbei ein bisschen Völkerrecht studiert, und solche Sachen. Und war eben dann auch im Ausland und fand das eben interessant weil mich dieses Reisen, weil mich das überhaupt interessierte, ich habe von diesen 5 Jahren in der Sowjetunion im Grunde alle [Sowjet] Republiken gesehen. Ich habe alle Region dieses riesigen Landes gesehen allein das, war für mich eine so unglaubliche Bereicherung. Unabhängig ... und man könnte aus allen diesen Bereichen auch Geschichten erzählen bis zu einer bestimmten Grenze natürlich. Die auch interessant war.

Also ich meine, auch nur wieder ein Beispiel, das ist immer so, wenn man abstrakt redet ... Wir waren, die Sowjetunion hatte das merkwürdige Gebaren, dass man die Journalisten vom Außenministerium her einlud, in Gegenden des Landes zu reisen, wo man nicht immer hinkam. Und da wurden die deutschen Journalisten , nach zwei oder drei Jahren, wurden die deutschen Journalisten gemeinsam eingeladen. Also die Frankfurter Allgemeine wurde gemeinsam mit dem *Neuen Deutschland* eingeladen. Deswegen sage ich das hier, nach Jakutien zu fahren. Jakutien ist in Sibirien, kurz vor dem Fernen Osten. Jakutien ist ein Gebiet, wo es im Winter sehr kalt wird, und im Süden viel Kohle hat. Wir führen also in den Süden von Jakutien, und der Kollege Werner Adam von dem *Frankfurter Allgemeinen*, und ich waren mit dabei. Und wir standen plötzlich an einer Straße im tiefsten Sibirien im Januar, es war malerisch. Das Asphaltband ..., es

kamen LKWs, links und rechts waren die Bäume. Wir stellten uns nebeneinander und machten ein Foto, und wir beide erzählten diese Geschichte von den Japanern, die gekommen sind um Steinkohle in Sibirien zu fördern. Und wir erzählten die Geschichte von den Leuten, von den Menschen die da unter diesen Bedingungen arbeiten. Und wir erzählten diese Geschichten gar nicht so sehr verschieden voneinander. Das alles wäre noch ganz gut gewesen. Aber, wir standen nebeneinander und machten dasselbe Foto. Also er stand hier und ich stand hier. Und wir Fotografierten diese Straße, wie diese LKWs kommen, und an demselben Tag durch Zufall, ist in der *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung* und im *Neuen Deutschland* dasselbe Bild. Und da hatte ich ziemlichen Arger hinterher. Wie das sein könnte.

Also nochmals zu den Absurditäten, das ist eine dieser Absurditäten. ... Die Frankfurter Allgemeine und das Neue Deutschland am selben Tag mit demselben Bild, das hätte nicht passieren dürfen. Das war 1987. Im Januar waren wir dort. Also so was, das hat mich immer in solchen Sachen dann aufrechterhalten. Und dann hatte ich dort eben auch persönliche Ziele. Zum Beispiel wollte ich immer nach Baikonur, wo die russischen Raketen starten. Und ich wollte immer in das Flugleitzentrum, das was Cape Canaveral in den USA ist. Wie Houston, das Flugleitzentrum, in das sowjetische Houston, da wollte ich immer hin. Und das habe ich geschafft. Und das war für mich persönlich befriedigend. Und das Befriedigende hat das Unbefriedigende aufgewogen. Für mich persönlich habe ich etwas erreichen können. Ich habe den Leuten, Dinge erzählen können, über die sich dann alle gewundert haben. Ich meine, ich habe mir über Astrophysik Wissen angeeignet und könnte über Astrophysik in Russisch reden. Das waren Dinge, die mich persönlich sehr befriedigt haben. ... Natürlich war dies im Großen und Ganzen ..., denn Freiheit des Wortes gab es nicht. Aber ich habe Nischen, Inseln gehabt, wo ich auch das schreiben konnte was ich für mich persönlich sehr interessant, sehr wichtig und

innerlich sehr befriedigend hielt. Das konnte ich. Natürlich nicht in Politik und Wirtschaft.

(00:40:35)

Ich würde gern Fragen, ob es für die DDR Journalisten Ethik, oder Verhaltensnormen gab?

Welche entweder aus der Schule kam, oder sich während des Berufes entwickelt haben.

Es gab tatsächlich so etwas, was man positive als Ethik bezeichnen könnte, und dann gab es natürlich, das andere wo man sagt, es wurde etwas als Ethik bezeichnet, was im Grunde aber unethisch war. Eine positive Ethik wurde ich darin sehen, und es war ehrlich, dass man wirklich auf die Grundlagen des Humanismus nicht bloß Wert legte, sondern dass das wirklich ein Pfeiler war, ein Rahmen, ein Haltepunkt. Was meine ich damit? Also sagen wir mal so. Es war schon eine Ethik da, so dass man Menschen über die man geschrieben hat nicht entwürdigt hat. Also beispielsweise, was man jetzt bei der Bild- Zeitung in Deutschland vor allem sieht, dass man hinget, gerade wenn einer Familie ein tiefstes Unglück passiert. Und dann geht der Journalist hin und weidet [alles aus], und quetscht diese Familie noch mal so richtig aus. Oder dass Leute entwürdigt werden in dem sie in bestimmten schwachen Situationen einfach bloß gestellt werden. Das meine ich mit einer Ethik des Humanismus.

Das wäre im Großen und Ganzen im sozialistischen Journalismus, nicht vorgekommen, mit einer Ausnahme, und die ist schon wieder unethisch. Deswegen war sie unehrlich, finde ich. Nämlich wenn du einen hattest der dein Gegner war, oder der, da als dein Feind galt, oder als Opposition, oder ähnliches. Diese Menschen wurden natürlich auch entwürdigt, auch von Journalisten, von meiner Kollegen entwürdigt. Ich hatte damit- Gott sei Dank. wie gesagt nichts damit zu tun weil ich Journalist im Ausland war. Aber ich weiß ich gar nicht ob ich in diesen Situationen, die Kraft aufgebracht hätte, anders zu handeln. Aber natürlich gab es das, dass man die Menschen entwürdigt hat, die nicht die gleichen Ansichten teilten wie man selbst, oder in

dem Falle, wie die Parteiführung. Also Ethik. Es gab eine Ethik, und dann ist da diese Grenze ... mit ethischer Prinzipien. Das sind unsere Gegner. Wir wollen den historischen Sieg davon tragen, dass sind unsere Gegner, also müssen wir sie bekämpfen. Das war auch eine Ethik. Und das meine ich. Das war eine völlig falsche Ethik.

(00:43:14)

Also insofern gab es, tatsächlich [Ethik]. Ich würde das nicht grundsätzlich sagen, dass es ein unethischer Journalismus war. Ich würde sagen es war in einem wesentlichen Teil fehlgeleiteter [Journalismus], aber es hat eine ethische Grundlage gegeben, die ich in meinem Beruf heutzutage manchmal vermisse. Nämlich, dass man die Würde des anderen Menschen respektiert. Was im Übrigen auch ein Verfassungsgrundsatz ist.

(00:43:45)

Also wir kommen noch mal zu dieser Ethik, nach der Wende, aber ich würde gern erst mal fragen, wie sie die Wende erlebt haben?

Das war dann der Sommer 1989 Wir waren gerade wieder da, wir hatten zwei kleine Kinder. Wir hatten uns gerade wieder eingerichtet, als diese Welle der Flucht begann. Über Ungarn. Wir haben damals durchaus überlegt, sozusagen, ob man da mitgehen soll. Und haben uns dann aber wirklich dagegen entschieden, weil wir nicht wussten ... wir hatten keine Verwandtschaft im Westen. Wir hatten niemanden im Westen, und wir werden mit zwei Kindern ... wieder diese Frage der Sicherheit. Freiheit oder Sicherheit. Wir haben uns dann im Augenblick für die Sicherheit entschieden, obwohl es gar nicht so alles sicher war, was dann kam. Meine Frau war eine der ersten, sie ist Kunstkritikerin von Hause aus, heute ist sie in der vor allem in der IT-Branche tätig. Und sie hat... hat gleich zu Anfang mit den Appell des „Neuen

Forums“ unterschrieben. Sie ist dann beinahe rausgeflogen bei der Zeitung *Junge Welt*, das war die Zeitung der Jugend-Verbandes, also es gab riesigen Ärger. Also, dieser Sommer und der Herbst 89, waren unglaublich aufreibend. Auch aufwühlend. Der hat unsere Emotionen ziemlich beansprucht, aber eigentlich von jedem, das ist gar nichts Besonderes. Und wie gesagt am 4. November da waren wir schon eigentlich auf der Seite derer ..., weil wir auch durch meine Frau viele Künstlerfreunde hatten, die hier mit ..., das ist vor allem von Künstlern organisiert worden. Dieser 4. November diese großer Kundgebung, hier unten, auf dem Alex. Und da waren wir schon, also als Zuschauer, als Leute die mit bei dieser Demonstration dabei waren.

Und als, das ist jetzt keine Legende, als die Mauer dann fiel, am 9. November, da hatte ich Spätdienst, ich musste am Abend Schlussdienst in der Redaktion machen, und wir haben da natürlich die Schabowski Pressekonferenz und alles gemacht. Und dann bin nach Hause gekommen, das war kurz vor Mitternacht, und da habe ich meine Frau geweckt, und habe zu ihr gesagt: so jetzt ist es vorbei mit dem Sozialismus. Ich war fest davon überzeugt, dass bei offenen Grenzen der Sozialismus in der DDR keine Chance hat. Das liegt aber wie gesagt daran, dass ich mich damit seit 85 befasst habe. Nicht weil ich so hellseher bin.

Weil es eine lange Periode gab, wo ich vorbereitet wurde, wo ich den Gedanken fassen konnte, und alles Mögliche. Ich war davon in dem Augenblick schon überzeugt, dass das Ende der DDR ist. Und es ist ja dann auch sehr, sehr schnell gegangen.

Es gibt noch heute Leute, die nicht glauben, dass die DDR bankrott war, aber die DDR war bankrott. Nicht bloß politisch, die war ökonomisch bankrott. Ja die Wende habe ich, als eine große emotionale Bewegung erlebt. Großes Auffallen. Hier in eine Nebenstrasse gab es mal eine Losung, die sich noch sehr, sehr viele Jahre gehalten hat. Da hat einer die Losung gesprüht: „Das

Chaos ist aufgebraucht, es war die schönste Zeit“. Es war unglaublich schön chaotisch.

Großartig.

Ich habe danach sehr viele Transformationen in Osteuropa, das ist so mein Spezialgebiet. Ich habe eigentlich in jedem einzelnen Land, dann auch, bis zum Ende des Jugoslawien Krieges, die Transformationen , verfolgt. Und ich muss sagen, immer wieder war es das, was mich dann auch in dem Beruf gehalten hat. Dass man sehen konnte, was sich bewegt und wie es sich bewegt. Das ist das, was mich wirklich interessiert hat, was mich jetzt ein bisschen in Schwierigkeiten bringt. Dass ich Osteuropa Experte bin, und in diesen Ländern bewegt sich im Grunde nichts mehr. Außer in Ungarn. Außer in Ungarn, in Richtung Faschismus.

(00:48:03)

Ich würde gern auch fragen, also sie haben jetzt die Wendezeit in ihrem inneren, persönlichen Leben, beschrieben. Was ist seinerzeit in der Redaktion passiert, oder bei der Zeitung. Was ist innerhalb der Zeitung passiert?

Also ich muss sagen, das ist für mich auch verbunden mit dem Wechsel der Zeitung, in dieser Zeit, war ich beim „Neuen Deutschland“, und ich wollte da auch schon lange weg, und ich habe dann auch die Wende genutzt, um die Redaktion zu wechseln.

Und wann sind Sie gewechselt?

Das war, vom Jahrwechsel 1989 auf 1990, also im Januar 1990 bin ich zur Berliner Zeitung gegangen. Und gerade deswegen, weil sich im *Neuen Deutschland* gar nicht viel bewegte, weil sich nicht viel veränderte, bin ich von dort auch weggegangen. Und hier bei dieser Zeitung, gab es etwas, was für mich unglaublich interessant war. Erstens mal konnte ich bei dieser Zeitung ,ich bin dann auch außenpolitischer Redakteur geworden, konnte ich erstmals

über das Schreiben, was ich in der Sowjetunion unter Gorbatschow gelernt hatte. Also über Reformprozesse, über Transformationen, das konnte ich in Kommentaren schreiben, in Analysen schreiben, über Reisen schreiben, die ich dorthin dann noch gemacht habe.

Aber auch für die Zeitung selbst war es ein Aufbruch. Zum Beispiel in der Wirtschaftsredaktion wurde plötzlich über Korruptionen berichtet. Über die Bereicherung von Gewerkschaftsfunktionären. Oder im Feuilleton wurde darüber berichtet wie sich die, -weil Sie vorhin nach dem Journalisten –Verband fragten-, wie sich die Künstlerverbände ..., welche Diskussionen denn da [geführt wurden]. Kontroversen, Streit, nun konnte wirklich mal über den Streit berichtet werden, und nicht bloß über irgendwas.

Und das war sagen wir mal gilt eigentlich für alle, es hatte nicht nur den Anschein, sondern es war auch tatsächlich so. Der große Teil der Kollegen wollte auch immer berichten, und deswegen konnten sie dann plötzlich berichten. Der Wille war eigentlich vorher auch schon da. Und diese Zeitung, ich bin deswegen, übrigens, auch so lange dabei geblieben, weil sich in diesen 90er Jahren diese Zeitung immer wieder so stark verändert hat.

Weil man immer wieder den Eindruck hatte, man ist plötzlich wieder bei einer neuen Zeitung, weil die Zeitung hat sich in den 90er Jahren immer wieder neu erfunden. Und da verspürt ich auch gar nicht die Notwendigkeit zu sagen: okay jetzt wäre es für meine Karriere besser, wenn ich jetzt mal zu einer anderen Zeitung wechseln würde. Was sich jetzt im Nachhinein, als Fehler herausstellt. Wie mit meiner Karriere ist nichts anzufangen. Karriere im westlichen Sinne habe in Wahrheit nie gemacht. Sondern im Gegenteil, ich habe sogar eine [Möglichkeit] richtig vergeigt. Also richtig in den Sand gesetzt. Richtig gescheitert ist meine Karriere, denn ich war hier in den 90er Jahren, der Ressortleiter für das Ausland. Und dann wurde das zusammengelegt, und wurde ein großes Politikressort, weil man Innenpolitik und

Außenpolitik nicht mehr trennen wollte, und so. Und da war ich so beleidigt, da war ich einfach beleidigt, was man nicht sein darf. Und dann habe ich gesagt, dann will ich auch gar nicht mehr. Und wenn man so etwas sagt, dann kommt ein Chefredakteur und sagt, das ist gut dann bist du jetzt wieder bloß ein Redakteur.

Und das meine ich damit, ich hab meine Karriere völlig vergeigt. Und wenn man das einmal getan hat, dann erzählt das natürlich ein Chefredakteur dem nächsten Chefredakteur, wenn einmal gewechselt wird, und dann kommt man nie wieder zu irgendetwas. Inzwischen habe ich mich damit auch arrangiert, und ich mache Dinge, die ich auch in der DDR gemacht habe, ich mache Dinge, die mir inhaltlich Spaß machen. Ich versuche das zumindest größtenteils.
(00:52:00)

Jetzt preschen wir ein bisschen weiter vor, gab es Debatten und Gesprächen unter den Journalisten?

Aber ja. Es gab zunächst die Debatten unter den DDR-Journalisten, aber ziemlich zeitig dann auch mit Kollegen, die aus dem Westen zur Berliner Zeitung kamen. Aber die Debatten unter den DDR-Journalisten waren dann meistens, wenn man so will Abrechnungen mit den Parteifunktionären der eigenen Zeitung. Und die waren dann ganz schnell auch weg. Plötzlich, ich auch, plötzlich wagte sich jeder, diesen Parteikadern, die Wahrheit ins Gesicht zu sagen. Das waren die ersten Gespräche, die es gab. Also das, dann gab aber auch viele Leute aus der Chefredaktion, die dann eigentlich ziemlich schnell verschwanden. Und dann kamen wie gesagt, eine zweite, -wenn man will- Welle, und das war als die ersten Westkollegen kam, und sie kamen auch schon 1990/1991, weil sie es einfach interessant fanden.

Und dann kam ... das hat es bei uns auch gegeben, und eine davon hat also gewaltigste Karriere überhaupt gemacht ... dann kam Westkollegen, die sozusagen hier im Osten das große Geld verdienen wollten. Und die auch recht schnell kamen, also die *taz*, *die Tageszeitung* hat sehr schlecht bezahlt, die bezahlen heute auch nicht besonders, aber die haben damals richtig schlecht bezahlt. Und diese neuen Kollegen aus dem Westen, von denen ich jetzt spreche ,die kamen mit einer ganz komplizierten Konstruktion. Die waren nämlich angestellt im Westen, und wurden nach Westtarifen bezahlt. Ich habe damals so etwa 1600 oder 1800 DM verdient, und die haben das Dreifache davon verdient. Machten dieselbe Arbeit, also da hatten wir in den Redaktionen, Leute die nach dem Westtarif verdient haben und nach dem Osttarif, das hatten wir bis 1995. Und bei Leuten, die die gleiche Arbeit gemacht haben.

Die Diskussionen gab es auch mit diesen Kollegen, dass die sich dann hinsetzten, und vor allem erzählten, wie Sie jetzt machen, aber das ist okay. "Aber dann erzählt uns dann doch mal eure Biografie." Das hatte so was Paternalistisches oder Therapeutenhaftes, als hätten wir von diesem Bruch, diesem Sozialismus therapiert werden müssen. Die hat es auch lange gegeben, diese Diskussionen also bis weit in den 90er Jahre hinein, aber das ist lange vorbei. Dann sind wir lange, als ein Projekt [bezeichnet worden], weil es gibt sonst keine Zeitung in Deutschland, die eine so gemischte Redaktion hatte, aus Ostkollegen und Westkollegen, dann wurde lange Zeit gesagt, „Das Projekt der *Berliner Zeitung*,“ weil es Ost und West war. Wir sind kein Projekt, wir sind ein kommerzielles Unternehmen. Wir sind keine Therapiegruppe oder weiß der Teufel was. Wir müssen Geld verdienen. Und da habe ich mich immer dagegen gesteuert, gegen das „Projekt *Berliner Zeitung*.“

(00:55:06)

Also es hat große Diskussionen gegeben, ja

Haben Institutionen, wie zum Beispiel der Runde Tisch, Westdeutsche Zeitungen und Verlage, oder Zeitungen selbst einen bedeutenden Einfluss auf die Gestaltung der Medienlandschaft genommen?

Der Runde Tisch gar nicht. Wir hatten nach der Wende, eine ganze Reihe von sehr ,sehr interessanten, zum Teil sehr, sehr interessanten, kleinen Zeitungen, die von der Bürgerrechtsbewegung dann gestartet wurden. Die waren wie gesagt als kommerzielle Unternehmen völlig überfordert, die hat gar nicht lange gegeben. Für die *Berliner Zeitung* ist es charakteristisch, dass sie sehr schnell verkauft worden ist. Aus dem Parteivermögen der SED, und zwar an einen Verleger in Großbritannien ,Robert Maxwell, und Maxwell hatte überhaupt keine Ahnung von der deutscher Zeitungslandschaft und hat sich als Teilhaber den Verlag Gruner und Jahr aus Hamburg mit hereingeholt. Und wir waren dann bis 19 ... nee bis 2001 sogar Teil des Verlages Gruner und Jahr, und seitdem wechseln wir alle drei Jahre sozusagen unseren Eigentümer.

Und insofern natürlich hat Gruner und Jahr massiven Einfluss genommen, ... Zunächst mal in einem technischen Sinne, also sie haben ein westliches Vertriebssystem aufgebaut, sie haben westlichen Lehrorten, diese ganzen Geschichten aufgebaut. Das ist ganz klar, aber sie haben nie Einfluss genommen in dem Sinne, in dem sie gesagt hätten, wir geben politische Linien vor. Das war tatsächlich so, dass da Chefredakteure sehr großen Einfluss hatten, und ist heute nicht mehr so. Wir hatten nur einen Chefredakteur, der erklärte, dass er der SPD sehr nahe steht und der hat Kraft seines Amtes als Chefredakteur, nicht als Verleger, sondern als Chefredakteur, eine sehr SPD nahe Zeitung aus uns geformt, und das war natürlich auch verbunden mit großem Streit und war auch sehr schädlich für die Zeitung, kommerziell schädlich. Der war auch bloß 2 Jahre da, und dann wurde gesagt er fügt dieser Zeitung so viel

Schaden zu, dass man sie so in diese SPD drängt, das machen wir nicht. Und wir holen uns lieber einen neuen Chefredakteur.

Also insofern inhaltlich haben diese Verlage keinerlei Einfluss genommen. Aber sie haben natürlich unternehmerisch-marktwirtschaftlich Einfluss genommen, sie haben diese Zeitung natürlich auf die Marktwirtschaft ausgerichtet auf jeden Fall.

(00:57:57)

Durch die Wende mussten Sie ihren Beruf neu erlernen?

Ja und nein. Also sagen wir mal, die Methodik gar nicht, aber für mich auch für viele anderen Kollegen weiß ich es ... natürlich hab ich angefangen Autoren, Dinge zu lesen, politische Autoren wie auch Belletristik zu lesen, die ich vorher ... ich hab unglaublich viel lernen müssen nach der Wende. Ich lerne auch jetzt noch immer dazu. Habe ... ja, natürlich lernen, muss ich täglich, muss ich noch heute, jetzt noch, immer neu lernen in dem Sinne, dass ich nicht sagen kann, jetzt mache ich das seit 30 Jahren, mir kann keiner mehr was Erzählen. Jeden Tag entdecke ich Dinge, die ich interessant finde, und die für mich neu sind, das ist eigentlich das schönste an dem Beruf.

Und wie lernen sie das, lernen sie das von ihren Kollegen oder beim Lesen ...?

Alles, ich lerne sehr viel von Kollegen, ganz deutlich. Ich lerne auch im Negativen. Ich sehe auch viele Kollegen, wo ich sage, um Gott es willen, dass darf man nicht machen. Und das fällt mir eben auf, vielleicht mache ich das ja selbst auch. Und ich lerne aber auch im Positiven von Menschen, von Journalistenkollegen die mich sehr beeindruckten, mit bestimmten Dingen. Und ich lerne auch so, ich bin wirklich so ein Mensch, ein extremer Büchermensch. Ich lerne sehr, sehr viel aus Büchern.

Und das war auch zur Wendezeit so?

Ja.

Welche Bücher waren sehr ...?

Wenn Sie sehen könnten, was ich zu Hause alles stehen habe, es sind alleine zwei Räume voll mit Büchern. Welche Bücher das waren? Nein das kann ich jetzt nicht im Einzelnen sagen. Das funktioniert nicht.

Okay dann machen wir weiter ... Was sind, ihre Meinung nach, die größten Veränderungen des Journalismus als Beruf seit der Wende.

Also zum einen, ist es natürlich politisch tatsächlich völlig anders geworden, es gibt tatsächlich die Freiheit des Wortes, sie ist nicht abstrakt. Sie ist sehr konkret für mich. Und darüber bin ich sehr froh. Das ist eine Befreiung für mich. Das kann man gar nicht anders sagen. Und da spielt es auch keine Rolle, dass ich über bestimmte Themen auch jetzt noch nicht schreiben kann. Aber ich kann sehen, dass die Begründungen dafür ganz andere sind. Wenn mein Chefredakteur sagt, es lässt sich nicht verkaufen, damit kriegen wir keine ... jetzt ganz neu sind wie viele Klicks [wir haben]. Alle Klicks spielen natürlich eine immer größere Rolle. Und wenn man sich das anschaut, müsste man natürlich als seriöser Journalist schon ein bisschen verzweifeln, was die Leute wirklich interessiert. Gut, okay.

Im Grunde kann ich trotzdem dabei bleiben. Ich kann alles schreiben was ich will, und wie ich es will, und ich habe natürlich meine Ethik und meine Verantwortung dabei. Und ich glaube auch, dass ich in einem System [lebe], das ich vertreten kann. Also das ist nicht anarchisch oder weltfremd oder Spinnerei, oder ich bin nicht so exzentrisch, dass ich glaube, alles was ich denke muss auch alle anderen wissen.

Ja, das ist das eine, muss ich sagen. Die größte Herausforderung, ist im Augenblick allerdings eine völlig andere. Die größte Herausforderung die ich sehe, die hat mit Ost und West gar nicht zu tun, die hat damit zu tun, dass die Periode von Print zu Ende geht. Es gibt manche die sagen Print ist schon tot, vor allem sind das die Jüngeren. Meine Kinder zum Beispiel sagen dass, Print schon lange tot ist, was du da machst, ist nur noch das Begräbnis.

Ich bin auch der Überzeugung, dass wir nicht erklären können, warum es eine Zeitung geben muss, die auf Papier gedruckt ist. Und das ist das, was ich jetzt neu lernen muss. Dieses ... und ich bin glücklicherweise noch nicht so jemand, der sagt, das will ich nicht. Ich habe jetzt meine Probleme mit dem Computer und im Gegenteil. Und ich habe ja schon erzählt meine Frau hat mit über 50 Programmieren gelernt, und was sie jetzt macht ist etwas, das den Journalismus wie wir ihn kennen überflüssig macht. Sie macht was man in Kalifornien sehr viel macht, nämlich computergestützte Texte schreiben. Sie entwickelt Computerprogramme, die Nachrichten schreiben.

Und für kurze Nachrichten, wo man einen festen Algorithmus hat, wo man einen Satz einfach grammatikalisch richtig aufbauen muss mit ein paar Worten ... es gar nicht kompliziert werden muss. Das wird ganz schnell gehen. Die kurzen Nachrichten werden in den nächsten drei, vier, fünf Jahren ganz schnell von Computern geschrieben werden. Sportnachrichten zum Beispiel. Wenn eine Fußball- Mannschaft gegen eine andere gewonnen hat. Da muss es kein Mensch aufschreiben, das kann ein Computer genauso gut. Der kann schreiben, wie das Ergebnis war, der kann schreiben, wer die Tore geschossen hat, und dann hat man schon eine fertige Kurznachricht, Aber das sind nur die einfachsten Sachen. Gut, das ist ein ganz anderes Feld.

Aber ich bin fest davon überzeugt, das ist auch eine interessante amerikanische Theorie, die davon ausgeht, dass wir uns viel zu sehr auf Zielgruppen und auf solche Sachen orientieren.

Sondern der sagt, wir müssen uns doch mal Gedanken machen, welchen Job eine Zeitung machen muss. Da stellen sich bei uns schon die Haare auf, weil wir immer denken, wir haben einen Bildungsauftrag, und wenn wir hören eine Zeitung muss einen Job machen, dann glauben wir uns schon unterfordert.

Aber was gemeint ist, ist Folgendes: Warum hat sich das Radio in den Zeiten des Fernsehens überlebt? Weil es eine Aufgabe hat, die das Fernsehen nicht erfüllen kann. Beispielsweise kann man zwar in der Küche einen Fernseher haben, viele haben das, oder im Bad möglicherweise auch. Aber es ist ja viel besser, wenn man früh beim Rasieren eben nur etwas auf die Ohren hat, und nicht gucken muss. Also ist das Radio am Morgen im Bad oder beim Frühstück oder im Auto, dem Fernseher überlegen und das ist dann der Job, den das Radio macht. Und dann kann auch nur das Radio machen, denn der Fernseher und die Zeitung können das nicht. Mann kann nicht gleichzeitig Zeitung lesen und Auto fahren, und auch nicht fernsehen, hinten ja, aber vorne nicht.

So, und was ist jetzt der Job, den nur die Zeitung machen kann? Wir haben keine Antwort darauf. Wir haben keine Antwort, dann sagen viele: Ja, aber ich habe die Zeitung gerne in der Hand. Ein haptisches Argument. Das ist aber sehr schwach, finde ich. Was passiert denn, wenn ich die Zeitung nicht mehr in der Hand habe? Es passiert gar nichts. Es ist kein Job, den die Zeitung macht. Was erfahre ich nur aus einer Zeitung und kann das Fernsehen oder Radio ... Das ist das Schlimme jetzt. Was kann mir das Bild nicht zeigen?. Natürlich können ältere Leute ich will aber nicht auf dem Bildschirm meine Nachrichten lesen, weil ich es gerne in der Hand habe. Okay, es ist ein Gefühl. Aber was beim Internet jetzt auftritt ist, dass man wirklich die Kombination haben kann. Von Schrift, von Audio- Files, von Video- Files, man kann alles

zusammenhaben. Und die Verlinkungen dieser ganzen Geschichten, die Zeitungen können nichts verlinken. Wie denn?

So, und deswegen bin ich fest davon überzeugt, es wird ein Überleben der Zeitung geben wie es im Grunde auch ein Überleben der Schallplatten gegeben hat. Die Freaks, die kaufen sich noch eine richtige Vinyl -Schallplatte, die wollen dann noch das Knacken und Knistern hören. Und diese Freaks werden sich auch in Deutschland die *Zeit* kaufen, oder die *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Und dann gibt es wieder die ganz anderen. Die sagen, okay ich will mir nicht mehr ... ich kann mir nicht mehr die Flat-Rate leisten, ich will mir sie dann gar nicht leisten. Und die kriegen dann eine kostenlose Zeitung. Die nur in den Briefkasten gesteckt werden. Und diese beide Segmente werden auf Papier glaube ich, überleben. Das was nichts kostet und das was viel kostet. Und dazwischen wird alles tot sein.

New Orleans ist eine Stadt die hat keine Zeitung, ja. Wenn New Orleans eine Zeitung bräuchte, würde es eine geben. Es braucht sie nicht.

(01:06:27)

Ich würde gern ein bisschen zurückgehen. Sie haben Ihre Ethik erwähnt, und ich würde gern wissen, wie sich ihre Ethik nach der Wende entwickelt hat. Und mit was für einer journalistischen Ethik arbeiten sie jetzt?

Also ich habe in der DDR- Zeit Kompromisse gemacht, die ich heute nicht mehr machen würde. Also beispielsweise, man hat es damals mit dem Begriff der „Schere im Kopf“ gefasst. Dass man sagt, ich weiß sowieso das druckt kein Mensch, also schreibe ich es, erst gar nicht. Das würde ich heute nicht mehr machen. Da würde ich heute sagen, das war damals unethisch. Ich habe damals unethisch gehandelt. Heute würde ich sagen, wenn ich von einer Geschichte

überzeugt bin, wenn ich davon überzeugt bin, dass ich meine Meinung artikulieren muss in einem Kommentar, dann würde ich das tun. Und dann versuche ich das auch durchzusetzen. Und dann gibt es immer noch Leute, die dagegen argumentieren. Es ist alles gut.

Also beispielsweise, wir haben jetzt in der Zeitung eine Diskussion, die wir schon vor einigen Jahren einmal hatten. Die Mauer in der Mühlenstrasse. Da gibt dieser Zeitung, die weitverbreitete Meinung wir müssten sie als ein Erinnerungsdenkmal erhalten . Ich hab vor einigen Jahren,- ich hab mich jetzt nicht an dieser Diskussion weiter beteiligt-, ich habe aber vor einigen Jahren, das kann man noch im Archiv finden, mal geschrieben: „Die Mauer muss weg“. Diese Mauer ..., und ich bin fest davon überzeugt. Ich finde diese Diskussion im Augenblick bloß so lächerlich, sie disqualifiziert sich selber. Ich schreibe da im Augenblick erst mal nichts drüber. Aber wenn David Hasselhoff kommt, und für die Mauer dort kämpft, dann muss ich sagen, dann stimmt was nicht. Dann sollten sie diese Mauer nehmen, sollten mit dieser Mauer in die Simon- Dach Straße gehen, vor diese ganzen Kneipen, sollten die Mauerstücke dort aufstellen, dann kann jeder Trinker, der sich mit einem Stuck Mauer fotografieren lassen möchte, gleich vor seiner Kneipe damit fotografieren lassen. Aber diese ganze Diskussion, dass das eine historische Geschichte ist und so. Das ... keine Sekunde. Da finde ich die Bernauer Straße viel wichtiger.

(01:08:40)

Finden Sie, dass jetzt, in ihrem Nach-Wende Berufsalltag, dass Elemente aus ihrer damaligen Ausbildung für Sie nützlich sind? Sind sie hilfreich?

Ja, das hab ich, glaube ich schon gesagt. Selbst die Elemente, die ich heute verwerfe, die ich heute negative finde, selbst diese Elemente sind in so eine Art negativen Dialektik nutzbar. Weil ich weiß, dass es nicht geht.

Und was ist, ihrer Meinung nach jetzt, die Rolle des Journalismus in Deutschland?

[Lacht]

Wir haben davon gesprochen, was seine Rolle in der DDR war ...

Ja, Okay. Ich glaube wir müssen in einer Zeit, in der es so einen Überschuss an Informationen gibt, die Information sorgfältig und professionell zu sortieren. Um den Menschen, doch auch eine gewisse Orientierung zu geben. Aber wir haben schon einen Bildungsauftrag, ja.

Wir müssen das Chaos der Informationen ordnen.

Und was war der Einfluss der Wende auf Ihr berufliches Selbstbild?

Ja, das ist wie gesagt ..., in vielen Einzelheiten, habe ich es auch schon angedeutet. Im Grunde war die Befreiung, eine Befreiung von ... es ging, plötzlich ging das, Dinge gingen ... Ich bin Journalist geworden, um Geschichten zu erzählen, und es ging natürlich nach der Wende viel viel besser, nach der Wende viel besser. Es wurden Fesseln weggenommen. Ganz kurz.

Und sehen Sie einen Unterschied zwischen sich selbst und ihren westdeutschen Kollegen?

Ja, schon.

Und was für einen Unterschied sehen Sie?

Ja, es sind viele Unterschiede. Also sie liegen gar nicht so sehr im Handwerk, sondern sie sind tatsächlich durch die Sozialisierung bedingt. Und wie soll ich sagen, das ist jetzt schwierig.

Nein die, ich sehe große Unterschiede in der Herangehensweise. Ich sehe diese Unterschiede, bis in die kleinsten Einzelheiten. Also die, die Weltsichten, die Sicht auf unsere Umgebung, die sind zwischen Westkollegen und Ostkollegen immer grundverschieden. Also eine stellvertretende Chefredakteurin, die auf außenpolitischem Gebiet immer sehr starken Einfluss nimmt. Sie hat natürlich ..., sie ist mit einem Engländer verheiratet und hat eine große Affinität zu den Vereinigten Staaten. Und das prägt ihre Auswahl der Nachrichten, und dessen was wichtig ist ungemain.

Also aus meiner Perspektive, nehmen wir die letzten Wahlen in Amerika. Obama hat wieder gewonnen, alles ganz wichtig. Muss man eine ganze Menge, auch in der *Berliner Zeitung*. Aber diese Kollegin hat auch die Macht dazu, weil sie stellvertretende Chefredakteurin ist. Sie hat gesagt wir machen im politischen Teil sechs Seiten damit. Ich, mit meiner östlichen Perspektive, auch ein bisschen indisch geprägt aus meiner Perspektive sage ich, das kann doch wohl gar nicht wahr sein. Das ist ein solcher, nicht nur Eurozentrismus, sondern auch Westzentrismus, und diese Welt ist nicht mehr so westlich zentriert. Ich hätte nie im Leben sechs Seiten damit gemacht. Mich interessiert nicht wie bestimmte einzelne amerikanische Swing-States sich am Ende entschieden haben. Das interessiert mich als Graphik nicht. In manchen dieser Bundesstaaten, komme ich im Leben nie. Aber das musste alles herein, weil sie nicht in der Lage war zu entscheiden was ist wichtig an diesen Wahlen ist und was nicht wichtig ist. Und da, unterscheiden wir uns, ich bringe das nur als Beispiel.

Es gibt soziale Themen, die ganz anders wahrgenommen werden. Also die Renten-Thematik sieht ein Westkollege sicherlich vergleichsweise anders als ein Ostkollege. Was schon alleine daran liegt, dass in der DDR Frauen und Männer im gleichen Maße berufstätig waren. Im Westen aber immer noch, bis in die jüngste Vergangenheit hinein, viele Frauen eine ganz

anderen Biografie haben. Und jetzt kommt plötzlich die Renten -Diskussion hoch. Im Osten sind die Renten höher als im Westen, wie kann das sein? Viele Männer und Frauen haben nämlich parallel gearbeitet haben, und haben jetzt gemeinsam einer höheren Rente haben als der Papi, der da im Westen gearbeitet hat und die Mutti, die nicht gearbeitet hat.

Was sind noch andere Themen, die wir unterschiedlich sehen? Bildung, bei Bildung bei Ausbildung, als es dann diese ganzen Diskussionen gab über die Studiengebühren. Das gibt es viele Westkollegen, die sagen, ja also mit den Studiengebühren, da hält man sicher dann auch die von dem Studium fern, die eben so nicht so mitziehen wollen. Sondern sie müssen es ja erst mal finanzieren. Und die vielen, die sich einfach nur durch schleichen ... im Osten war Bildung immer kostenlos. Egal welche Art von Bildung.

Ja diese Fragen werden immer noch sehr, sehr unterschiedlich gesehen. Es ist übrigens auch nicht so, dass das dann mit meiner Generation zu Ende ist. Also, mein großes Kind war sechs Jahre alt, als die Wende kam, und er ist jetzt wie gesagt Lehrer. Und er hat Lehramt in Potsdam studiert und ist jetzt Lehrer in Berlin- Steglitz, West- Berlin. Ein Riesenunterschied, ein Riesenunterschied.

Mit dem Blick auf bestimmte ... oder meine Frau, meine Frau ist aus einem kleinen Dorf. Bei Meissen, das ist in Sachsen in der Nahe von Dresden. Ihre Eltern sind beide überhaupt nicht intellektuell. Meine Schwiegermutter hat in der Landwirtschaft gearbeitet, und mein Schwiegervater ist Schlosser, Schlossermeister. Sie hat in der DDR ganz selbstverständlich studiert, und ihren Weg gemacht und alles Mögliche. Das würde, bin ich fest davon überzeugt, heute so nicht mehr stattfinden. Weil das soziale Umfeld gar nicht dazu geeignet ist, ein Kind auf die Universität zuschicken. Sondern, da bleibt man im Dorf wieder, selbst im Osten. So klein ist

das Dorf... aber das ist wie gesagt, es gibt tausende [Beispiele]. Diese Einheit, die innere Einheit die gibt es noch lange nicht.

Und im Handwerk?

Im Handwerk gar nicht. Nein, das ist nur mit dem Blickwinkel, unser Blick auf das Thema ist ein anderer.

Also wir machen jetzt Schluss. Ich wollte fragen ob Sie irgendwas dazu sagen wollen. Ich habe viele Fragen gestellt, wollen Sie etwas was ergänzen?

Nein, ich hab keine Botschaft, wenn sie etwas wissen möchten, dann fragen Sie, aber ich muss hier keine Botschaften transportieren.

Wenn Sie zurückschauen, welchen Einfluss hatte die Wende auf ihre Karriere?

Also erst mal ging es hoch hinaus, und dann habe ich es vergeigt.

Nein, nein, ich kann darüber inzwischen schon lachen, obwohl mir auch manches leichter fallen würde, wenn ich eine gewisse Macht hätte. Wenn ich Ressortleiter wäre, könnte ich natürlich bestimmte Vorstellungen viel leichter durchsetzen, das ist for sure aber, das ist inzwischen ... Inzwischen ist mit diesen anderen Problemen, wie lange werden wir noch eine Printzeitung machen? Das, ist die große Frage, die über allem anderen steht. Bei mir.. also mit Karriere und so. Karriere ist gar nicht mein Thema. Ich mache, was mir in diesem Beruf Spaß macht. Und ich hoffe, dass ich es so lange machen kann, bis ich meine Rente bekomme.

Appendix 5: Torsten H.

I met with Torsten H. on March 22, 2013 after he got off work. We decided to meet in a relatively quiet café in the Prenzlauer Berg neighborhood of Berlin.⁵⁸ After ordering tea and coffee we found a spot where we could speak relatively undisturbed. When I posed my first question, Torsten closed his eyes and began to recount his life story. His answers were candid, detailed, and extensive. I only needed to pose a few questions, and Torsten spend the next three plus hours recounting his experiences living and working in East Germany and the life that followed the GDR's collapse. His answers were emotional, heartfelt and candid, and our interview lasted over two and a half hours. After our interview, he asked if he could be referred to by his first name and last initial.

(00:02:03)

Dann können wir anfangen. Ich würde gern erst mal hören über Ihren familiäre Hintergrund. Wo sie geboren worden sind usw.

Ja, ich bin am 8. Dezember 1961 geboren. In Berlin, Köpenick. ... Das ist im Südosten. Ja, Familie. Hintergrund weiter ... Meine Eltern waren Lehrer, studierte Lehrer. Meine Mutter hat als Grundschullehrerin gearbeitet, das hieß in der DDR „Unterstufe“, bis zu 4. Klasse. Mein Vater ist relativ schnell in den Staatsdienst gekommen, im Ministerium für Volksbildung hat er gearbeitet als Inspektor für Schulen.

⁵⁸ We could not meet at my apartment due to the fact that I had a young infant and paper thin walls, and his apartment was further away on the outskirts of Berlin.

Und haben Sie Geschwister?

Ich habe nur eine Halbschwester, die aber nicht bei uns wohnte, in Sachsen. Das war aus seiner ersten Ehe. ...

Wie war für Sie das Aufwachsen in der DDR, als Kind?

[Kurze Unterbrechung]

(00:04:01)

Ja das ist eine sehr globale Frage, nicht? Die gar nicht so einfach zu beantworten ist. Als Kind bin ich eigentlich wie jedes andere Kind (aufgewachsen), mit allen, was man so als Kind hat: draußen spielen, Freunde, Ferien, Urlaubsreisen, Sommer, ganz tolle Erlebnisse. Also eine richtige normale Kindheit gehabt. Dieses, worauf Sie sicher so ein bisschen zielen, dieses Politische, dieses Eingebunden-Sein in diese Gesellschaft, na, in dem man aufgewachsen ist. Dies geschah natürlich als Form des Hineinwachsens, und dazu gehörte natürlich auch die Art und Weise, der familiäre Hintergrund. Also wenn Leute relativ schnell, wenn Leute in Familien aufwachsen, die in großer Entfernung zum Staatszentrum (leben), ist das was anderes, als wenn man von vornherein so eingebettet ist.

Und das war bei mir so, mein Großvater war Kommunist in den 30er-Jahren. Ist dann seine Mitgliedschaft eingeschlafen, er ist auch nie verhaftet worden und so. Und ist, nachdem er im Krieg war, und in der Gefangenschaft in Russland - er war an der Ostfront - ist er wieder zurückgekommen und hat sich dann relativ schnell dieser neuen Macht zu Verfügung gestellt, weil er das Gefühl hatte: Das ist der richtige Weg. Ist wahrscheinlich auch im Lager ein bisschen gedreht worden, was weiß ich. Und ist dann zum Schluss, ist dann auch in der Stadtregierung Berlins - also Magistrat - ist er Personalchef am Ende gewesen. Und mein Onkel, der Bruder

meines Vaters, ist Offizier, war zum Schluss Chef des Artillerieregiments der Grenztruppen hier in Berlin. Also das ist eine Familie, die relativ staatsreu war, und überzeugt vor allem. Also jetzt nicht so aus Karrieregründen – weil, das hat man den jungen Leuten zwar gesagt: Hier könnt hier schnell was werden, aber eher so aus dem, wir brauchen euch. Dieses „Wir brauchen Euch“. ...

Erzähle ich zu viel?

Nein, das ist wirklich schön.

(00:06:27)

Erzählen Sie ruhig weiter.

Also, man muss sehen: Das sind ja Kriegskinder gewesen. Meine Mutter war sieben. Sie musste zu Hause weg. Sie kommt aus dem heutigen Polen, ungefähr zwanzig Kilometer östlich der Oder lebte sie in einem Ort. Sie sind, als die Russen kamen, erst hinter die Front verlegt worden, weil die Russen ihre Offensive auf Berlin vorbereiteten. Dann haben sie schon einige Wochen in irgendwelchen ... auf der Straße mehr oder weniger, in Erdhöhlen in Wäldern verbracht, und meine Mutter war sieben Jahre alt. Und dann sind die kurz in ihrem Ort zurück, der hieß Drossen im Sternberger Land.

Und der Vater ist auch nicht aus dem Krieg zurückgekommen, also die wussten also nicht, wo er ist, überhaupt. Und die waren allein, mit ihren schwerkranken Mutter. Vier Kinder, die Älteste war 11 Jahre. So und dann ist sie, sind sie noch mal kurz zurück und dann mussten sie, im Sommer mussten sie gehen. Weil das ja polnisch wurde. Das hatten die Alliierten festgelegt, glaube in der Potsdamer Konferenz, das ist polnisch das Gebiet. So, und die hatten aber nichts, nicht mal einen Handwagen, also nur eine Art Puppenwagen. Ihre Mutter irgendwie

auf einen Pferdewagen gesetzt, zwischen andere Leute, und dann waren sie nur so lange unterwegs, bis sie in Berlin waren, mit nichts.

Also diese Erfahrung haben sie, und dann kommt nun jemand und sagt: Wir bauen einen neuen Staat, da wird mit der ganzen Nazibarbarei aufgeräumt, und die Zukunft ist hell und freundlich. Alles, was die FDJ und die Partei und was weiß ich, es sind ja alles Zukunftslieder, was die da gesungen haben. Und da kann man junge Leute einfangen, und die waren halt wirklich sehr überzeugt, und die haben mich damit ziemlich beeinflusst. Und ich war, hatte auch immer bei den Pionieren, in der FDJ - ich hatte immer Funktionen, und auch immer so Funktionen, die ins Ideologische gingen.

Nun muss man noch eins dazu wissen: Dieser Begriff Kommunist ist, er wird im Westen oft missverstanden. Wir haben nie geglaubt, dass der Kommunismus existierte oder herrscht. Sondern der Kommunismus war einerseits eine Bewegung, die sozusagen von Marx begründet wurde, aber auch auf Ur-Sehnsüchten der Menschheit, eine endgültige Befreiung also, das war eine endgültige Befreiungsidee. So, und es war so eine Art Zukunftsziel. Irgendwann werden wir den Kommunismus aufbauen. Aber das war eine Gesellschaft, die, wie wir auch wussten und immer gelernt haben in der Schule, gar nicht zu unseren Lebzeiten wahrscheinlich ... denn dazu müssen die Leute so reif sein, dass sie tatsächlich, wenn es unendlich viel (gibt), sich dann auch aber nur das nehmen, was sie brauchen. Das war so also irgendwas, auch was von der Moral her. Und der Sozialismus, der da aufgebaut wurde, war was mit Makeln Behaftetes, was Halbbares, was nur noch besser werden kann. Also muss man wissen, vor dem Hintergrund, warum man sich fragt: Warum haben die Leute bis zum Schluss dran gehalten?

So, dann das zweite ist die Ideologie, hatte eine wahnsinnig große Rolle eingenommen. Und die hat doch vieles überdeckt, was in der Realität unbefriedigend war. Sicher gab es

bestimmte Sachen nicht einzukaufen. Also die Ideologie bestand aus zwei Dingen: eine nach Westen gerichtet, und das war aber auch ideologisch begründet. Weil die kommunistische Ideologie ist so, ganz kurz ... Die Geschichte besteht aus Klassenkämpfen, in der Antike gab es Sklavenhalter ... und diese ganze Geschichte. Und der Grundkampf der Epoche ist der Kampf zwischen der Arbeiterklasse und den Kapitalisten. Da die Kapitalisten im Westen herrschen und die Produktionsmittel besitzen, verbindet die mit uns überhaupt nichts. Denn im Osten, also in der DDR, oder in der Sowjetunion, besitzt die Arbeiterklasse die Produktionsmittel, da fängt man schon wieder an zu diskutieren....

Es gab immer Zweifel und Aber, dass, wer ist denn jetzt die Arbeiterklasse? Wer besitzt denn wirklich die Produktionsmittel? Hat jeder irgendeinen Anteil oder besitzt es der Staat? Der Staat als Vertreter. So, also im Grunde Staatskapitalismus, oder Staatssozialismus, wie man das immer nennt.

Aber, dann kam immer die Eigentumsfrage. Der Kern ist nie eine Frage des Staatsaufbaus. Wenn man nämlich Diktatur und Demokratie als Begriffe nimmt, wie es heute gemacht wird, kommt man ganz schnell auf das Ergebnis: Diktatur ist böse, und Demokratie gut. Ja aber das Diktatur-Verständnis, was sozusagen in unser Ideologie herrschte, war folgendes: die Diktatur des Proletariats, ausgedrückt: die Partei, ist ja tausendmal demokratischer, weil sie ja die Interessen der Masse vertritt, so. Und drüben wird stundenlang geredet im Parlament, in einer Parteiendemokratie, aber in Wirklichkeit besitzen die Herrschenden die Produktionsmittel, und damit bestimmen sie, was da abläuft hinter den Kulissen.

So und das habe ich halt lange auch mitgetragen und auch aktiv, und ich wollte erst andere Sachen werden, also auf der Künstlerebene usw. ... Und zum Journalismus bin ich relativ zufällig gekommen, weil ich nie dachte, dass ich so was werden kann. Also ich war in der

Schule, wie viele Jungs, bis zur achten Klasse gar nicht so wahnsinnig gut, und hatte erst dann in der neunten Klasse, zehnten, so einen Sprung. Also ich kam ja gar nicht auf das Gymnasium, sondern hab dann erst später Beruf und Abitur zusammen gemacht. Und dann war der Weg auch frei zum Journalismus. Also sie wollten mich eigentlich. Die haben ... ich bin von Betrieb zum Betrieb, wollte eine Lehrstelle fürs Abitur haben, und dann hat mich der Betrieb, wo ich jetzt bin immer noch, der Berliner Verlag, im Grunde halt überzeugt, Journalist zu werden. Also nach den Zeugnissen geguckt, nach der Einschätzung, haben gesehen, dass ich gesellschaftlich immer irgendwie aktiv war, dass ich Geschichte, Sprache und so überall Einsen hatte. Und dann haben die gesagt, warum will er denn Maler werden? Also Künstler, warum will er denn nicht Journalist werden? Und dann bin ich sozusagen, von dem Betrieb delegiert worden zu dieser Berufsausbildung mit Abitur, um dann später Journalistik zu studieren, für den Berliner Verlag, und die hatten schon mit der Berliner Zeitung auch schon so ausgeguckt. Das war ja alles so in der DDR gelenkt. Die haben ja genau so viele Journalisten ausgebildet wie man brauchte.

Und das war alles durch das Karl Marx Universität?

(00:13:29)

Ja, das war auch ein geschützter Beruf, der eine Diplomausbildung verlangte. Es gab zwar auch eine Fachschule, irgendwie in Schönweide, aber das war eher für die Betriebszeitungsredakteure, für irgendwelche, nicht für die echten für die großen Zeitungen. Und das habe ich dann auch gemacht. Ich hatte, nachdem ich mein Abitur hatte, habe ich noch Armee gemacht. Das war natürlich auch mal wieder so ein, „Wir lassen dich studieren, du wirst bei uns was, du musst uns auch was geben, drei Jahre waren da.“ Das war auch mein Vater gegenüber, also ich hätte nie sagen können, ich mach da nur ein und ein halbes Jahr. Mein Vater ist einer der

Ersten gewesen, die freiwillig in die Nationale Volksarmee gingen, 1956 wurde die gegründet, die Bundeswehr wurde 1955 gegründet. Darauf hat die DDR auch eine reguläre Armee gegründet, vorher gab es die Kasernierte Volkspolizei, hieß das. Und mein Vater hat studiert Lehrer in Dresden, und weil der, der hat Kultur gemacht, Pantomime und was weiß ich, aber er war eben auch FDJ-Sekretär, hat immer alles Mögliche gemacht. Kunst, Kultur und Politik so alles, aktiv überall in allem. Und dann haben die gesagt: „Wir haben keinen FDJ-Sekretär für die nächsten zwei Jahre, wollen Sie denn nicht noch dableiben?“ Aber er wollte eigentlich nicht, er wollte Lehrer sein. Und sie haben dann mit mehr Druck, und also wie ... mit, wie es immer so lief: „Wir haben keinen anderen, und du bist der Einzige, der es kann.“ Und er hat sich recht schnell überzeugen lassen. Er hat dann zwei Jahre den hauptamtlichen FDJ-Sekretär dort gemacht, in seiner Hochschule in Dresden, in seiner Lehrerhochschule, und das war genau die Zeit, wo die Soldaten werben mussten, für die Armee. Und die haben unter den Studenten beworben. Und was macht jemand, der FDJ-Sekretär ist und andere Leuten wirbt? Der geht mit als Erster, ist doch klar. Es ist so: Du hast nicht nur die anderen da hingeschickt, sondern du bist vorangegangen.

Das war so im Grundprinzip: Ein echter Kommunist geht immer voran. Vor den anderen. Der stürzt sich als Erster in die Flut, wenn irgendwie die Baumstämme wegschwimmen, rettet sie. Also dieses Gefühl, natürlich gab's auch Karrieristen und Leute, die auf ihre Bequemlichkeiten und [unklar] schauten, also natürlich gab's die auch. Aber die waren oft dann nicht diese Gläubigen, und aus meiner Familie kamen eben Gläubige. Und meine Patentante, die hat ja 8 Jahre im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück gesessen, und mein Patenonkel 8 Jahre in Sachsenhausen, und die haben Militärsplionage gemacht für die Sowjetunion. Und waren beinah zum Tode verurteilt worden, und das waren aber Freunde meine Eltern, die die über die Arbeit

und über die Schule kennengelernt haben. Immer mit solchen Leuten war ich halt umgeben. Ich war mit Leuten umgeben, die irgendwie wegen der Nazis im KZ saßen, oder die... also das waren so Leute, mit denen ich ständig in der Bekanntschaft und Verwandtschaft zu tun hatte. Und hab' deshalb mitten in der Legende gelebt.

Und ich wollte auch als Journalist gerne so historische Sachen, ich wollte eher so ... diese Ideologie diese Legenden und Geschichten einfach mit weiter pflegen, und, aber mit der Zeit, in den letzten Jahren, kamen so Zweifel an vielen Dingen. Also ich kenne heute auch, mein Vater ist letztes Jahr leider gestorben, und bin auch jetzt sehr viel mit meiner Mutter, sie ist jetzt allein. Ich diskutiere sehr viel, also ich muss auch sehr entgegenhalten, dieses Aber. Die Ideologie war ja so ... das Gefährliche im Kommunismus ist: Die Idee ist so wahnsinnig toll, dieses Glück, Frieden, Völkerfreundschaft und so. Guckst du dann aber auf die Realität, auf den Stalinismus, diese Hungersnöte und diese Masseninternierungslager, in die die die da gepresst haben, um irgendwelche Bahnlinien und zu bauen. Also im Grunde wie so ein Sklavenheer. Das hat man in der DDR nicht gewusst. Sicher gab es Leute, die es gewusst haben, denen werfe ich heute noch vor, dass sie irgendwie geschwiegen haben. Also es muss Leute gegeben haben, die aus Moskau kamen, die irgendwie in den 30er-Jahren da im Knast saßen, irgendwie oder hier im [unklar), oder sogar im Lager, aber die haben es aber trotzdem gemacht. Die haben nur gedacht: Es kann ja nur besser werden, aber den Kapitalismus wollen wir nicht mehr, wir wollen was Besseres, aber das kann nur besser werden, das sind alles ...

Der Stalin, der Personenkult, der Stalinismus Wenn man gesagt hat, selbst der ist ein Verbrecher ... Die Sache selbst ist doch toll, die Macht ist doch super. Und das hängt doch nur an Stalin. Das haben wir in der DDR später auch gesagt, da ist der Stalin plötzlich abgesägt worden, 1953 ist er gestorben, 1956 diese Aufarbeitungsrede. Da waren meine Eltern glühende

Anhänger von Stalin. Da gab's Lieder zu Stalin und Bilder, und der „Vater der Völker“, und der hat den Frieden geschenkt, die Welt vom Faschismus befreit und so. Der war der neue Held. Hat fast sozusagen Hitler ersetzt, also wenn man böse ist. Aber nur so haben die damals gelernt, Geschichte und Politik zu sehen, weil sie in diesem totalitären, absoluten Blick aufgewachsen sind, nicht? Da konnte jetzt nur ein anderer, totalitärer, absoluter Blick das ersetzen.

Denn, was heißt Demokratie, im Westen, im Westen Deutschlands haben die Demokratie auch erst mal bekommen von außen. Die mussten sie sich langsam aneignen. Das waren jetzt nicht geborene Demokraten. Heute ist ja auch schwierig, die Leute zu überzeugen: Warum brauchen wir das Grundgesetz, warum brauchen wir diese Parteienvielfalt, warum brauchen wir die Debatte, warum brauchen wir das, das kann

(00:20:23)

Aber Sie sehen damit durchaus, das ist nicht so, dass ich blind durch die Gegend rannte, auch damals schon nicht. Dass da was anderes ist, was auch durchaus mehr diskutiert und mehr debattiert und viel bessere, tollere, buntere Schaufenster hat, und den Arbeitslosen geht es auch nicht so schlecht, das wussten wir schon. Aber wie man in vielen Sachen lesen kann - ich hab ja hier ein paar Artikel von damals mitgebracht, die können Sie nachher haben - wollten wir nicht so diese Kaufhausmentalität, dieses Alles-ist-käuflich, und ... ein anderer Sinn sollte sein, auch in der Gesellschaft, ein anderes Miteinander. Sozial im Mittelpunkt und nicht der Konsum im Mittelpunkt.

Das war auch eigentlich die Grundidee, warum auch bis zum Schluss ... Heute denkt man: Die Geschichte sieht so aus. Die Ossis wurden alle unterdrückt, dann wollten sie alle wegrennen in den Westen, dann ist die Mauer gefallen, alle haben sich super umarmt, und dann kam die Freiheit und die Demokratie. Und warum sind sie jetzt undankbar? Ja, es ist eben so, das

war ein anderes Gesellschaftsprinzip, eine andere Gesellschaft, und die kann man nicht, von vornherein nicht als schlecht verteufeln, weil es Ansätze gab, die auch bedenkenswert sind. Eben dieser soziale Ansatz, dass tatsächlich geguckt wurde, von den Wohngebieten angefangen, über die Betriebsorganisationen, wo kann man möglichst viel für die Allgemeinheit tun. Und dieses, und das ging natürlich auch von der Freizeit und so und Arbeitsgemeinschaften und alles. Aber wurde eben, mit diesem Stempel Staat oder dem Stempel Gesellschaft, Stempel Ideologie oder irgendwelche Organisationen, überall wo ein Stempel drauf war, ist heute alles natürlich verbrannt.

Wenn die Leute von Hitlerjugend sprechen, von tollen Wanderungen und Lagerfeuern und dass man miteinander gesungen hat, dass der Papa endlich Arbeit hatte, Oh Gott, das darfst du gar nicht sagen zum Hitlerreich. Da gab's ja alles. Das gab's ja. Die haben die Leute tatsächlich korrumpiert, und das kann man nicht mal nur so sagen, weil so in die Richtung, ja die Leute sollten nur für den Krieg nur fit gemacht werden. Die Gesellschaft hatte damals ihrer einigen Gesetze, und bestimmte Dinge, die die Menschen wollten, wurden auch dann hergestellt. Also das waren noch verschiedene Elemente, die da zusammenkamen. Andererseits muss man heute sagen: Klar, das Ergebnis zählt immer in der Gesellschaft und in der Geschichte, und das Ergebnis von Hitler und dem Faschismus - oder Nationalsozialismus - waren eben die Millionen toten Juden und wahnsinnig viel Kriegstote und Mordopfer, Vertriebene, wie meine Mutter oder so, die dann wirklich in Berlin stand mit ihren Geschwistern ganz alleine, ihre Familie ist verteilt worden. Die später dann, Gott sei Dank zu einer Frau kamen, die sie aufnahm. Dadurch konnten sie dann zusammenleben, Gott sei Dank. Und es war alles Leid. Und aus dieser Geschichte hat sie ja ein Leid nach dem anderen.

(00:24:01)

So und ich bin dann, eigentlich noch als, ich bin ins Studium gegangen, das war 1984 nach der Beendigung meiner Armeezeit. Und der Anfang der 80er-Jahre war für die ganze Welt eine ziemlich harte Zeit. Weil in der Sowjetunion das ganze Wackeln stattfand. Da starb eben ein Chef nach dem anderen weg. Breschnew, Tschernenko, Andropow. In den USA war Reagan an der Macht. Der hat sicher ökonomisch viel gemacht, und das auch, aber bei uns war er das Oberfeindbild. Weil er ja gesagt hat, hier von wegen Marxismus auf den Aschehaufen ... Also für uns war Reagan der Teufel an sich, na? Natürlich wuchs dadurch auch innen der Druck, in Polen gab's Anfang der 80er Jahre Solidarność. Und man stand so zwischen ... es ging schon auf irgendeinen Scheideweg zu.

Und für mich entscheidend im Studium war dann eigentlich Gorbatschow, das Auftreten von Gorbatschow, weil der plötzlich so dieses ... Erstens diese lähmende Angst, dass uns in den nächsten zwei Jahren die Atombomben auf den Kopf fallen. Was wir wirklich gedacht haben. Da haben wir fest dran geglaubt. Also, irgendwie haben wir das Gefühl gehabt, wir werden nicht alt. Wir werden nie eine Chance haben, eine Familie zu gründen. Weil, wenn die so weiter rüsten, Ost und West, es wurde immer dichter hier, mit der Raketennähe, gerade in Deutschland, dann braucht bloß einer auf dem falschen Knopf zu drücken, und dann kracht es. Es gab so mehrere Momente, wo man im Nachhinein gehört hat. Und dann diese Angst, vor diesem Aufeinanderprallen.

Und Gorbatschow hat, erst mal, so menschliche Worte geredet, die man lange nicht gehört hatte. Die Sowjetchefs waren nicht gerade für offene menschliche Worte bekannt, sondern für Phrasen. Nun haben wir gedacht, na okay, das muss so sein. Das ist in der Struktur, wir haben unsere Chefs nie so richtig gemocht. Also wir haben Honecker nicht gemocht, Ulbricht nicht so gemocht, das war nicht, dass wir sie geliebt haben. Überhaupt gar nicht. Sondern eher so, da

wurde sehr skeptisch hochgeguckt. So, und dann wurde auch gesagt, die haben aber auch den eigentlichen Sinn dieses Systems irgendwie nicht mehr so ... die heben sich sehr ab. Die sehen gar nicht mehr, was abläuft. Aber der Schritt von „die sehen gar nicht mehr, was läuft“ bis zum „jetzt machen wir Schluss mit dem System“ ist noch ein anderer. Ist ja, bloß weil die viel rumscheißen, muss man nicht alles wegwerfen.

Dann eben müssen wir mal gucken: Wer kommt dann hier Neues, gibt's denn Reformer? Und plötzlich war dann der Gorbatschow, und er war für uns so ein Reformer-Modell, und wir glaubten tatsächlich, was er gesagt hat, dass man, wenn man den Sozialismus ganz anders anpackt, und dann auf sozusagen eine Werbetour für den Sozialismus geht. Im Westen war es „Ah, der Gorbatschow“. Und dann dachten wir, wenn der so einschlägt, dann könnte vielleicht daraus was werden, ja? Dass man nochmal so richtig ... Aber da haben wir nicht gedacht, dass so viel Dreck eben auf diesem System lag, dass es nicht mehr rettbar ist. Und dann diese Bezeichnung, unter dieser Führung, unter dieser Partei. Nicht nur Dreck, ich mein die katholische Kirsche besteht immer noch, obwohl die auf Kreuzzüge und so ..., aber das heißt nicht, dass sie nicht reformierbar ist. Dass da ein Geist drüber ist, der trotz allem weiter wirkt.

(00:28:16)

Zweitens ist, dass garantiert diese ökonomische Seite die entscheidende am Ende war, da hätten sie dreißig Mal nee, in der Welt herrschen halt andere Gesetze, und da geht es um harte Währung, und da konnten wir am Anfang nicht mehr mitziehen, und das war wahrscheinlich am Ende wirklich das Entscheidende. Nicht irgendwelche Ideen - Freiheit oder nicht Freiheit. Wenn es dem Kapital so oder irgendwelcher Regierung im Westen passt, dann unterstützen sie irgendwelche Leute, die ihre eigenen Leute unterdrücken, das haben wir ja immer wieder gehabt, so. So moralisch sind sie ja alle nicht. So.

Aber mit diesen Gedanken. Also und dann im Studium da teilte es sich dann so in Gorbatschow- und Nicht-Gorbatschow-Leute, aber die jungen Leute waren alle auf Gorbatschow, auf Hoffnung und dass es Reformen geben werde in der DDR, und dass das in eine tolle Richtung kommt. Alles viel besser und vor allem auch freier. Da ging es gar nicht so darum, dass man unbedingt sich super tolle Autos kaufen kann, da geht's manchen auch mal sicher darum und so. Sondern, also, uns ging's eher darum, dass man wirklich schreiben kann was man will, so und dieses, dass man Journalist sein kann. Ohne mal ständig auf Zwänge zu gucken und irgendwelche Linien verfolgen zu müssen.

Und da gibt's ja diese Geschichte von Alexander Osang. Wie er seinen alten Chefredakteur Fritz Wengler da besucht, und über dieses eine „Ja“, worüber wir auch damals gesagt haben, was soll das? ... Aber das ist so typisch gewesen. Dass da ein höheres Prinzip verteidigt werden muss, und dass nicht der einzelne Journalist die Freiheit hatte, sondern du warst als Parteijournalist auch ein Instrument. Du hattest natürlich auch Freiheit, du konntest oft ein bisschen dich geschmeichelt fühlen, weil dein Name mal da stand, und du hattest auch Möglichkeiten, über lokale Dinge - ich war in der Lokalredaktion lange - auch Dinge zu schreiben, die auch die kleineren Sachen so veränderten und so. Aber an den Grundfesten konntest du nicht rütteln. Das wussten wir aber auch, wir träumten davon, irgendwie mal mehr Freiheit zu haben, nicht gegen dieses System, sondern so mit ihm. Aber eben mit einem freieren System. Einem System mit ..., wo die Probleme offen diskutiert werden, wo man auch mehr schreiben kann. Meinungsfreiheit, Pressefreiheit. Also was da so unter Glasnost genannt wurde in Russland. Auch dass Filme gemacht werden konnten, die sich mit Problemen beschäftigten. Dass nicht Bücher zensiert wurden, das war so unser Hauptidee, und dann ... so dann im Hinterkopf, dass man mehr von der Welt sieht, natürlich auch, was im Nachhinein, wo man in

vielen Teilen der Welt war und ganz viel gesehen hat, würde es nie mehr ein Zurück geben können, hinter die Mauern oder so, das gibt es nicht. Aber diese Horizonterweiterung hatte man damals noch nicht. So eine Weltanschauung zu haben, ohne sich die Welt anzuschauen. Und das waren so die Ideen, mit denen wir aus den Schulen auch in den Journalismus gingen. Wir waren die letzte Generation, die noch in die Zeitungen kamen vor der Wende.

(00:32:05)

Wann haben Sie ihren Abschluss gemacht?

1988, also es war gar nicht so lang, das war im Jahr 1988/89, wo sich ja alles zuspitzte. Wo wir als Absolventen ... also ich weiß nicht, wer noch an der Zeitung war in der Zeit ... Also, aber als Absolvent bis du tatsächlich in so eine Drucksituation auch gekommen, wo man sich auch erklären musste, warum man Journalist ist in dieser Zeit. Und wenn man plötzlich zwischen die Herrschaft da oben, die weiter so ihren Kurs gehen, und zwischen den Leuten, die immer unruhiger wurden und so. Da gab's ja in diesem Jahr verschiedene Ereignisse, wo man als Journalist auch schreiben musste.

Da gab's zum Beispiel eine Volkskammerwahl, wo sich dann herausstellte, es gab so eine Bürgerbewegung, die gesagt hat, dass hier gefälscht wurde. Dann gab es ein großes Pfingsttreffen der Jugend. Da war schon mal ziemlich schlechte Stimmung, auch unter den Organisatoren, und es begann offenbar, dass der Druck auf die Herrschenden, dass man auch in der DDR was verändert, größer wurde. Und diese Gorbatschow-Geschichte. So in der Sowjetunion waren 87 - ich war ja auch da und hatte dann so einen Studentenaustausch - also in der Sowjetunion war 1987 und 88 zwei Jahre, wo sehr sehr viel historisch und politisch diskutiert wurde. Es gab so Artikel und Bücher über die Vergleiche von Hitler und Stalin. Über den

Nichtangriffspakt und dieses Zusatzprotokoll, oder wie sie sich Polen geteilt haben. Es gab die Aufarbeitung von diesen Lagern, und das wollten die Oberen in der DDR gar nicht erst hören, und deshalb wurden alle Dinge die aber ... Bis dahin gab's hier Zeitschriften, die lagen rum. Zum Beispiel der „Sputnik“, das war so eine ... Dann bekamst du die plötzlich nicht mehr. Meine Frau, die Französisch spricht, sie hat sich dann ein französisches Exemplar über Umwege besorgt und das dann übersetzt, mit so einem Artikel drin, historisch. Und, dann wurde sowjetische Filme ...

Da gab's so ein sowjetisches Filmfestival, dann wurden sowjetische Filme, die wurden dann verboten. Und also, wir haben dann immer gesagt: verboten. Die haben immer gesagt: Ja, die werden nur nicht gezeigt, oder es wird aus der Postzeitungsliste gestrichen, oder solche Sachen. Aber uns hat es ganz ..., weil wir so geistige Leute waren. Eher nicht so materiell. Es ging gar nicht darum, über den Kudamm zu laufen und sich schöne Sachen zu kaufen, das überhaupt gar nicht. Da haben wir als letztes dran gedacht. Ich wette, Sie werden es vielleicht nicht glauben, aber ich kann nur so reden, wie es ist. Denn wir haben ja nicht Hunger gelitten, und auch Sachen zum Anziehen gehabt. Aber dieses Mentale oder Intellektuelle war für uns viel wichtiger.

Ich hab ja auch meine Frau kennengelernt gehabt, sie war ja beim Rundfunk, beim Radio. Die habe ich in Leipzig, im Studium kennengelernt. Und wir dachten eigentlich sehr ähnlich in der Beziehung, und der Druck wurde immer größer. Und dann wurde es noch am schlimmsten, als die Leute dann anfangen, in Massen wegzulaufen. Das war so im Frühsommer, Sommer, das war ja dann so diese grüne Grenze da ... dann Prag, wo sie auf dem Botschaftsgelände da saßen. Da kam der Druck auch so extrem, da sind auch Leute weggelaufen, die man kannte. Und wir fragten uns: Warum gehen die jetzt weg, jetzt? Wo der Druck so groß ist, im Inland, da kann es

ja nur irgendwas Neues geben. So diese ... das ist ja eine dialektische, eine philosophische Geschichte. Dass irgendwann der Druck so groß ist, dass es in etwas Neues umspringt. So, und dann haben wir fest daran geglaubt: Das kann nicht mehr so weiter gehen. Und auch alte Leute, die ich kannte, die auch Kommunisten waren noch aus den 20er-Jahren, die haben gesagt: Das wird jetzt alles, es wird besser und na ja. Und dann ging es eben auf den Herbst zu. In der Redaktion, da sind aber die Sachen sehr sehr aussagekräftig, auch was Osang da schreibt so ... aber vielleicht stellen Sie ein paar Fragen, um die Sache so ein bisschen durch Nachfragen zu strukturieren.

(00:37:37)

Ja, also ich würde gern ein bisschen wissen, wie ihr Berufsalltag so war in der DDR und dann auch zu Wendezeit.

In der Berlin-Lokal-Redaktion, war das so, dass ich, wir waren vielleicht ein Dutzend Leute, die Lokalredakteure, und die Bezirke, die einzelnen Stadtbezirke waren aufgeteilt, und ich hatte Köpenick, und ich kam aus Köpenick, auch noch, das war aber nicht unbedingt so, dass das Wohnortprinzip da vorherrschte. Also ich hab mich dieses Jahr vor der Wende eigentlich mit Kommunalpolitik beschäftigt. Das war, ich hab Artikel geschrieben über Stadtbezirksversammlungen und über neue Stadtviertel, wo es darum ging, welche Händler da einziehen. Also, ich hab geschrieben über Problemen der Wohnungsverwaltung, alles solche Sachen, die in so einer Kleinstadt so notwendig sind. Und man hatte auch so ein sehr starkes, wir hatten eine Rubrik, so eine Glosse, „Bärchen“ hieß die, ja so ein kleiner Bär. Da ging's darum: Wenn Leute Probleme hatten mit Behörden oder mit Bürokratie, dass man darüber durchaus schreiben konnte, ...

Und man konnte so in kleinen Dingen durchaus wirklich dann was bewegen. Weil das, die Macht des Wortes, wenn die auch abgesichert war von einem Chefredakteur, die war schon wesentlich größer als heute. So das Wort, wenn man heute was schreibt, verrauscht es oft so. Aber damals hatte man unheimliche Macht schon mit Kleinigkeiten. Und oft, eine paar Kollegen und ich, es gab so zwei, drei Kollegen, wir haben damals überlegt, dass man mehr auch machen kann, so Richtung mehr Offenheit, dann gab's mal so ein ... da wurden mal irgendwelche Bitumenfässer auf irgendeinen Betriebshof gefunden, und dann haben wir tatsächlich mit irgendeiner grünen Bürgerbewegung, mit dem Stadtrat und so. Da haben wir einen Ortstermin gemacht und darüber geschrieben. Das sind immer so kleine Sachen, das war wie ein kleiner Umweltskandal.

Und das war auch die Zeit, wo vor Ort nicht nur diese, diese – also in Köpenick, woher schon meine Vorfahren herkommen, mein Opa ist da schon geboren, ich glaub auch meine Uroma auch schon, also wir sind uralte Köpenicker -, dass dann nicht nur die Macht einfach so weiter herrschte, sich parallel dazu auch andere Bewegungen so ein bisschen entwickelten. Das war nicht nur die Kirche, sondern ich glaube auch, dass die Stadtverwaltung versuchte, auch Bürger mehr einzubeziehen. Also, wenn es um ... weil die einfach den Geist der Zeit merkten. Die sagten so: Alles geht einfach nicht so, dass man von oben herab einfach weitermacht, da haben wir ein Bürgerbüro hingestellt. Das war ein großes Schaufenster, da konnte man sehen: Die Straße wird umgebaut, wir bauen da neue Gebäude und so, und jetzt können Sie alles jetzt mal anschauen und ihre Meinung dazu sagen. Also eine typische Einbeziehung von Bürgern, was es eben davor oft auch gar nicht so gab.

(00:41:40)

Die DDR hat eine sehr demokratische Phase am Anfang, ganz am Anfang. Dann wurde, dann kam der Ulbricht und die Truppe da, und dann wurde sie sehr stalinistisch. Und '53 diese ganze Geschichte. Dann mit Honecker gab es so eine Hoffnung, dass die Türen sich öffnen - so 1973 die Weltfestspiele und so - und die krachten dann mit Biermann wieder dicht zu. Und dann wurde es, natürlich, also Honecker und Schlussakte von Helsinki, nach außen wurde das alles dialogfähiger, aber nach innen verhärteter. Durch Biermann, also diesen Sänger, der ausgebürgert wurde, also ab 76 wurde es eigentlich immer extremer, was diese Sache betrifft. Aber diese Vorwendezeit war eben gekennzeichnet durch die Einsetzung einer ziemlichen Verhärtung, und andererseits gab es eben da mal ein Zeichen und da mal ein Zeichen, dass überall Leute waren, die glaubten, irgendwas verändern zu können. Und mit diesen zwei Dingen ging man - weil Sie fragten mit der Arbeit, wie ich den Arbeitsalltag -, das war erst mal das Gebiet, damit wollte ich nur sagen, dass man selbst, wenn man Kommunalpolitik machte, immer auch in diese großen Sachen so hineingezogen wurde.

Aber wie hat man gearbeitet? Also rein, rein organisatorisch war das nicht viel anders, als man heute arbeitet. Es gab also mal eine Sitzung früh, es wurde halt geguckt: Was machen wir heute. Es gab Mittagssitzung, es gab diesen genauen Ablauf auch mit Redaktionsschluss und so. Es war alles da, man hatte mehr Zeit für Dinge. Weil alles mehr noch nach Absprachen und mit, es ist nicht so, du bist nicht so einfach losgegangen in einen Betrieb und hast irgendeinem gefragt ... Nein du musstest angemeldet sein, und dann musste der Direktor oder der Verantwortliche des Betriebes den Text oft noch mal lesen. Und klar gab es auch Pressetermine. Ich hatte auch zum Beispiel diesen Kleingartenverein mit in meinem Bereich, oder solche Sachen, das hört sich heute bescheuert an. Aber wenn man überlegt: In einem Land, wo es kaum Obst und Gemüse gab, hatte dieser Kleingartenverein - das war der VKSK: Verband der

Kleingärtner und Kleintierzüchter - eine unheimliche Macht und eine unheimliche politische Bedeutung, so. Weil die ja dann die Leute ernähren. Und manchmal gab es eine Pressekonferenz, da ist man dann auch hin, ist zurückgekommen, hat das aufgeschrieben, möglichst was man gehört hat.

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Und dann gab es mehrere Kontrollebenen. Die erste war der eigene Kopf: Kannst du das so schreiben? Meistens haben die natürlich auf einer Pressekonferenz nicht wesentlich mehr erzählt, als in der Zeitung steht. Aber manchmal schon. Also manchmal. Also ich sag mal ein Beispiel: Ich gehe als Lokalredakteur zur Stadtbezirksversammlung, das sind ja so die Abgeordneten, und da tritt der Chef der Wohnungsverwaltung auf und sagt also: Wir haben überhaupt kein Material mehr, unser Häuser sind so veraltet, das bricht alles zusammen. Wir reißen alte Häuser ab und holen das Holz aus den alten Häusern und bauen es dann in neuen Häusern ein. Er sagt ungeschminkt, wie das aussieht. Du gehst zurück in die Redaktion, und sagst dir so: „Wahnsinn, toll, aber kannst du jetzt das in eine Zeitung schreiben, die auch im Westen und überall gelesen wird?“ Das gab es ja noch, nach innen kann man viel sagen, wenn Türen zu sind, kann man ehrlich sein und offen. Aber schreibst du das in die Zeitung, wo der Klassenfeind mit guckt und liest? Das war ja immer nicht nur so, dass man untereinander darüber nicht reden wollte, sondern immer geschaut wurde: Wie kann man das wieder gegen uns ausnutzen? Da ist es auch zu verstehen, warum viele Sachen gar nicht erst drin waren, obwohl man öfter drüber geredet hat.

Sonst hast du das meist so geschrieben, dass vielleicht doch was drin ist, davon. So dann gab es ... Der erste Leser war der eigne Ressortleiter, da ging es dann: „Bau das mal so um, und du kannst doch nicht das da vorne machen. Und das verstehe ich jetzt nicht.“ Also ganz normale

journalistische Sachen, wie überall. Und selten war es so, dass man Sachen drin stehen hatte, wo dann gestrichen wurde von irgendwo. Das gab es aber auch, dass man dir dann erklärte mit seiner Erfahrung, so in die Richtung, „Passt mal auf, kannst du das jetzt belegen?“ Also mit solchen Dingen. Wir haben zum Beispiel oft über die KWV (Kommunale Wohnungsverwaltung) geschrieben, dass sie irgendwelche Sachen mit den Mietern machten, und dass sie ewig die Balkons nicht reparieren und andere Fälle ...

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Das haben wir manchmal so reingeschrieben. Und manchmal kam es eben auch durch, manchmal kam es eben nicht durch. Und es ist auch so gewesen, bei bestimmten Dingen konnte es auch tatsächlich vorkommen, dass der Chefredakteur vom Dienst abends an deinem Artikel rumschrieb, und rummalte - das ist mir glaub ich zweimal passiert, dass ich so am nächsten Tag was gefunden habe, was überhaupt gar nicht, also ... Ja aber, da hat man sich ja sehr aufgeregt. Und dann haben sie ja auch begründet: „Na, pass mal auf: Nächstes Mal machst du das so und so, und du weißt ja ganz genau dass ...“ Also es war so ein Geflecht von Selbstwissen, wo die Grenzen sind.

Es war eine sehr ... Verhandlungssache kann man nicht mal sagen, das war so eine, es arbeitete sich so aus. Also du hattest selber so eine Sperre sicher auch da, man sagte immer: „Schere im Kopf“, so aber „Schere im Kopf“ so einfach gesagt. Es war nicht mal eine Schere. Es war einfach, auch aus dem Gefühl: Was kannst du jetzt offen sagen und was nicht offen, also diese, diese Doppeldinge, die gab es immer. Das waren wir einfach trainiert, so. So wie heute, die Dinge einfach so rauszusagen, das gab es einfach nicht. Also, Doppelmoral ... würde ich vielleicht nicht sagen. Aber, so eine Doppelöffentlichkeit, so eine interne und eine nach außen gerichtete. Und wir waren die nach außen gerichtete. Also eher ein Instrument auch.

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Wie würden Sie die Rolle der Journalist in der DDR beschreiben?

Also wollen Sie, wie sie es gerne gehabt hätten? Also von der Parteiführung her war ja nach dem Leninistischen Modell der Journalismus ein Organisator, Agitator, Propagandist, und so haben wir das auch in der Uni gelernt. Ganz eindeutig. Das Modell war das Leitmodell. Der Journalist in der DDR war - außer die, natürlich die für die Blockparteien, die waren ja die Verbündeten - war ein Werkzeug, ein politisch verantwortlicher Mensch, der einer Sache verpflichtet war und nicht sich selbst und seinem Gewissen. Sondern einer höheren Sache, einer Idee, also einer Ideologie, mal mehr und mal weniger. Natürlich gab es auch Blätter, wo man es nicht so scharf machte, es gab Blätter, wo es extremer war. Wenn man natürlich über Politik schrieb und so was, oder Wirtschaft, wo man noch stärkeren Sachen unterworfen war, oder auf der ideologischen Seite. Es gab ja auch, wir hatten auch eine Seite, die mit Geschichte oder Ideologie beschäftigt war, wo ich dann später hinkam, übrigens in der Wendezeit.

Mit allen, mit den Artikeln, die man schrieb, sollte man eigentlich die Werktätigen, sollte man das Volk für die Gesellschaft, für den Sozialismus, für die Ideen des Sozialismus, für die Ideologie begeistern. Also eigentlich vorwärts bringen, erst mal geistig. In der Zeitung hattest du da aber auch eine rein praktische, organisatorische Rolle, also diese, nicht nur mit den Lesern zu kommunizieren, sondern auch, wir haben ja Pressefeste gehabt. Also wir hatten am Alexanderplatz jährlich einen Solidaritätsbasar der Presse. Da sind wir als Journalisten eben auch hin und haben selber Dinge verkauft, und die Leute haben mit uns geredet, wir waren viel anfassbarer, ja. Also man war seltsamerweise, obwohl man so diese Ideologie vertrat, für die Menschen irgendwie anfassbarer. Komisch.

(00:51:42)

Und die Leute konnten auch trennen, zwischen der Realfigur und der Idee, die man ... die man vertrat. Und wir schwebten doch nicht arrogant über den ganzen Dingen, also so war es auch nicht. Ich sage wir, wir, wir, ich meine immer auch ich und die, die eine ähnliche Meinung hatten. ... Wir hatten auch Kollegen, die in den Westen abhauten, so war es nicht, also aus dem Sport oder so. ... Ideologisch war es eigentlich, was so als Leitbild war, und das wurde auch durchaus in der Praxis versucht umzusetzen.

Und was nicht im Mittelpunkt stand, war dein Ego. Natürlich gab es auch Leute, die ihr Ego pflegten, da gibt es immer solche und solche, und ich pflege ja auch mein Ego, klar. Aber es gab auch Leute, die Sonderrechte hatten, ... die großen Leitartikel schrieben und so. Aber wenn du mit dem Argument kamst, ich hab es so und so geschrieben, und hier setze ich meinen Namen nicht drauf, wie man es heute kann, dann wurde dir gesagt, da steht zwar dein Name, aber du bist hier Teil der Zeitung, und wir haben als Zeitung nun mal die Meinung. Das gibt es heute gar nicht mehr, aber das war damals so.

Es gab mal zur Wendezeit eine Diskussion, und zwar davor noch, dass über einem, über den Kommentaren immer „Unsere Meinung“ stand. Es gab tatsächlich mal so eine interne Diskussion: Das kann man ja eigentlich nicht machen, „unsere Meinung“ gibt es nicht, es gibt nur „meine Meinung“. Dieser Begriff, dieses Denken, dass man als Journalist nicht, dass der Chefredakteur nicht für alle spricht, die da arbeiten, das war gar nicht erwünscht und gar nicht verbreitet. Sondern, das hat sich so nach und nach bei den Leuten (durchgesetzt), die endlich Meinungsfreiheit haben wollten, aber auch innerhalb der Zeitung - und nicht nur der Zeitung als ein Organ, also wie so ein Armeisenbau, wo alle für eine Sache arbeiten, für die Bienenkönigin oder so, alle nur auf ein Ziel gerichtet. Sondern auch mit Individuen, und dieses, dass solch eine

Zeitung auch eine Sammlung von Individuen ist, mit einzelnen Meinungen, das war eben nicht. Sondern du warst ein Instrument, ein Teil eines um sich greifenden Mechanismus.

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Und der stoppte und krachte irgendwann. Da gab es ja auch schon, bevor die Wende kam, so Punkte, dass die Leute nicht mehr ... Also ein Beispiel nur, damit Sie noch mal die Atmosphäre illustriert sehen. Es gab zum, war das vor dem Jahrestag oder ..., ich glaube ja, vor dem Jahrestag, dem 40. Jahrestag (der DDR), hat der Chefredakteur gesagt, wir sollten eine Straßenumfrage machen: "Warum lebe ich so gern in der DDR". Und es ist keiner gegangen, alle haben abgelehnt, er hat rumgefragt, die ganzen Ressorts, da hat sich keiner bereitgefunden, und da sagte er: „Da musst man einen bestimmen! Wir müssen diese Umfrage machen“. Aber es ist nicht zustande gekommen, die Redaktion hat sich geweigert, sie hat gesagt: Wir können nicht da rausgehen in dieser Situation, wo Leute weggelaufen sind, das ist ja ... Also dieses Gefühl gab es. Es ist nicht so, dass wir so wie Automaten dann da raus sind, nein es gab genau dieses Gefühl, was man den Leuten auch zumuten kann und was nicht. Und uns selbst. Wenn man die Leute das gefragt hätte, hätte man eins auf die Fresse gekriegt.

Und man hat sehr mit Leuten geredet damals, die haben auch ... Weil sie auch viele Vorbehalte hatten gegen Journalisten. Die haben dann auch festgestellt, dass in den Redaktionen da auch junge Leute saßen, die Ähnliches wollten wie sie, also Veränderungen.

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Sie haben ein bisschen angedeutet, und das würde ich gern noch mal hören wie war der Stand der Journalist in der DDR, wie wurde von der Gesellschaft ein Journalist gehalten?

Der hatte ein sehr hohes gesellschaftliches Image. Also damit ist nun noch gar nichts zur politischen Seite was gesagt. So eine ... ganz einfach, die Stellung des Berufs. Journalist, Arzt, was weiß ich, das gehörte zu den hohen, erstrebenswerten Berufen, mit hohem sozialen Ansehen. Weil es eben nur wenige werden konnten. Weil man dazu einen hohen Ausbildungsgrad brauchte, und weil man so eine Macht hatte. Man saß sozusagen ... Als mein Großvater, der auch viele Geschichten geschrieben hatte usw., gehört hatte, dass ich Journalist werde - der war so stolz. Weil du stehst dann irgendwie in der Zeitung jeden Tag. Wir hatten als Berliner Zeitung 450.000 Auflage, da würde man heute träumen. Also wenn man da deinen Namen kannte, kannten den tatsächlich fast alle im östlichen Teil der Stadt ...

Und da, also man hatte schon durchaus ein hohes Ansehen, rein von der gesellschaftlichen Stellung her, was diese politische Seite betrifft, da war es sehr divergent. Da wurde auch innerhalb des Journalismus geschieden. Da wurde auch durchaus geguckt, so ob man jetzt, in welchen Ressorts man ist, da wurden Abstufungen gemacht. Es gab Journalisten, die nicht so parteinah waren, also so, und es gab Journalisten, wenn du da in den Lokalredaktionen gearbeitet hast, dann warst du relativ nah an den Leuten auch dran. Wenn man die großen Leitartikel auf der Außen- oder Politikseite geschrieben hat oder so, warst du sehr nah an der Führung dran, also da wurde schon noch geschieden.

Aber es ist eben wirklich erstaunlich: Das gab es nicht, dass sich jeder Journalist nennen konnte so wie heute, wenn du ... Heute rettet man sich noch dahin, dass man sagt, man ist Redakteur. Aber so dieser Absturz eines Berufsbilds ist eben doch ... ziemlich, eben durch die Breite der Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten heute, du kannst ja an alle Informationen ran, und brauchst ja nicht mehr ... Damals haben wir den Ticker gehabt, und dann haben wir das verbreitet, und erst da haben die Leute das erfahren. Heute kommen die Leute selber an den

Ticker, über das Internet, an die aktuellen Meldungen der Nachrichtenagenturen, was weiß ich. Aber das ist wieder eine andere Seite, die gar nichts mehr mit Sozialismus zu tun hat oder mit der DDR. Das betrifft ja alle.

(00:59:04)

Ich wollte auch fragen, ob Sie bei dem Verband der Journalisten tätig waren.

Nein, nein, ich weiß nicht ob ich ... VDJ ... ob ich da automatisch Mitglied war? Waren wir das? Ich war jedenfalls nicht aktiv tätig. Aber ich glaube den Journalisten- ... den Ausweis hat man ... Also irgendwie war man schon automatisch drin. Aber aktiv war ich nicht. Ich war auch ziemlich kurz davor (vor der Wende Journalist geworden!). Muss man auch mal sagen. Da haben Sie jetzt kein ideales [Beispiel] in mir.

Das finde ich alles sehr interessant, muss ich ehrlich sagen. Und ich würde gern wissen ... mehr ... [...] Aber, ich würde gern wissen was in der Berliner Zeitung drin, wie waren die Diskussionen, nachdem der Mauer fiel, und als die Partei sich zurückgetreten hat. Um, aber bevor man die Wiedervereinigung sah, was waren die Diskussionen, was ist da passiert?

(1:00:19)

Ich hatte Ihnen schon mal so einen Abriss geschickt, der zeigt also, was wann passierte mit diese [unklar], das würde ich nicht gerne unbedingt wiederholen wollen. ... Rein organisatorisch war alles ja tatsächlich so, dass die Partei sich da mehr oder mehr zurückzog. Die Diskussion vor dem Mauerfall war die: Jetzt muss doch endlich mal was passieren. Das waren eher so Flurdiskussionen: Warum reagieren sie da nicht, auf diese Fluchtbewegung, was ist denn da in der Führung los? Und so. Dass wir auch ein Teil dieser ganzen Geschichte sind, wusste

man auch, und das hat uns doch besonders gewurmt. So in die Richtung: Die erzählen sonst wo, in Westmedien wird das und das erzählt, und wir sitzen und erfahren gar nichts, so in der Richtung.

Es kam zu diesen Montagsdemonstrationen, und der Druck wuchs, und auch innerhalb der Redaktion: Wir mussten endlich auch als Zeitung reagieren, auch die Partei musste reagieren, wir waren eben verbandelt.

Und dann gab es so einen Aufbruch, das war Freitag und Sonnabend, wo sich in der Redaktionsversammlung plötzlich alles entlud. Und die Chefredakteure, die ja an der Parteiführung angebunden waren, also der Kerschek, Dieter Kerschek, unser Chefredakteur, war Mitglied der Bezirksleitung der SED, und wir - obwohl wir nie nach außen so in Erscheinung traten - waren ja eine Bezirkszeitung der SED. ... Da kam dann alles raus, und das ging dann so in die Richtung, eigentlich in die Richtung pro Partei. Weil es ist nicht so, dass damals die Journalisten gesagt haben, jetzt gehen wir den Weg zu Wiedervereinigung. Das war eher so ein Aufbruch: Jetzt muss endlich, jetzt müssen die ... die SED muss jetzt die Führung übernehmen und muss eigentlich aktiv in dieser Reformbewegung vorangehen. So Gorbatschow-mäßig. Da müssen wir endlich auch so was wie einen Gorbatschow hier haben. Also Umbau und Öffnung, Meinungsfreiheit, Pressefreiheit, usw. Also diese Illusion, dass mal mit dieser Partei das alles noch geht, war eben einfach noch da. Die war einfach da.

(01:03:03)

Und genau muss man noch dazu sagen: Es gab ja keine gesellschaftliche Kraft, die an die Stelle trat oder treten konnte. Diese Bürgerbewegung, die war relativ klein. Da gab es das Neue Forum, das wurde bis 9. November ... war das noch illegal, verboten. Und es gab so kleine Bürgerbewegungen aus Kirchenkreisen und Splittergründungen von Parteien, die gar nicht an die

Stelle ... die konnten nicht einfach irgendwelche Sachen übernehmen an Staatsgewalt. Sondern wir haben auch gewusst: Scheiße, in dieser Partei sind jetzt 2.3 Millionen Mitglieder, und das ist eigentlich die Kraft, die hier überall den Staat führt. Und die muss jetzt eigentlich das lenken. Was anderes haben wir uns ja gar nicht vorstellen können. Das war die erste Phase.

Dann wuchs der Druck. Also und dann ging es in die Richtung: Wie können wir jetzt offener berichten und so, wie können wir ... wir haben es zwar gemerkt, da bewegte sich nichts wahnsinnig. Dann trat Honecker zurück, am 18. Oktober, dann gab es die Rede von Krenz, und alle dachten so: Der erzählt zwar was von Wende, und jetzt wird alles anders, aber in Wirklichkeit wollen die nur den Druck ablassen. Die Wende nannte Krenz das. Der Slogan war, und unser Chefredakteur hat uns das auch gesagt, also Kerschek und die oberste Riege: Ja die Wende findet in den Betrieben statt und nicht auf die Straße. Die Straße, das wird ja nur missbraucht von irgendwelchen Rowdys und Leuten, die auf die Mauer irgendwie wollen, und da was zerstören wollen.

Und es gab durchaus, es gab eine Angst vor der Straße da oben. Die haben zwar gewusst, da muss sich was ändern, aber das wollten sie jetzt alles auf die typische Art lösen: Die Wende findet am Arbeitsplatz statt. Wir arbeiten jetzt kräftiger und stärker, und wir machen das jetzt alles besser, und wir reden jetzt über unsere Probleme. Und dann gab es, gab es auch plötzlich, überall diese Diskussionen ... Sonntagsdiskussionen, im Roten Rathaus, in der Kongresshalle, überall. Da wurde, das wurde nämlich - nach dem die Demonstrationen waren in Leipzig usw. - wurde das irgendwie über den Druck der Öffentlichkeit erzwungen, dass sich jetzt Minister, Vertreter von Staat und Regierung, also der Oberbürgermeister und diese Leute, oder das Volksbildungsministerium, den Bürgern stellten und über Probleme redeten. Und da wurde überall ... und da hatte ich ja ständig Dienst und musste dann noch drüber schreiben, über so eine

Diskussion, und da wurden dann auch die Dinge einfach auf dem Tisch gelegt. Leute haben auch ihren Frust abgelassen - über ihre Zustände in den Schulen, und dass man nichts sagen darf und so, und meist saßen die da vorne und haben sich das nur angehört, aber sie mussten da ... Und in dieser Phase war ja zum Beispiel der Schabowski ganz aktiv. Der stand da überall auf der Straße und versuchte sich für die Partei einzusetzen. Und versuchte noch zu retten, was zu retten ist.

(1:06:07)

Dann gab es irgendwelche ..., ich glaube, am 8. November gab es eine SED-Tagung, da gab es erste Rücktritte, von ZK-Mitgliedern, also die Spitzen zogen sich dann langsam zurück. Aber das war eben alles, so ... Also die Phase, wo der Druck wuchs, und wir versuchten so ein bisschen mitzumachen. Die offizielle Linie der Zeitung war, weil die alten Chefredakteure waren ja noch da: Ja wir machen jetzt diesen Krenz'schen Kurs mit, aber die Wende findet in den Betrieben statt. usw. und gegen diese Straßengeschichten. Und die normalen Redakteure, nicht alle aber doch die jungen, die zog es durchaus auch zur Straße. Ich weiß es auch noch ganz genau: Mich haben sie mal geschickt, am 23. Oktober, ich glaube, als Krenz auch noch Staatsratsvorsitzender wurde, oder so. Es sollte dann eine Demonstration sein am Alexanderplatz und am Fernsehturm, und ich sollte mit einem mitgehen, weil sie dachten, ich bin ja zuverlässig, so ein Roter, ein Agitator gewesen bei der FDJ, und ich sollte da irgendwie mit diskutieren. Und da haben sie jetzt aus allen Betrieben so Leute geschickt, Genossen ... und ich war ja auch in der Partei seit dem Studium. Da haben sie die Leute geschickt, die da mit diskutieren sollten. Und ich ging da mit Dieter Dietzel, so hieß er, der war stellvertretender Chefredakteur und wollte mich auch für die Kampfgruppe werben, und so eine Sache, der dachte so ... Und ich hab mich gewehrt, ich wollte in so was überhaupt nicht rein. Von irgendwelchen militärischen Sachen hatte ich die Schnauze voll. Und während wir da standen zwischen den Leuten, hielten einige da

immer entgegen, und ich habe einfach mal nur zugehört. Ich fand das einfach interessant, ich wollte mal hören, was die Leute nun denken jetzt in diesen Moment. Ich habe natürlich gesagt, meine Meinung gesagt, und aber eben alles behutsam. Alles auf einer Gesprächsebene und nicht in der typisch kommunistischen Agitatoren-Art, die alles platt macht, so dass sie am Ende nichts mehr sagen können. Das war diese typische kommunistische Haltung: Ich hier weiß es ja besser, und ihr wisst es alle nicht. Ihr habt ja keine Ahnung vom Klassenkampf, und ihr habt sowieso kein Klassenbewusstsein, und keine Ahnung usw. Also dieses leninistische Kaputtreden und Macht-Durchsetzen. Das funktionierte aber nicht mehr. Und das wollte ich auch nie. Sondern ich habe immer auch mit den Leuten geredet. Und auch mal mit West-Leuten geredet, wenn man die am Alex mal traf, und die suchten irgendwas zum Einkaufen. Und bei dieser Demonstration habe ich die ganze Zeit mehr oder weniger zugehört. Ich fand diese Gruppen interessant. Die standen da so, ich weiß nicht, ob sie Kerzen in der Hand hatten oder nicht. Es waren auch einige Tausend. Zum Schluss hat sich ein Häuflein abgeteilt und wollte zur Mauer marschieren. Und da war für mich dann Schluss, so bei dem Gedanken, weil ich hatte das folgende Gefühl, und das erklärt auch unsere Haltung zu dieser ganzen Mauergeschichte.

(1:09:13)

Also ich hab erst mal ... die da standen, waren halt Leute von der Bürgerbewegung, die wollten eigentlich genau das was wir wollen: offen reden, endlich die Probleme auf den Tisch, endlich auch was anderes, mehr Freiheit, mehr Demokratie. Die wollten gar nicht unbedingt die DDR weg haben, das war, das wollte eigentlich kaum jemand. Aber dann sind so tausend Leute zur Mauer marschiert und wurden dann irgendwie auf der Höhe der amerikanischen Botschaft, Friedrichstraße, ein Stück weiter, wurden die aufgehalten, es ist auch nichts passiert. Sind dann umgekehrt oder so. Und das war eben das, wovor die Mächtigen Angst hatten, wir aber auch.

Wir haben gedacht: Okay, die haben Angst vor den Leuten auf der Straße, weil es ja sein kann, die drehen durch und marschieren zur Mauer oder sonst wohin und schlagen irgendwas kaputt, oder greifen irgendwie die Stasi an oder so. Und dann schießt irgendjemand, und dann kippt die ganze Sache. Davor haben die Angst gehabt, aber wir auch, also ich auch. Ich fand nämlich, dieses ... dass das Volk plötzlich sprach und redete, fand ich faszinierend, und meine Frau war hoch schwanger, und ich bin dann zum 4. November auch mit gegangen. Übrigens, wir waren also gar nicht so wahnsinnig viele von der Redaktion damals, bei dieser Demonstration, man sagt da waren eine Million, ich glaub aber, das war eine halbe Million, reicht aber auch. Es war ja, man wusste ja von vornherein nicht am Anfang, wie das ausgehen würde, und die Chefredaktion hat dann auch gesagt, ja wir raten, nicht dahin zu gehen. Wir können es aber keinem verbieten. Aber es hat niemand aufgerufen offiziell. Aber viele von uns wollten dahin. Und das war auch ganz toll, wir sind auch mit eigenen Transparenten rumgelaufen und so. Und es war faszinierend, und an einem Tag kam nämlich dies ganze ... was auch ziemlich humorvolle ironische Sachen zum Teil waren. Es war einfach ein Revolutionsfest, finde ich, dieser Tag.

Man begreift es nicht, aber für mich war das viel, viel bedeutender als dieser Mauerfall. Weil in dem Moment war dann so was ... da sah man Leute, die tatsächlich was wollten, was gesellschaftlich wollten. Und zwar mit diesem Land, noch im Dezember, gab es dann diesen Aufruf von Stefan Heym und verschiedenen anderen Leuten, also Schriftstellern und Künstlern usw. Da gab es da den Aufruf „Für unser Land“. Weil die Intellektuellen immer noch dachten, da gibt es irgendwas noch. Wir müssen uns nicht mit dem Westen zusammenschließen. Und daran dachte auch in dem Moment kein Mensch, das war so ein Schritt, da dachten die im Westen gar nicht dran, in den Moment, in November. Dann war der 4. November, und dann gab es die eine Woche, wo der Druck noch weiter wuchs da. Nach diesen großen Demonstrationen am Alex

traten dann plötzlich viele Minister zurück, und die Regierung trat am 7. November glaube ich zurück, also es fielen dann plötzlich tatsächlich viele Sachen ... die waren halt handlungsunfähig, was sollen die noch machen.

(1:12:19)

Und das zweite Ding war der Druck auf dieses Reisegesetz. Wir hatten dann als Redakteure rundum ... Telefondienst - war das schon da? Ich glaube ja. Also, weil jetzt ja die Zeitung eine ganz andere Rolle spielte in dieser ganzen Debatte. Wir haben körbewise Leserbriefe bekommen, und da ging es ganz stark ... das Thema war: Reisegesetz. Also, der Hintergrund war, dass die Leute wollten endlich mal reisen können, und die mussten einfach das öffnen. Die mussten die Grenze irgendwie mehr öffnen. Dass die Leute mehr raus können. Dass sie irgendwie in den Westen fahren können. Aber wie? So. Du kannst mal nicht jedem noch zweihundert Mark Westgeld in die Hand drücken, und was sollen die ohne da. So die, die hatten ... die DDR hatte einfach keine Devisen, die Leute reisen zu lassen. Und DDR-Geld wolle da drüben keiner. Umtauschen eins zu hundert, oder was weiß ich. Das war einfach ein ökonomischer Grund, und der Druck wuchs dann. Und dann war der 9. November früh, und da machte ich ... und dann kam meine Tochter, die kam ja zehn Tage später, als sie eigentlich sollte, also jeden Tag wuchs ja dieser private Druck: Geht es nun los, geht es nicht los? Das erste Kind auch noch. Also nicht nur auf der Arbeit.

Es war die Woche meines Lebens - natürlich. Der Druck wuchs wahnsinnig, und dann kam – ich hatte Dienst, und dann war ich noch bei meiner Schwiegermutter - früh der Anruf ... das sie (meine Tochter Laura) endlich da ist. Meine Frau war einen Tag drin. Meine Tochter ist da, super! So und abends war denn so dieser Mauerfall, wie ein Betriebsunfall so ein bisschen. Für mich nicht die Erfüllung der Sehnsucht, sondern einfach dieses Gefühl: Die machen jetzt

was, um diesen Druck abzulassen. Sie haben ja versucht, weiter die Grenzkontrolle einzuhalten usw., haben regimentsweise Stasi-Leute dahin versetzt, um die Grenztruppen zu verstärken. Aber dieses Gefühl, „Wow, wir sind jetzt endlich wieder zusammen, mit den anderen,“ dazu waren wir uns viel zu fremd. Ost und West, viel zu fremd. Es war zwar super, eine Super-Nacht, von der ich natürlich nichts mitbekommen habe, weil ich einfach ins Bett ging. Und ich habe ja auch gedacht, okay toll, dass sie jetzt das entschieden haben. Also kann ich dann tatsächlich, wenn ich will, irgendwann mal zu Polizei gehen, mir einen Stempel im Ausweis holen und kann überfahren? Ja, weil das ging ja alles geregelt, warum soll ich dann in der Nacht da losrennen? Ist ja nichts offen, keine Meldestelle, um einen Stempel zu holen. So denkt man doch als normaler Mensch. Du denkst jetzt nicht, jetzt rennst du an die Mauer und rüttelst am Tor ... Darf ich hier durch? Kein Mensch denkt so.

Und wenn man die Filme sieht, die ersten die da waren, waren junge Männer, so 20 bis 40 Jahre alt. Es waren alles nur Männer, die am Anfang da standen und das einfach mal testen wollten. Die kamen aus den Kneipen oder sonst wo, zur Bornholmer Straße, und dann kamen irgendwie immer mehr. Und dann irgendwann natürlich war der Druck da, und als sich dann rumsprach, jetzt ist die Grenze offen, sind natürlich mehr da übergeströmt. Bloß ich wohnte viel zu weit weg, und hab in der Zeit schon geschlafen. Ich habe zwar Fernsehen geguckt, und hab da, und kommt Tom Brokaw, und er stand, glaube ich, am Brandenburger Tor, und sagte: Ob heute Nacht auch hier am Brandenburger die Mauer aufgemacht wird? Ich hab Westen geguckt, also bei uns haben die nicht drüber berichtet. Und dann dachte ich also, mein Gott, jetzt stehen sie vor dem Brandenburger Tor, und wirklich nur eine symbolische Geschichte, das machen die heute garantiert nicht.

(01:16:16)

[kurzer Pause]

(01:18:31)

Also, das war natürlich so immer so ein bisschenWir waren an einem Punkt, als die Mauer fiel und wir aber noch mit dem Kopf eigentlich bei der gesellschaftlichen Diskussion waren, der eher so nach innen gerichtet war. Und plötzlich richtete sich die Entwicklung nach außen. Das ist schwierig für Menschen, die eine Gesellschaft verändern wollen und an eine Gesellschaft glauben, an den Gorbatschow'schen zweiten Anlauf des Sozialismus, die neue Revolution und so. Wir wollten die Gesellschaft verändern, und dann ging das tatsächlich los. Dass Redakteure von uns dann solche Korruptionsgeschichten aufgedeckt haben, und das ging, und diese ganzen ... Wandlitz, und irgendwelche Funktionäre haben sich da irgendwelche Häuser bauen lassen. Aus heutiger Sicht, was Korruption in der heutigen Gesellschaft betrifft, ist das so piefig. Das ist überhaupt nicht diskutabel. Aber, aus der Sicht des Ideals der sozialen Gleichheit oder so, die wir ja nie wirklich hatten, aus dieser Sicht ist das natürlich, da konntest du die Leute schon ziemlich mit aufregen.

Ich denke manchmal, das tatsächlich auch Leute ein Interesse hatten, diese Dinge auf Einzelperson zu lenken, so einzelne Schuldige zu finden, an denen sich der Volkszorn abarbeiten konnte, um nicht die Herrschaft der Partei insgesamt infrage zu stellen. Denn die begann langsam, die SED begann langsam richtig unter Druck zu geraten. Und vor diesem Hintergrund – was alles für Korruption und Schweinerei in diesem System möglich waren – sind dann immer mehr Leute ausgetreten. Und das war so die innenpolitische Phase nach dem Mauerfall, die hatte ja gar nicht unbedingt mit dieser Wiedervereinigung zu tun, sondern eher damit, dass da so viel im Inneren aufzuarbeiten da war.

Und um mal vorzugreifen: Ich bin ja der Meinung, das diese Aufarbeitung - was war eigentlich und wo müssen wir jetzt hin - irgendwann abgebrochen wurde, viel zu schnell abgebrochen wurde. Ich hab ja eine Zeit lang mitgemacht aktiv. Ich habe mal ein paar Texte aus der Zeit mitgebracht, die ich geschrieben habe. Ich wollte einfach so eine Debatte führen. Das „Heute nicht wissen, wer man ist“ hängt im großen Teil damit zusammen, dass man die DDR nicht aufgearbeitet hat, sondern einfach mit Etiketten nachher überzogen hat. Und die Etiketten werden aber von den Leuten nicht angenommen. Die Etiketten heißen Unrechtsregime, heißen menschenverachtendes Regime, heißen Mauersystem, heißen SED-Diktatur, heißen Stasi-Regime, also alles so was, wo Etiketten drauf sind, mit denen die Leute gar nichts anfangen können, weil sie ... Natürlich gibt es immer Opfer, die da mitreden. Natürlich Leute, die eingesperrt waren und sehr gerne, sehr auch zu Recht, dafür anerkannt werden müssen, auch ... Aber es gibt aber auch viele, die heute bestimmte Dinge einfach da einordnen, ja, also, um es mal auf den Punkt zu bringen. Das würde ich aber nicht gern zitiert haben wollen ...

(01:21:59)

[...]

(01:22:32)

Und dieser Druck auf die Partei war so stark, dass massenhaft die Leute wegrannten. Und es gab ja dann dieses, diese verschiedenen Parteikonferenzen, und dann kam Gysi und die PDS und das alles, und irgendwann war diese Partei zum Jahreswechsel 1989/90 nur noch ein toter Hund. Die hatte da einfach nichts mehr zu sagen. Dann gab's den Sturm auf die Stasizentrale und diese ganzen Geschichten. Der Runde Tisch, die Modrow-Regierung, aber es ist für uns, also ich war sehr sehr intensiv mit der inneren Geschichte beschäftigt. Wir haben, also ich kann jetzt nur

immer von mir reden, jeder Journalist hat irgendwas anders gemacht. Die einen haben sich plötzlich darin gefallen, die großen Aufdecker von Wirtschaftsproblemen und Korruption zu sein. Die zweiten haben das auf der Lokalebene gemacht. Die dritten haben endlich gesehen, dass es ideologisch vielleicht neue Fragen zu stellen gibt und es historische endlich die Chance gibt, Dinge aufzuarbeiten. Stalinismus, was war das eigentlich?

Ich habe da Interviews auch gemacht und so, und was muss jetzt kommen. Ist jetzt ein großes Loch da? Gilt Marx jetzt überhaupt noch? Also diese ganzen Fragen. Was war eigentlich mit der KPD in den 30er-Jahren? Was war mit Thälmann? Lange standen all diese Dinge monolithisch auf Sockel. Unangreifbar. Und jetzt brach das weg. Aber es muss ja irgendwie den Leuten erklärt werden, warum jetzt alles kaputt oder tot und weg ist. Was ist denn da gewesen? Woran haben wir dann so geglaubt, so dass wir dafür vielleicht sogar in den Tod gegangen wären? Wofür wir vielleicht sogar einen Weltkrieg im Kauf genommen hätten. An welcher großen Sache. Was ist denn jetzt damit? Punkt. Aus.

Da kommt jetzt der Westen. Die soziale Marktwirtschaft ist die neue Ideologie, die war die neue Ideologie. So, und das ist aber schon weit vorgegriffen. Und dieser offenen Richtung Westen, war ja ... Erst mal gab's die Phase, da rannten alle rüber. Ich bin erst am 17. November in der Mittagspause mal rüber, weil ich die 100 Mark Begrüßungsgeld haben wollte, dann bin ich noch mal rüber mit S***, meiner Frau, und dem Baby. Weil wir für das Baby und für S***** auch das Begrüßungsgeld wollten. Dann hatten wir 300 Mark, und dann gab's irgendwie die Möglichkeit, noch mal 500 Mark umzutauschen, eins zu wasweißich. Und dann hatten wir noch 800 D-Mark, die wir sammeln wollten, wir haben dann nicht Bananen gekauft und auch nicht Cola, keinen Billig-Recorder oder so, sondern wir haben es in eine Kassette getan, weil wir nach Paris fahren wollten unbedingt. Susanne konnte gut französisch, noch aus dem Studium und so,

hatte alles in der DDR gelernt, als Zweitsprachler, hatte ein sprachlich orientiertes Gymnasium, EOS hieß es, Erweiterte Oberschule. Und das war so unser erstes Reiseziel. Unbedingt nach Paris. Und die anderen Sachen, das kam dann später. Also eher so ein Ziel. Horizonterweiterung.

(01:25:58)

Und dann, im Dezember, gab's an der Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften eine Debatte zwischen einem Westprofessor und einem Ostprofessor, die waren eigentlich beide einer Meinung, dass es noch sehr lange dauern wird bis zu einer Einheit, und selbst Kohl hatte ja in seinem 10 Punkte Plan - 10 Jahre und Konföderation und irgendwann mal - das Gefühl, dass es lange dauert, bis diese beiden Seiten sich angleichen, weil so 40 Jahre getrennte Entwicklung ... Ja im Osten ist man ..., in der DDR gab es sogar Wissenschaftler, die sagten, dass eine eigene sozialistische Nation entstand. So weit würde ich nicht gehen, weil was für eine ... Ich sehe Nationen eher tatsächlich als ... oder sehe Mentalitäten, also wenn man Nation als Mentalität begreift, ist es eher was Gewachsenes. Und da ist der Sachse, der hat eine andere Geschichte und Mentalität als vielleicht der Nordrhein-Westfale oder der Hamburger oder so.

Darum sehe ich eher die Trennung. Also Bayern wollte eher mit Südtirol vereinigt werden, als mit dem Osten, wir passen da viel schlechter zusammen. Und Halle, Mitteldeutschland, war eines der wichtigsten Gebiete Deutschlands zum 30-jährigen Krieg, diese Ecke ist heute inzwischen ein ganz unbedeutendes Grenzland, irgendwie sehr vernachlässigt worden, auch schon in DDR-Zeiten und danach auch. Aber jetzt das ... ich kenne ja den Minister da, der jetzt Humboldt-Uni-Präsident ist, ganz gut. Den Olbertz, der war da. Gut das jetzt nur am Rand.

(01:28:01)

Das hat für uns nicht so eine ... Die Wiedervereinigung hat für uns gar nicht so eine Rolle gespielt, das ging bis März. Bis zum 18. März mindestens. Weil, da lag es so weit entfernt, auch für den Westen. Unser großes Problem war: Warum stürzt jetzt diese Partei in sich zusammen? Was passiert jetzt mit uns als Zeitung? Wer will uns jetzt haben? Wir hatten ja eine Phase, da war die Bürgerbewegung auch im Haus. Wir hatten denen eine Seite angeboten, einmal die Woche. Forum hieß die, glaube ich, die Forum-Seite. Und die haben ihre eigene Seite gemacht, wir haben uns auch geöffnet. Und wir haben so eher gedacht: Die SPD, die da langsam stärker wurde, oder irgendwas anderes wird mal die Zeitung übernehmen, so die Phase. Und dann entstanden also linke Projekte, die Zeitung „Die Andere“ und so, ständig neue Zeitungen. Es war eine Phase des Ausprobierens des demokratischen Aufbruchs. Und nicht der Wiedervereinigung, das war so weit weg.

Und da hat auch ... Die Hoffnung kam auch nicht mit der Grenzöffnung und nichts. Ich glaube auch, wenn man damals die Leute gefragt hätte, bis ins Frühjahr hinein: „Glauben Sie, dass wir in einem Jahr Teil der Bundesrepublik sein werden?“, hätten die gesagt: „Sie haben ja ein Rad ab“, „Geht gar nicht“, „Wie soll denn das gehen?“ Und die hatten auch ihre Vorstellungen, die wollten gern ihre billigen Wohnungen weiter haben und ihre sichere Arbeit, und trotzdem immer mal rüberfahren und schön einkaufen. Aber womit? Geld hatte man wohl nicht und so, Geld war ...

Und dann kam dieser Wahlkampf und so, da glaubten wir ja oder hofften wir noch, dass die PDS noch gut Stimmen abkriegt Da war ja noch alles offen, na, und das wurde ja als erste freie Wahl dargestellt. Und stimmt auch, rein formell stimmt das auf alle Fälle. Von den Kräfteverhältnissen aber war es durchaus eine problematische Geschichte, finde ich, weil: Die DDR war noch souverän, aber die Westparteien haben sehr stark diese kleinen Parteien, diese

kleine Mini-SPD oder diese CDU, die eigentlich von den Mitgliederzahlen überhaupt ein Randpartei in der DDR war, gepusht. Vor allen mit Werbematerialien, mit Auftritten der Politiker und so. Das war durch außen ... Also, wenn die heute sagen, das haben alles die DDR-Bürger aus freien Stücken, das ist einfach so auch nicht, so nicht wahr. Also sie haben schon durchaus ihr Parteiensystem da in dieser Form übergestülpt, einfach als Werbefeld. Kohl ist in Sachsen getreten und hat Versprechungen gemacht. Er hat Versprechungen gemacht, dass die D-Mark kommt durch die Wiedervereinigung, die haben in diese Richtung Versprechungen gemacht und haben eine Eigendynamik ausgelöst damit.

(1:31:16)

Am Abend des 18. März 1990 war uns klar, dass der Zug jetzt in eine andere Richtung fährt. Da war die CDU, wir wussten jetzt: Dahinter ist der Westen, dahinter ist jetzt Kohl, dahinter ist ... die DDR wird irgendwann nichts mehr zu sagen haben. Die Leute der DDR nicht. Und es war ja tatsächlich so, die de-Maizière-Regierung ... das war im Grunde ... wir hatten da nicht viel. Ich hatte mal ein Interview mit der letzten Staatschefin gemacht, mit der Sabine Bergmann-Pohl. Ganz ganz großes langes Interview, gar nicht lange her. Die ist jetzt im Vorstand vom, Roten Kreuz. Sie war die letzte Staatschefin der DDR. Die hatten in dieser kleinen CDU - die konnten ja nicht plötzlich Westminister einsetzen - zu wenig Leute, um die ganzen Ministerämter zu besetzen, so. Der de Maizière sollte dann zugleich Fraktionsvorsitzender und Staatschef und Parteivorsitzender und Ministerpräsident oder was weiß ich sein ... und dann haben sie die Sabine Bergmann-Pohl, eine Lungenärztin, gefragt, ob sie nicht Volkskammerpräsidentin sein wolle. Hatte Sie sich auch Bedenkzeit erbeten, eine Zeit zurückgezogen, und dann gesagt: „Ja okay, mache ich.“

Und dann war sie Volkskammerpräsidentin, und da es keinen Staatschef mehr gab, hat man dann als Übergangseinrichtung gesagt: Die Volkskammerpräsidentin ist bis zur Wahl eines neuen Präsidenten auch Staatschef. Und da ist diese Lungenärztin, die eben noch, was weiß ich, in ihren Dings war, plötzlich zu Staatsbesuchen gefahren. Das hat sie ja alles erzählt, für sie war es auch unheimlich spannend und so. Für uns war es damals, wir haben mal gesagt: Was sind denn das für Leute? Aber das waren halt Übergangslleute, na. Es gab ja niemanden, da war ein Vakuum.

Und da hat irgendwie der (Richard von) Weizsäcker ihr einen Mitarbeiter an die Seite gestellt, und die ritt da in der Volkskammer ein, da waren natürlich die alten Mitarbeiter noch da, die konnten nun mitmachen oder nicht. So wie es halt so ist. Übergangszeit. Ja. Und in der Phase haben wir als Journalisten weiter natürlich ... Wir haben uns von der Partei immer mehr verabschiedet, auch innerlich. Wir sind auch ausgetreten, massenweise. Es sind in der Redaktion auch Leute auch ausgetreten. Es gab eine Parteiversammlung, wo die dann, in Tränen aufgelöst, ihre Parteibücher auf den Tisch geschmissen haben, und ausgetreten sind. Leute. Weil sie einfach völlig erschüttert waren, was da nur alles raus kam.

Ich meine, ich hab das immer schon gewusst und gedacht, dass so was passiert, hinter verschlossenen Türen. Das irgendwelche Leute sich da irgendwelche Häuser bauen lassen und so. Das war gar nicht der Kern der Sache. Der Kern der Sache lag bei mir viel tiefer. Viel historischer, viel weiter zurück. Wo begann es falsch zu werden? Das war meine Hauptfrage. Wo begann es eigentlich? Und was machen wir jetzt damit? Also eine geistige Frage.

Und da ... wollen wir dann ganz kurz den Weg zur Einheit und dann noch mal zu mir zurück.

(01:34:43)

Die Einheit ist auch deshalb, dann irgendwann relativ stark von uns als Journalisten der Berliner Zeitung mit ... nicht gefordert worden, aber es gab auch Kommentare, die in diese Richtung gingen. Vor dem Hintergrund, dass mit dem Zusammenfall der Macht auch ein gesetzloser Raum entstand, den viele Leute ausnutzten. Und man auch ein, ein Herrschaftsvakuum hatte und der Ruf einfach in die Richtung ging: Nun macht man doch endlich eine ... wenn, dann muss doch endlich ein gesetzliches System her. Und da gibt es nun mal das Grundgesetz, da gibt es ein Rechtssystem.

Dann gab es da noch die Diskussion: Was passiert, Beitritt, Anschluss, was weiß ich. Dann schließen wir uns doch diesem Westen an, dann ging es nur noch um den Weg. Der wurde in der Volkskammer beschlossen, und die haben natürlich den Weg des Beitritts mit allen Übernahmen, allen Dingen, und nicht der Neuvereinigung - so die Richtung neue Verfassung -, das hätte man auch machen können. Da waren wir eigentlich dafür. Wenn, dann beide Staaten zusammen, gucken, was kann man von beiden nehmen. Aber nein, wir waren da die Verlierer, und wir waren die plötzlich die ... wir haben uns selber, sozusagen, wir hatten selber eine Revolution, und so. Als wenn wir denn Krieg verloren hätten, wurden wir behandelt am Ende. Und das ist bis heute, dass die Leute ... Die Art und Weise, und die Folgen, die danach kamen.

Aber meine Sache ging einfach mehr noch zurück, weil ich eher so ein geistiger, historisch denkender Mensch bin. Ich kam dann in der Wendezeit schon in diese Redaktion, in dieses Ressort, das Propaganda hieß. Hatte dann die Seite, „Geistiges Leben“, über mehrere Jahre sogar, ganz allein dann. Und da ging es halt tatsächlich ..., daraus sind auch einige Artikel, die ich mitgebracht habe ... Unter Überschriften wie: „Darf jeder Demokrat werden?“ habe ich mich mit solchen Punkten beschäftigt. Und auch: Was ist mit der Ideologie passiert. Was ist da das Neue, wo ist jetzt hier der Sozialismus?

Die Leute wollten auch so was. Ganz Berlin, die Hauptstadt der DDR, also Ostberlin, das waren ja viele ... das war der Kopf der DDR, der geistige Kopf auch. Was Presse, was Fernsehen, was Kino sogar mit den Namen Babelsberg betraf, alles. Die ganzen großen Akademien mit Zehntausenden Mitarbeitern, das war alles Berlin. Und die hatten natürlich auch ein starkes Bedürfnis, sich auseinanderzusetzen inhaltlich. Während draußen der Zug der Einheit rauschte, war man noch mit dem Geist ganz weit hinten. Und saß dann plötzlich schon auf dem Finanzamt und musste irgendwelche elenden Bögen ausfüllen, weil man plötzlich Steuererklärungen machen musste. Die Leute hatten dann plötzlich mit diesem ganzen Alltagskram zu tun, mit der Suche nach neuer Arbeit, mit allem, was mit dem neuen System über sie hereinbrach.

Es war ja so: Am ersten Juli war Währungsreform, der fand folgendermaßen statt: Die Woche vorher gab es zum Beispiel in der Bahnhofstraße in Köpenick einen Ausverkauf. Alles runtergesetzt, gute Waren, Kindersachen kosteten plötzlich eine Mark. Dann wurde alles rausgeschmissen, alles aus den Läden, da waren leere Regale, ganze Kaufhallen waren leer. Es gab nichts. Und von einem Tag auf dem anderen waren die ganzen Regale wieder voll, mit Waren, die man noch nie gesehen hatte. Also man hat den Leuten neues Geld in der Hand gegeben, ein volles neues Währungssystem, und die vertrauten Waren aus dem Osten waren weg. Es gab keine *bambina*-Schokolade mehr, keine *Club Cola*, nichts, was einem vertraut war. Stell dir mal vor: In Amerika gibt es ja auch Sachen, die man gerne isst.

Wir waren ein Absatzmarkt, ein hundertprozentiger Absatzmarkt. Es gab dann Ostproduktmärkte, natürlich, ... wo man dann mühsam die Sachen gekriegt hat. Inzwischen gibt das alles wieder, ... du findest es wieder, es schmeckt natürlich zum Teil anders. Es ist auch alles egal. „Sie wollten doch immer Westschokolade!“ Na klar wollte man, auch.

Dieses Jahr nach der Wende, diese Wendezeit war selbst ein einziger Strudel. In diesem Strudel steckte man, man hat den Kopf nicht rausgesteckt und geguckt, wo geht denn das jetzt hin? Und wo sitzt du in 10 Jahren? Das erste Mal, dass ich ein bisschen zu Ruhe kam, war mit meiner zweiten Tochter 1996, als ich im Erziehungsurlaub war. Bis dahin hab ich 5 Jahre lang im Grunde genommen Trouble gehabt auf der Arbeit. Es kam Welten zusammen. Es kam auch zusammen, was nicht zusammenpasste, also nicht in politischer Art, da hat man sich zurückgehalten, aber die Art des Arbeitens, die Art wie man sich selbst präsentierte. Das Selbstverständnis des Journalisten.

Ich hab natürlich ... weil die Frage vorher stand ... das ist ganz gut, dann kommen wir jetzt ganz gut dahin. Wie wird man von einem kommunistischen Journalisten plötzlich zu so einem Journalisten einem freien Meinungsland so? [...]

(01:41:29)

Und wir haben in dem einen Jahr, wo wir keinen Herausgeber hatten, 1989/90, also eigentlich bis Gruner + Jahr uns aufkaufte, und dann langsam so neue Leute kamen, haben wir schreiben können, was wir wollten. Und haben auch in einer Freiheit und Anarchie erlebt, die wir auf die Art nie mehr erlebten, später. Wirklich, du hast Dinge geschrieben, und die wurden 1 : 1 abgedruckt. Und in dieser Zeit habe ich viele Dinge gemacht, wo ich tatsächlich auch über Dinge nachdenke.

Und die neue Chefin, die ich dann kriegte ... Ich gehörte eine Zeit lang, nachdem ich aus der Lokalredaktion raus bin, zu dieser Gesellschafts-Abteilung, die später „Geistiges Leben“ hieß, die behandelte Geschichte und Gesellschaft, im Grunde so was, heute würde man sagen Feuilleton, sie war eine Vorform des politischen Feuilletons. Also ich habe das politische Feuilleton in der Berliner Zeitung gemacht, kann man fast sagen, als es das noch gar nicht gab.

Mit nicht mal 30, obwohl ich wohl keine super spezielle Ausbildung gehabt habe, außer eine allgemeine gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Ausbildung. Aber das Interesse muss einfach da sein, und die Leute müssen da sein, die man befragen kann. Aber die dann kamen, so um 1991/92, waren daran gar nicht interessiert. Es gab es für mich dann auch noch mal so einen Knick. Weil, ich fand es durchaus wichtig, und Leser fanden es auch wichtig. Wir haben Briefe bekommen ...

(01:43:35)

[*Pause*]

(01:43:44)

Also viele fanden es durchaus wichtig, dass es solche Seiten gibt, so eine Art politisches Feuilleton, Sachbücher und so was, wo man auch über diese Dinge, diese ideologischen historischen Sachen sich klar wird und Artikel macht. Aber die neue Chefin, die ich hatte, wollte so ein Akademiker-Seite, eher so für Westberliner. Die kam aus der Freien Universität, die wollte alles ummodellern. Ich sollte denn plötzlich auf dem Gesamtberliner Uni- und Akademiker-Markt mitschwimmen. Und das war für mich unheimlich schwierig, weil ich kannte von den Westberliner ... ich kannte die Freie Universität nicht, die Technischen Universität nicht, ich kannte diese ganzen Geschichten gar nicht. Das ist ja nun kein Grund, sich nicht damit zu beschäftigen, ich hab es ja auch geschafft.

Aber es kam Welten aufeinander, und für bestimmte Leute, die dann in die Berliner Zeitung kamen, zählte halt nur die andere Welt, weil die nur die kannten. Die DDR war tot. Und du konntest aber als DDR-Journalist nicht plötzlich selbstverständlich und selbstbewusst in dieser anderen Welt mitspielen. Und mit diesen ganzen Kollegen auf den Pressekonferenzen da drüben oder irgendwoanders, du hattest die Hintergründe einfach nicht.

Und das waren Probleme, einfach diese Inhalte neu zu lernen. Und es war ein zweites Problem, das Selbstverständnis zu wandeln. Denn es war auch sehr stark, bei vielen. Es gab natürlich die Eitelkeit, und es gab natürlich vorher auch schon DEN Filmkritiker oder den Herrn Soundso, es gab auch Leute, die sich selber gerne schreiben sahen und lasen, sich selbst dann immer wieder lasen. Aber es gab trotzdem eine Art kollektive Mentalität, man hat auch gern zusammen gefeiert. Wenn jemand Geburtstag hatte, wurde halt aufgefahren, und man hat sich da getroffen und verlor dann den halben Tag so miteinander. Es war so eine Art Miteinander, es gab Weihnachtsfeiern, es gab dies und das, mal einem Ausflug und so, so ein kollektives Miteinander. Was ich gar nicht so das Wichtigste finde, was sein muss, also überhaupt gar nicht.

Aber sag dann mal, dass jemand sich profiliert auf Kosten eines andern, das jemand dafür dann gehen muss. Diese „Das-Boot-ist-voll“-Mentalität, die dann irgendwo kam. Oder: Wer nicht mitzieht, muss gehen. Also der Erich Böhme, der kam, es war der ehemaligen Spiegel-Chefredakteur oder so was, der wurde Herausgeber der Berliner Zeitung. Der hat gesagt: „Ich richte hier kein Massaker an. Wir werden hier eine liberale Zeitung, im Zweifel linksliberal. Wir werden zusammengehen mit der Leserschaft und zusammen mit der bisherigen Mannschaft eine neue Zeitung machen, das kann man auch nicht gegen die bisherige Leserschaft. Man muss auf deren Augenhöhe bleiben.“ Das war eine kluge Entscheidung. Die Washington Post war sein Ziel, so sollte die Berliner Zeitung werden. Und dann gab es so eine Mannschaft, nach und nach kamen immer mehr Leute aus dem Westen, sie man so als Ressortleiter oder als Kollegen dann hatte, das klappte also ganz gut. Man hat aber auch oft auch noch nebeneinander so gearbeitet. Es gab durchaus Reibereien. So war es nicht. Ich hatte mit meiner Chefin durchaus Reibereien. Der Georgia Tornow, einer der ehemaligen taz-Chefredakteuren, der Tageszeitung in West

Berlin. Überregional später dann. Und es gab durchaus Reibereien, Reibereien, die aber vor allem auch mit der Art des Arbeitens zu tun hatte. So.

(01:48:26)

Dazu kam eben auch noch, was für mich bis heute schwierig ist, dass man eigentlich so ein Informationsjäger sein muss, so ein Rechercheur, der allen Leuten ständig hinterherrennt, und ich komm aber ein bisschen aus eine anderen Ecke. Deshalb bin ich in der Wissenschaftsredaktion ganz gut aufgehoben. Oder im Feuilleton. Es gibt hier den investigativen Journalisten, der kann oft nicht gut schreiben. Es gibt den Kritiker, der würde am liebsten das Werk selber schreiben und ist einfach nur neidisch, dass der andere Künstler ist und er selbst drüber schreiben muss. Wenn der jetzt eine Art Bericht schreiben muss: Wie war der Abend, also von der Umgebung und so, das ist ihm völlig ... oder sogar sagen wir mal so: Wenn der Kritiker ein Porträt über einen Kulturpolitiker schreiben soll, dann sagt er: „Wieso, das ist doch Sache der kulturpolitischen Journalisten. Ich bin doch der Kritiker, ich schreib doch nur über Opern oder Konzerte. Aber bei der Intendanten-Diskussion hört es bei mir schon auf.“ So. Und dann gibt es den politischen Redakteur. Und es gibt auch solche außerhalb dieser Sparten. Und man muss seine Stärken finden, und nicht jeder ist für alles zu haben. Das zu lernen, das man diese Stärke finden muss und die ganz bewusst ausprägen und auch vermarkten muss, das war ein ziemlicher Weg.

Das ist also, in der DDR war es durchaus so: Du hast einen Bericht geschrieben, und jeder hat mal eine Glosse geschrieben, und jeder hat mal einen Kommentar geschrieben, und ja gut, es gab natürlich auch Leute, die bessere Reportage schreiben konnten, es hat sich denn auch so hier ... Der Alexander Osang war da als FDJ-Redakteur und hat schon Porträts und Reportagen geschrieben, der war einfach mal so ein Typ, der so halb-literarische Form machte.

Und es kam gut an bei den Lesern. Und ich bin eben ich bin eben ein anderer Typ. Ich habe eher so die hintergründigen Sachen, die betrachtenden Dinge geschrieben, und kam auch sehr gut an. Und ich schreibe auch gern Glossen und Kommentare, bin eher der bewertende Typ. Und dieses, dass man so zu diesem, was man eigentlich als Journalist ist, was seine Stärken sind, findet, die gut vermarktet und versucht, wie man die Dinge, die man machen muss, möglichst auch gut macht, weil: man muss auch andere Dinge machen, muss auch Berichte schreiben und auch Interviews machen und so ... mache ich auch gern. Aber es gibt eben Sachen, die man lieber macht. Und das ist ein sehr vielschichtiges Neulernen. Und gar nicht so, dass wir alle verbohrt Ideologen waren, die die neue Zeit nicht begriffen. Das war es eigentlich bei mir jetzt zum Beispiel gar nicht. Obwohl, ich Reflexe habe. Und sehr wohl auch irrational reagieren kann.

In mir leben zwei Welten, denn ich war ja, als die Mauer fiel 1989, wurde ich 28, war ich ja 27. Hatte also schon ein Leben bis zum Erwachsensein hinter mir in der DDR. Also ein erstes Leben, und dann begann das zweite Leben. Und ich teile das auch in zwei Leben. Und welches gefällt mir besser? Das Jetzige gefällt mir besser. Nicht weil ich als Kind nicht super Sachen erlebt habe und so, sondern weil mich das jetzige, diese neue Kommunikation, das Menschen-Begegnen, Horizonterweitern, über Dinge nachdenken, frei nachdenken, Bücher lesen, Filme gucken, die ich kann, Reisen können, einfach meiner Mentalität besser entspricht. Und nicht: „Du musst jetzt drei Jahre zur Armee und da abdienen.“ Obwohl ich auch da super Leute getroffen habe, Musik gemacht habe, auch danach viel Musik gemacht habe, heute noch mache und so. Und auch mein ganzer Freundeskreis aus dieser Zeit kommt, aber sich auch entwickelt hat. Das sind heute Kameramänner und was weiß ich, oder sind irgendwie in andere Branchen gegangen. Das Nach-Wende-Leben bekommt mir wesentlich besser und hält mich auch jung,

offensichtlich auch äußerlich. Wenn ich immer erzähle, was ich für große Kinder habe, dann heißt es: „He, wann hast du denn angefangen?“

Es ist eben wirklich etwas, was mir gut bekommt. Obwohl dieses Leben auch Seiten hat, wo man auch Angst kriegen kann. Und das ist schon durchaus also soziale Angst, damit kann der Ossi sehr schwer umgehen. Dieses Gefühl: Ach, hörst du mal da auf und bewirbst sich dann neu. Alle haben sich dann 30-mal beworben, es ist auch ganz normal, sich im Leben 60-mal zu bewerben oder so, hintereinander. Was sie einem so erzählen, damit kann der Mensch aus dem Osten, der ein gewisses Alter hat, sehr schlecht damit umgehen. Sich verkaufen zu müssen, sich anbieten zu müssen und dann zu hören: Na wir melden uns, und dann meldet sich keiner - und das nicht auf sich persönlich zu beziehen. Das ist schwer. Das würde auch mir schwerfallen, wenn mir das passieren würde.

Meine Frau hat das relativ früh machen müssen, hat sich früh auf eigene Füße gestellt. Weil sie aus dem Rundfunk sowieso alle rausgeschmissen wurden damals. Nein sie eher, weil sie dann verlagert wurden, nach Halle übrigens, zum Sender „Sputnik“, der kommt aus dem Stall, war früher Jugendradio DT64. Und sie war dann oft in Halle und hat da Dienste gemacht, in den 90er-Jahren, hat da Redakteursdienste gemacht. Und da ist aus dem Jugendradio DDR der Sender MDR Sputnik geworden. Die sind dann nach Halle umgezogen, wir sind nicht mitgezogen, weil ich hatte nämlich hier den besseren Job. Das war einfach so. Und sie hat sich dann auf eigene Füße gestellt, ein eigenes Journalistenbüro aufgemacht, hat auch maximal abgezockt die Leute, was zum Beispiel die Gründerbeihilfe betrifft. Aber die ist ja ein anderer Typ auch.

(1:55:33)

Ist Sie jetzt noch Journalistin?

Die ist Journalistin, macht auch Sendungen. Muss dann natürlich auch immer neu ... jedes Jahr neu. Das ändert sicher immer mal. Sie hat ja mal eine Zeit lang beim RBB-Rundfunk eine eigene Umwelt und Wissenschaftssendung, also eine umweltkritische, gemacht über mehrere Jahre. Die Wortsendungen wurden dann abgebaut, dann wurde daraus eher so ein Radio-Mix, auch mit kürzeren Beiträgen. Aber sie macht auch viele andere Sachen, sie macht auch Ausstellungen. Sie hat eine Ausstellung gemacht über Gastarbeiter in der DDR, die sehr erfolgreich ist. Die hießen ja Vertragsarbeiter. Oder wir hatten ja in der DDR auch Vietnamesen, Kubaner, Angolaner, Mosambikaner, also Leute, die auch hier die Drecksarbeiten macht, muss man auch mal sagen. Und die auch mies behandelt wurden, nachdem das alles zusammenbrach. Die Vietnamesen wurden zum Beispiel zum großen Teil einfach ausgewiesen. Und dass sie dann irgendwann anfangen, Zigaretten zu verkaufen, war auch eine Notgeschichte.

Aber obwohl: Die Vietnamesen gehören zu denen, die wirklich ... Also die Türken sind oft so unter sich als Gruppe auch. Aber bei dem Vietnamesen ... Sie gehen sehr stark in die Gesellschaft rein. Sie haben zwar ihr Tet-Fest, wir machen auch manchmal mit, dieses Jahr haben wir wieder beim Tet-Fest mitgemacht. Aber ihre Kinder, die sind ..., sie gehören zu den besten in die Schule und sollen auch straight gute Leistungen bringen, irgendwas Besseres werden, nicht im Laden hinten stehen. Also es ist schon eine interessante Entwicklung ...

Das war also, wie man so eine andere Art Journalist wird ...

(1:57:34)

Also um es zu zusammenfassen: Es hat einen mentalen Teil, das Selbstverständnis, wie man mit dem Job umgeht. Das hat einen inhaltlichen Teil. Und einen politischen auch. Aber der politische war für mich gar nicht so schlimm. Und um noch mal zu den Reflexen zu kommen,

warum man so schizophren ist. Also, wenn ich höre, dass jemand irgendeine allgemeine Bemerkung macht, so was Unhistorisches über die DDR, kann ich durchaus zum DDR-Verteidiger werden, und auch zum Mauerverteidiger komischerweise. Ja, weil ich einfach ..., ich will, dass man die Entwicklung solch eines Monstrums einfach mal historisch einordnet und nicht erzählt: Das waren böse Leute, die haben ihre Leuten eingesperrt, damit die nicht an die tollen Sachen im Westen rankommen und nicht an die gute Demokratie. Nein, verdammt, das beginnt alles bei Hitler, und noch viel weiter davor, ... ich ärgere mich die Platze über so was, so ein unhistorisches Herangehen.

Leute wie Kennedy, die haben nichts gemacht, als die Mauer gebaut wurde, aber die waren alle erleichtert, die haben gesagt: „Gott, machen Sie diese Scheiße zu. Diese Unruhe halt. Die interessieren uns sowieso nicht (da im Osten), die sollen ihr Ding machen, die Russen haben das Sagen.“ Es ging gar nicht um den Menschen, habe ich das Gefühl da in dem Moment. Und so lange den auf unserer Seite bauen, sagten die, interessiert uns das überhaupt nicht. Ich habe ja ein Buch darüber geschrieben („Die Königskinder von Bärenburg“), da gibt es den General Genny, und der guckte ganz genau, dass sie nicht im Westen bauen. Die sagten: Ja, bei sich können machen, was sie wollen. Es interessiert uns überhaupt nicht, was passiert. Die Blockade war was anderes, aber hier, dass sie sich da einmauern, das interessiert doch uns nicht. Da haben wir Ruhe, Gott sei Dank. Und es gab ja durchaus einen Grund dafür gab, das nicht zwei Systeme in diesen Formen nebeneinander bestehen können.

Wir haben ja gedacht: Die Mauer ist offen, wir können jetzt in fairem Wettbewerb irgendwie zusammen was machen. Das war Illusion. Sobald die Mauer auf war, war die Sache erledigt. Und das wussten die Honeckers, das wusste auch sicher Gorbatschow. Er hat ja die DDR einfach aufgegeben, schon viel früher, es gab ja schon Pläne: „Was sollen wir jetzt mit

denen noch? Was sollen die da? Uns bringen die nichts. Wir haben damals alle Maschinen demontiert und die Schienen alle weggenommen, uns bringt's ja hier nichts mehr. Es ist zu teuer, 500.000 Soldaten zu unterhalten, so schweine-teuer. Wie können die alle wieder zurückkehren, wo sollen die hin?“

Aber das haben sie dann gemacht. Die wollten bloß als faire Sieger verabschiedet werden, okay. Aber das die DDR für sie ein Klotz am Bein war, das haben wir dann hinterher durchaus gemerkt.

Aber ich kann auch zum DDR-Verteidiger werden, vielleicht sogar manchmal ein bisschen über das Ziel hinausschießen, und Dinge dann sagen, die ich vielleicht sonst so nicht sagen würde. Weil ich eben diese Mauer auch grausam fand, aber es ist eben eine Mauer, die druchaus aufgrund einer Konfrontation der Alliierten und Nachkriegs-Mächte entstanden war, und nicht weil da einige Leute Spaß hatten, plötzlich Menschen einzusperren. Und das muss man einfach sehen. So.

(02:01:15)

Und die Menschen in der DDR ... weil Sie vorhin fragten, ob die ... warum die zurückgelassen wurden, sind die jetzt angekommen oder nicht angekommen? Wer hat mir denn neulich? Ich habe neulich was ganz Interessantes gehört. Dass bei Umfragen kein einziger gesagt hat, dass er sich über die Wiedervereinigung gefreut hat. Sabine Rennefan, genau, eine Redakteurin von uns, sie hat ein Buch geschrieben, die ist aber erst nach der Wende zur Berliner Zeitung gekommen. Sie kommt aus Eisenhüttenstadt, wo auch Tom Hanks neulich war. Der nannte es ein „kommunistisches Paradies“. Doch nach dem Ende der DDR wurde dort die Industrie rückgebaut, die Leute wurden arbeitslos, und so, und gerade diese Generation (von Sabine Rennefan), die da aufwuchs - die waren nämlich in der Abiturklasse zur Wendezeit - ,

gerade die ist genau die Generation, die ins Loch rutschte. Die Eltern waren plötzlich die Schwachen. Sie hatten überhaupt gar keine Orientierung mehr geben können, waren plötzlich die Leute, die man trösten musste, als Kinder. Es gab aber nichts, niemand kümmerte sich um einen. Die einen wurden Nazis, die anderen besetzten Häuser. Das war genau diese Generation, die sich erst neu finden musste. Ich hab da noch was mitgeschleppt, sozusagen, eine Ideologie. Und ich hatte vor allen einen Job, ich war einfach 10 Jahre älter, als die. Das ist ein entschiedener Vorteil gewesen.

Keiner versteht, dass viele sagen, sie hätten sich nicht gefreut über die Wiedervereinigung und so. Da hat jetzt meine Kollegin aus Köln gesagt: Das kann doch gar nicht sein, wie denn das? Das kann man nur so verstehen: Über die Veränderungen haben sie sich garantiert gefreut, über die D-Mark, die Reisen und diese ganzen Sachen. Aber so, die Art und Weise der Wiedervereinigung, hat ja viele Leute einfach nicht da mitgenommen, wo sie standen. So nicht abgeholt. Also da spreche ich davon, von diesem Geistigen, das man hätte doch weiter treiben müssen. Ob das denn weiter so gelaufen wäre, ob die dann weiter mitdiskutiert hätten? Weiß ich nicht.

Aber es gab damals schon den Hans-Joachim Maaz, als Psychiater da, der tatsächlich schon vom „Gefühlsstau“ geredet hat. Es gibt so psychologische Studien über die Psyche des DDR-Bürgers. Da wird dann immer erzählt, ja, der ist deformiert werden, durch seine DDR und so, weil die Kinder (im Kindergarten) alle in Reih und Glied auf dem Topf sitzen mussten, und plötzlich sind die alle Kriminelle heute. Es gibt ja so West-Psychologen oder auch Ost-Psychologen, die gerne etwas erzählen. Ich glaube nicht, dass das Problem in einer grundlegenden menschenverachtenden Seite oder dem Schulsystem der DDR liegt.

Ich glaube, auch in der DDR konnte man innerhalb des Betriebes, innerhalb seiner Gruppe durchaus über viele Dinge reden. Gegen den Staat durftest du nichts sagen, nach außen durfte nichts dringen. Da war aber keine generelle Sprachlosigkeit oder so. Und auch keine generelle Versklavung. Viele haben mitgemacht und dabei ihr Ding gemacht. Zum Beispiel musste jeder Schüler ins GST Lager, jeder musste irgendwie seine militärische Ausbildung machen. Aber im Alltag geht so was doch immer mit Jux und Tollerei ab. Wer sich nicht gerade tatsächlich anlegte, wer nicht gerade in den Knast kam und in die Mühle der Staatssicherheit, dem ging es gar nicht so schlimm.

(02:06:01)

Andererseits würde ich das alles nicht schönreden. Es gibt sicher auch Leute, die haben einen Knacks weg von der DDR, und es gab sicher auch Leute, die diszipliniert wurden, auch an der Schule, und so. Und wenn du so ein Typ warst, der gerne aneckte, dann hattest du es schwer, garantiert. Du musstest mit dem Strom schwimmen. Das ist so. Aber das ist nicht das Problem, warum der DDR-Bürger angeblich so verkorkst ist heute. Ich glaube, die Probleme liegen bei vielen auch darin, dass sie ihre Arbeit verloren haben, also in ganz realen Sachen. Und es ist ja nicht so, das es dann reale Auffangmöglichkeiten gibt, sozialer Natur. Diese Arbeitsmaßnahmen, die das Jobcenter anbietet, und was weiß ich, das sind alles vorübergehende Dinge und alles so organisierte Dinge. Wo man halt mal hingeh, eine Computerschulung macht oder irgendwas. Diese sozialen Strukturen, die waren ja in der DDR ganz anders..

Nehmen wir nur ein Dorf, in Thüringen, wo meine Frau immer hinfuhr im Urlaub. ... Die hatten früher im Ort eine Schule, sie hatten da eine Kneipe, die hatten einen Konsum, die hatten eine LPG, also eine Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft, und das Leben spielte sich in dem Dorf ab. Man feierte, es gab ja viele Sachen nicht, aber da hat man zum Beispiel sein

Gemüse selber angebaut. Und die hatten zum Beispiel ihre Thüringer Rostbratwürste, die gab es woanders nicht, die waren ihr Alleinstellungsmerkmal. Die hat man dann noch den Verwandten aus Berlin mitgenommen, und so da hatte man was Besonderes. Die waren was, sie hatten was, sie sind Traktor gefahren, die hatten Viehzeug, was auch noch was einbrachte, schwere Arbeit aber eben auch Urlaub trotzdem, weil sie in der LPG waren. So, rumgemeckert: Im Konsum gibt's nichts und dies und das, natürlich, klar. Alle haben gemeckert in der DDR, muss man sagen, ständig alle gemeckert. Aber, das war auch ein gemeinsames Meckern. Meckern, was auch zusammenschloss. Heute ist in diesen Dörfern nichts mehr. Da wohnen die Leute nur, fahren dann mit den Autos nach irgendwohin, die alten Leute können nichts mehr einkaufen, es gibt keinen Konsum mehr, es gibt keine Kneipen mehr, es gibt gar nichts mehr. Die treffen sich mal zum Maibaumsetzen oder so, und da wird auch kräftig gesoffen. Oder mal zum Familienfest. Also das wird noch ordentlich hochgehalten, zumindest versucht. Aber ein soziales Leben gibt's da nicht mehr.

Und das ist der entscheidende Kern. Der DDR Bürger, das Leben des DDR-Bürgers, die Fortsetzung der gemütlichen Schunkelabende der Nazis mit anderen Mitteln, muss man fast ehrlich sagen. Aber die Leute brauchten so was. Irgendwie brauchten die so was auf dem platten Land, hier in der urbanen Stadt Berlin vielleicht nicht. Hier trifft man sich abends immer mit irgendwelchen Leuten. Aber es gibt so Dörfer, Kleinstädte, wo man einfach eine seltsame Art von sozialem Leben haben muss, wo nicht jeder so auf sich allein gestellt sein kann, weil er mit sich und seinem leeren Kopf nichts anfangen kann.

Einfach, um es auf dem Punkt zu bringen: Die soziale Struktur wurden zerstört, und diese soziale Struktur hing in der DDR an den Betrieben, da waren die Kindergärten, an den kommunalen Projekten. Nach der Wende in der DDR überhäufte man diese ganzen

Wohnungsverwaltungen mit einem Haufen Altschulden, die die gar nicht tragen konnten, weil offenbar in der DDR die Stadt selbst die Schuldenlast für kommunale Dinge trug. Mit der Privatisierung wuchsen die Schuldenberge, und viele sind daran kaputt gegangen. Ich glaube, das Problem sind tatsächlich die unterschiedlichen Definitionen von Gesellschaft. Und dass bei den Leuten, die lange in der DDR gewesen sind, das Soziale im Mittelpunkt steht – mit seinen positiven und negativen Seiten. Du musstest du auch mitmachen. In diesem Sinne ähnelte die DDR durchaus auch ein bisschen dem alten Nazisystem. (...) Die DDR war nach innen scheinbar klein und gemütlich und nach außen durchaus fremdenfeindlich, ängstlich - obwohl wir immer die Völkerfreundschaft und Verbrüderung haben wollten und so. Aber man hörte auch Sprüche, wie: „Was macht denn der Neger da auf der Straße?“, „Die Nachbarin hat einen Schwarzen geheiratet. Was macht denn der mit ihr?“ Also es gab so eine Fremdenfeindlichkeit, aber die Leute waren trotzdem von ihrer Art her gutmütig.

Dennoch: Das führte dann irgendwann auch zu diesen ganzen dummen Sachen nachher, dass sie gegen Ausländer protestierten, vor Ausländerheime zogen. Haben selber keine Arbeit mehr, die LPG ist kaputtgeschlagen, es gibt keinen Konsum mehr, aber plötzlich wird irgendwo im Dorf ein Ausländerheim gebaut, das hat man „von oben“ entschieden. Ein normaler menschlicher Mensch, der mit Menschen umgehen kann, regt sich da nicht auf und schlägt seinem Gegenüber auch nicht auf die Nase, egal wer da ist. Aber da hat sich so eine Scheiße entwickelt. Und es gab auch falsche Entscheidungen, dass sie Menschen alle in bestimmte Wohnheime steckten, weil sie dann alle unter sich sind.

Und es ist eben eine Sache der Struktur. Und da hat die Gesellschaft, die bundesdeutsche Gesellschaft, nicht nachgedacht. Obwohl sie offenbar in anderen Fällen durchaus in der Lage war, einen anderen Weg zu gehen. Ich weiß nicht, wie es genau im Ruhrgebiet war, als sie die

Kohleförderung langsam einstellen. Da haben sie zumindest viel Geld reingepumpt, damit keine sozialen Verwerfungen entstehen. Andererseits ist in dieser Gesellschaft so was wie soziales Leben auch immer eine Geschichte von Vereinen, von Privaten, also es ist sehr privat organisiert. Du kannst dich in der heutigen Gesellschaft wunderbar für Dinge einsetzen, für viel viel mehr Dinge einsetzen, die in der DDR nie möglich gewesen wären. Aber du musst irgendwie aktiv werden, selbst aktiv werden, irgendwo hingehen, irgendwas gründen, in einen Verein eintreten oder irgendwas. Und das nimmt dir kein Staat ab. Dieser Staat, diese Gesellschaft ist nicht für das Soziale verantwortlich, nur dafür, dass man die nötigste soziale Absicherung hat. Aber für das soziale Leben nicht. Und das ist ein Missverständnis, das bei vielen heute noch drin ist. Man guckt eben im Osten sehr stark auch nach dem Staat: Der müsste was machen. Hier müssten die doch was tun und so. Aber der Staat ist dafür nicht verantwortlich, der sollte immer kleiner, immer schmaler, immer schwächer werden. Am besten, wenn die FDP das Sagen hätte, würde nur noch der Außenminister existieren, oder was weiß ich, und die Kanzlerin, nur kein Wirtschaftsministerium. Das geht doch alles von alleine, die Wirtschaft reguliert sich doch von alleine!

(02:14:14)

Ich würde gern nur noch eine Frage stellen. Dann können wir Schluss machen. Ich würde gern wissen, ob Sie einen Unterschied sehen zwischen sich selbst und ihren westdeutschen Kollegen mit dem Sie jetzt arbeiten? Also sehen sie sich als Ost-Journalist oder als Journalist?

Also immer weniger. Also ich sehe mich als Journalist mit Ost-Sozialisation. Und ich sehe das aber im Moment durchaus als interessanteren Hintergrund und auch ein bisschen als Vorteil in bestimmten Momenten. Ich muss ja auch dazu sagen. Wir sind so weit jetzt von dieser

Zeit entfernt, und es kommen neue Generationen, so dass man schon als Journalist an sich durch seine Erfahrung einen großen Vorteil hat. Dass man sich gar nicht zurückgesetzt fühlen muss. Ich glaube, dass es für mich eher fast eine Generationsgeschichte ist. Ich hab Kinder, die schon in einer ganz anderen Welt aufgewachsen sind. Mit ganz anderen Gedanken. L*** ist zwar immer noch mit ihrem Geburtstag und so sehr stark an diesem Zusammenhängen drin (geboren am 9. November 1989, Tag des Mauerfalls). Aber ich hab zum Beispiel jetzt - ich bin ja in die Wissenschaftsredaktion gekommen – wir sind zusammengesetzt aus jemandem aus Frankfurt, der aber auch in der DDR gewohnt hat als Kind, und dann irgendwie rausging ... mit dem ich mich sehr gut verstehe, weil er auch von der DDR viel begreift und so. Ja aber im Westen eigentlich aufgewachsen und gearbeitet hat. Ich habe von der Art des Schreibens, von der Art des Denkens, von der Art, die Dinge zu sehen, unheimliche Ähnlichkeiten mit ihm.

Dann habe ich eine Kollegin, die ist 20 Jahre jünger. Da gibt es gar keine Ost-West Probleme, obwohl sie aus Köln kommt und wir durchaus mal auch unterschiedlicher Meinung sein können. Sie hat sich zum Beispiel über bestimmte Dinge noch gar keine Gedanken gemacht, und hat auch so ein Schablonen-Bild (von der DDR), aber das kann man auch keinen vorwerfen. Ich versuche dann mehr zu erzählen, und wenn man es in einer richtigen Art erzählt und nicht vorwurfsvoll, dann geht alles super, dann kann man gut diskutieren. Wenn man einfach nur sagt, man tauscht Meinungen aus - und dann nicht: „Nee, nee, nee, du hast doch nicht recht und so“. Einem anderen das Recht zu nehmen, ist sowieso Quatsch, so.

Wie finde ich mich also jetzt gegenüber einem West-Journalisten? Diese Frage kann sich so für mich gar nicht mehr stellen, da müsste man vielleicht die Altersstufen vergleichen. Da gab es eine sehr starke Annäherung, und ansonsten ist es eher so eine Generationsfrage. Und da, muss ich sagen, habe ich tatsächlich immer noch so das Gefühl - nicht immer noch, ich habe das

Gefühl -, dass ich ein paar Defizite habe, die ich, wenn ich im Westen aufgewachsen wäre, vielleicht nicht hätte. Zum Beispiel, was Sprachen betrifft. Wir hatten Russisch und Französisch - aber als Zweitfremdsprache - und ein sehr unlebendiges Politik-Englisch. Auch an der Uni, aber was haben wir da gemacht? Wir haben irgendwelche Zeitungen übersetzt oder was weiß ich. Aber nicht die normalen Umgangsformen.

Ich würde gerne mal ein Jahr irgendwo hingehen, und das habe ich nie gemacht und nie geschafft, weil ja - ich bin doch hier der Verdiener der Familie - das ist doch leider so - und würde gerne mal richtig super Englisch lernen zum Beispiel. Irgendwann mal ein paar Monate. Ich war nie in Amerika zum Beispiel bis jetzt. In England und was weiß ich überall schon, aber in Amerika sind wir noch nicht gewesen. So viele Leute waren da. Ja meine Tochter ist da, zum dritten Mal jetzt. Ecuador ist ja auch Amerika, weil ja, bei uns wird immer über Amerika geredet, und man meint ja nur immer nur die Vereinigten Staaten. ... Meine Tochter unterrichtete indigene Kinder in einer Bergschule in Ecuador, da war sie ein Jahr als Freiwillige, mit einer englischen Organisation. Sie redete mit den eigenen Leuten nur Englisch, mit den Leuten Spanisch und Quechua, also indianisch auch, also das hat sie auch noch mitgelernt. Und das ist was ganz anderes. Also sie, sie spricht natürlich Englisch und was weiß ich, und wenn ich dann mal mit ihr und einer ihrer Freundinnen weggehe, dann muss ich schon ganz das Radar aufsperrn. Dann bekomme ich nur so ein Drittel, höchstens die Hälfte mit, was sie reden. Man ist halt nicht trainiert.

Also, das sind so Dinge ... Für mich ist die Wende noch rechtzeitig gekommen, um Ägypten und was weiß ich alles so anzugucken, oder nach Italien zu fahren. Aber es hat sich bisher immer so auf Europa, Asien, Afrika konzentriert, nach Amerika bin halt ich noch nicht, aber sicher werde ich es auch mal machen. Aber es ist auch ein langer Weg, und man braucht

doch mal eine längere Zeit dafür. Aber S*** würde gerne mal mit einem Wohnwagen durch (Amerika) fahren. Also das machen wir vielleicht mal. Und es gibt auch Klischees über Amerika oder die Amis oder so. Es ist genau so wie „die Deutschen.“ Und es gibt ... ich glaube deshalb sieht man als Amerikaner ... als jemand aus den USA vielleicht Europa nur so als einen Brocken, weil wir auch Amerika nur als einen Brocken sehen. So viele Unterschiede zwischen Ostküste und Westküste, zwischen den einzelnen Staaten. Wir wissen, es ist ein ganzes Universum. Eine Welt für sich. Und doch sagen wir: Wir fahren halt nach Amerika.

Sie müssen nach Kalifornien.

Ja ich muss nach Kalifornien, aber ich interessiere mich auch für die Ostküste, für beides vielleicht. S*** kennt sich sehr gut mit Indianerkultur aus, und hat immer gegen diese ganzen Pseudo-Indianerfilme, die übrigens auch aus Hollywood kommen zum Teil, mit der Kultur beschäftigt. Sie weiß schon über die ganzen Stämme und ihre Kulturen Bescheid.

(02:21:15)

Es ist interessant, was man so für Hobbys hat. Es gibt ja immer so diese Klischeevorstellungen, und Europa ist genau so vielfältig, von den Sprachen her und so. Aber hier gibt es eben schon ... hier gab so viele ... wir hatten immer mal ... Als wir kleine Kinder hatten, haben wir unser Urlaubsreisen immer dorthin gemacht, wo ein Strand war und wo man nicht so wahnsinnig weit fahren musste. Du kannst nicht mit dem vierjährigen Kind nach Amerika fliegen. Freunde von uns, die waren im Nationalpark so und so (Yosemite) und im Death Valley, mit dem vierjährigen Kind, es war super, es gab schöne Bilder von da. Da gibt's ja diese Goldgräberstadt, wo alles noch da liegt wie vor 80 Jahren oder so. Und es gab ganz tolle Bilder im Facebook. Da habe ich mich auch gefreut, aber es ist doch ein wahnsinniger Flug. Wir

haben halt die Zeit dann genutzt, und haben dann dafür uns immer mal eine Woche genommen, wo die Großeltern halt Zeit hatten, und wir haben uns dann halt Rom und Istanbul und so angeguckt. Bis dann die Kinder sagten, sie wollten unbedingt mit, da waren sie aber größer. Aber dann wollten sie eher nach Paris und nach London.

Seltsamerweise ist dieser Blick dahin gar nicht so, sogar. Aber wenn man vielleicht jemanden kennt ...? Also L*** kennt ganz viele, überall in der ganzen Welt. Durch die Türkei ist sie auch getrampt, mit einer Freundin, fünf Wochen. Weil auch durch diese freiwilligen Leute, die kamen immer aus Australien, aus Amerika und aus England auch, aus Großbritannien, und dadurch kennt sie überall Leute. Aus London und aus Mittelengland, und ich glaube auch in Kalifornien.

(02:23:26)

[...]

(2:24:03)

Ich habe über die Angela Davis neulich, die mal in Deutschland war, ein Porträt geschrieben. Weil die war, glaube ich, auch in der UCLA Professorin und macht jetzt, ich weiß aber nicht, wo sie da wohnt, aber die wohnt mit einer Frau zusammen ... Sie kennen den Namen, der Name ist ja bekannt, und die war ja hier ein Held. Die war hier eine Heldin, meilenweit. Wie John Lennon. Es gab diesen Afro-Look. Auch so hoch-gepowert, wie man sich in Amerika das gar nicht vorstellen kann, also wie jemand zu so einer halb-göttlichen Figur wird. Und das ist eben überhaupt das Problem, von so Ideologien. Dass man Leute so vergöttert, so verherrlicht, so auf ein Podest stellt, dass sie nichts Menschliches mehr haben. Als Angela Davis dann da war, 1973 in der DDR, zu den Weltfestspielen (der Jugend und Studenten), da war die schon raus aus dem Knast, und wir dachten wirklich, wir haben sie der sicheren Hinrichtung entrissen, durch

unsere Solidarität. Wir haben ständig Briefe geschrieben, körbeweise Rosen und Postkarten ... da wird sich Ronald Reagan gesagt haben: „Was soll das denn? Die sehen alle gleich aus, die Karten, alle vorgedruckt.“ Und ob das was gebracht hat, weiß ich nicht. Ich glaube, hinter den Kulissen hat da einiges stattgefunden. Sie soll ja mit irgendeiner Waffe und Geiselnbefreier im Gerichtssaal was zu tun gehabt haben.

Aber das war schon eine interessante Geschichte, aber für uns war das eben eine Schwarz-Weiß-Geschichte, und dass da was Dubioses bei sein könnte, mit Blank-Panther-Bewegung und so, so was kannten wir alles nicht. Die war eingesperrt, weil sie eben eine Freiheitskämpferin war. Aber solche Schwarz-Weiß-Modelle haben sich in den Köpfen festgesetzt, und so was haben die älteren Generationen immer noch.

Im Chile zum Beispiel, Chile war ja der zweite große Einbruch 1973, der Faschismus hat die Macht übernommen. Jetzt kenne ich Leute in Chile. Ich hab eine Freundin, die in Santiago wohnt, die hier mal zum Theatertreffen war, die durchaus auch eine ganz widersprüchliche Meinung hat über diese ganze Entwicklung. Da gab es auch nicht nur Gut und Böse, genauso wie hier, nicht nur Gut und Böse. Die Stasi war nicht nur das Böse und die anderen waren nur das Gute. *Das Leben der Anderen*, es gab ja diesen Film, ich hab da auch eine widersprüchliche Meinung, weil ich mein Land da nicht so wiedererkenne. Aber in vielen Dinge eben doch, und ich habe den Film mehrfach gesehen. Beim letzten Mal hat er mir plötzlich am besten gefallen, weil diese ... ich hatte nicht mehr diesen Impuls: „So sah das aber nicht aus bei uns, und solche Autos ist man nicht gefahren, und die haben jetzt nicht auf dem Dachboden gesessen, da wurde Wäsche aufgehängt.“ Diesen Impuls einfach mal zu unterdrücken und sich den Film dann so als Film anzugucken, mit der Aussage die er machen will. Und dann fand ich das ganz interessant, weil der eben in allen Ebenen doch gebrochene Charaktere zeigt. Auch die Schauspielerin ist ja

nicht einfach die Heldin oder die Missbrauchte oder die Gefallene. Und dann, wie gesagt, dieser widersprüchliche Stasi-Mann, der dann tatsächlich so (menschlich) reagiert ... Da sagte natürlich Hubertus Knabe, der Chef (der Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen) der sagte: „Niemand hätte jemand so reagiert!“ Mag sein. Mag sein, dass allein in dieser militärischen Hierarchie jemand nicht so ein Doppelspiel hätte treiben können, über längere Zeit. Aber darum geht es ja nicht. Es geht darum, dass es menschliche Leute und unmenschliche Leute überall gibt. Ja auch in so einem System gibt es solche und solche. Und nicht überall Verbrecher und (auf der anderen Seite) die Guten. Deshalb fand ich diesem Film ... Als ich zum Schluss geguckt habe, hat der mir am meisten gegeben. Weil auch diese Widmung zum Schluss in dem Buch und dieses mit den Akten und so ...

Und ich bin einfach dafür, dass nicht zu instrumentalisieren und nur so Dinge in den Raum zu werfen, so Schockworte, und einfach mal zu überlegen: Wie haben die Menschen in so einem System (gelebt), warum entstehen solche Systeme? Warum hat der Mensch offenbar auch einen gewissen Hang, solche Dinge entstehen zu lassen. Ob es auf der Staatsebene ist oder im Betrieb. Es gibt auch Betriebe, die autoritär geführt werden. So ein kleines diktatorisches System, wo man sich nicht traut, das Maul aufzumachen gegen seinen Chef. Das ist auch so, wenn plötzlich eine ganze Gesellschaft so beherrscht wird, aber dieselben Mechanismen herrschen. Ich sag mal lieber nichts. Jetzt werden bei uns 46 Leute entlassen, wir haben vorher, wir waren fast wie in einer großen Revolution, und jetzt denkt nur jeder an sich: Wie kommt er da durch, mich wird es ja nicht treffen ... Es ist also bei uns genauso, als wenn irgendwie von oben eine Bedrohungen kommt. Es geht darum: Wie reagiert man? Man sagt: Es hat alles kein Zweck. Die müssen sowieso sparen, das ist jetzt ... Aber es ist genauso, (wie man es früher in der DDR begründete): „Es hat alles keinen Zweck. Man kann gegen die da oben nichts machen. ...“

Der Klassenkampf erfordert nun mal eine Mauer. Wenn die nicht da wäre, würden sofort die Panzer aufeinanderfahren.“ Das ist auch eine Begründung. Und der höhere Zweck. Es ist immer ein höhere Zweck (der die Mittel heiligt) ... aber die Erfahrung muss man erst mal machen.

Aber es ist schon interessant, dass Sie sich so dafür interessieren. Ich habe so das Gefühl gehabt, der Zug ist so abgefahren, es interessiert kein Schwein mehr. Ich weiß, ich hatte da eine Phase nach der Wende, eine Zeit, so die ersten 10 Jahre. Etwa Mitte der 90er-Jahre kamen viele Leute nach Berlin, sehr viele Politikstudenten aus Frankreich zum Beispiel, weil hier gibt's an der FU dieses Sciences Po, das ist so ein Doppeldiplom. Die haben dann ihre Diplomarbeiten geschrieben und ihre Magisterarbeiten, und ich habe sehr oft solche Interviews geben müssen. Und die haben sich da sehr interessiert für die DDR und so und Berlin. Es war damals für die eine neue Entdeckung. Ich hab heute noch - ich unterrichte und der UDK, Universität der Künste - Studenten aus Frankreich, die sind immer so mit am offensten. Und die Deutschen interessieren sich füreinander gar nicht so. Auch Ost oder West, da wird gar nicht so intensiv darüber diskutiert. Wenn man nicht gerade ein ähnliches Interesse hat. (...) Das Interesse kommt immer von außen, aus Frankreich, aus Österreich. Ich hatte mal ein paar österreichische Studenten, die mich befragten, wir saßen irgendwie in so einem Biergarten draußen, und die waren so offen und dann hat man dann immer Lust. Dann bringt man auch Sachen mit, und dann haben die tatsächlich eine Arbeit daraus geschrieben. Oder eine andere Generation ... über mein Buch habe ich auch, jemand hat ein Theaterstück gemacht, irgendwelche Gymnasiasten.

Aber in der Redaktion wird über so was nicht so diskutiert, es hat sich einfach so entwickelt, und da gab es diese Stasi-Diskussion vor ein paar Jahren. Dann gab es, da versucht man möglichst sauber rauszukommen und dass möglichst wenig Schaden für die Redaktion angerichtet wird, dann wurde eine Ehrenkommission eingesetzt ... Und damit hat man gedacht,

die Debatte ist erledigt. Und ehrlich gesagt, die Leute, die sich da als Aufarbeiter hinstellen, da hat man nicht das Gefühl, dass sie tatsächlich ... da hat man nicht das Gefühl die wollen das Wirken der Staatssicherheit in den Medien erforschen. Aber am Ende geht es nur darum, zu gucken, wer ist noch dabei. Das ist es einfach. Eine Personalgeschichte. Es gab keine Strukturen, natürlich sind Strukturen auch mal Menschen aber so.

Wollen wir es abmachen?

(02:33:57)

Appendix 6: Susanne H.

The final interview I conducted was with Susanne H. Her husband Torsten, had mentioned her during his interview, and how she had adapted to the transitioning media landscape by moving from full-time employment to freelance work. She agreed to meet with me, and on April 18, we met at my apartment and had a warm and insightful conversation about her career and professional development.

(00:00:15)

Zum Anfang wurde ich gerne ein bisschen über Ihre familiären Herkunft hören.

Also ich bin 1965 in Berlin geboren, meine Mutter war alleinerziehend mit mir, war Lehrerin und Hortleiterin. Ich bin im Stadtbezirk Friedrichshain aufgewachsen. Ich weiß nicht, ob das jetzt eine Rolle spielt, hier im Osten von Berlin. Bin dann normal zur Schule gegangen. In der 8. Klasse zur EOS gekommen. Das war die weiterführende Schule. Ich weiß nicht wie man das am Besten vergleicht. Das ist Ihr Problem. Heute wurde man Gymnasium sagen. Hab dann 1983 Abitur gemacht. Das war dann in Mitte. Und als ich überlegt habe, was ich mal studieren will, gab es für mich drei interessante Sachen, Archäologie, Kriminalistik oder Journalistik. Weil irgendwie wollte ich immer was rauskriegen. Dann habe ich halt überlegt, ich hatte neusprachlichen Unterricht, also russisch, englisch und französisch, dass das für Archäologie ein bisschen doof ist. Außerdem waren die Möglichkeiten mal irgendwas, beispielsweise Ägypten zu sehen ziemlich gering. Und bei Kriminalistik habe ich mir die Studiengänge angeguckt und das war sehr juristisch, und sehr an den Staat gebunden, also sehr eng. Das war mir dann auch zu trocken. Und dann habe ich mich halt für Journalistik entschieden. Zum Rundfunk bin ich gegangen. Weil ich als Kind so hobbymäßig, bei Hörspielen mitgemacht habe. Also das war im

Kontakt meine Mutter zu einer ehemaligen Schülerin. Dadurch kannte ich einfach das Radio schon und auch das Gelände. Das war bei uns ziemlich weit draußen in der Nalepastraße. Dann bewarb ich doch dort, und das hat auch geklappt. Und das war in der DDR so, dass man ein Jahr Volontariat, also quasi ein Praktikum vorher gemacht hat, auch um damit beide Seiten rauskriegen passt das? Na, ist das geeignet? Und dann erst zum Studium gegangen ist. Und dann habe ich vier Jahre in Leipzig studiert. Dort meinen Mann kennengelernt, und hab danach, auch das war also in der DDR so richtig planwirtschaftlich organisiert, wer einmal beim Radio das Volontariat gemacht hat; der geht auch wieder zum Radio. Also wenn nicht was ganz Irres passiert, dass man aus familiären Gründen unbedingt in eine ganz andere Stadt will oder so, das war also schon vorgeschrieben. Und das wollte ich ja auch, und ich war damals beim Jugendradio von Stimme der DDR, die Redaktion nannte sich „Hallo“, und während ich in Leipzig studiert habe, ist aber aus dieser und aus der Jugendredaktion vom Berliner Rundfunk ein gemeinsames komplettes Jugendradio geworden. Also ein eigener Sender der wirklich 24 Stunden am Tag speziell für Jugendliche gesendet hat. Der wurde 1986 gegründet, wenn ich mich richtig erinnere, und zu dem bin ich deswegen auch zurückgekommen.

(00:03:12)

Okay, ich würde gern ein bisschen zurückgehen, und wurde gern ein bisschen hören über, wie war für Sie das Aufwachsen in der DDR, die Kindheit?

Unkompliziert. Also, meine Mutter war nicht in der Partei (SED) oder besonders systemkonform, aber ich hatte auch keine Berührungspunkte mit Leuten, die große Probleme mit dem System hatten. Und insofern war ich Pionier und FDJler, habe da meine Sachen so mitgemacht. Und ich habe das nicht alles, also gerade, wenn man älter wird, nicht alles

unkritisch gesehen, aber wie soll ich sagen, doch als eine etwas bessere Alternative als das andere Deutschland, was wir immer so vor Augen hatten. Also ich hatte mir relative wenig Illusionen gemacht, ich wäre auch nicht freiwillig gern rübergegangen. Selbst wenn man gesagt hätte, „Du kannst umsiedeln“ oder so, weil ich halt auch die Schattenseiten wie Arbeitslosigkeit und gewisse soziale Unsicherheit und solche Sachen durchaus gesehen hab. Also, auch jenseits der Propaganda, das wurde ja bei uns immer viel propagiert und so.

Eine Cousine meine Mutter lebte in Westberlin. Und die kam so ein, zweimal im Jahr zum Geburtstag oder so. Und die war jetzt überhaupt nicht links oder so, die ist sehr konservativ, aber sie hat immer ein sehr realistisches Bild von ihrem Leben gezeichnet. Also wenn man gesagt hat, weiß ich, „Aber bei euch sind ja die Geschäfte so voll“ und so, oder „Du kriegst so viel Rente.“ Dann hat sie gesagt, „Ja aber ich muss doch auch davon das und das und das bezahlen, also am Ende stehe ich nicht besser da als ihr. Mit eurem geringeren Einkommen, aber auch den geringen Lebenshaltungskosten.“ Es war ein relativ realistisches Bild. Also insofern hatte ich mir sehr viel mehr, wie dann Gorbatschow gesagt hat, Perestroika und Glasnost, also sehr viel mehr offenes Umgehen und kritischeren Umgang gewünscht, aber hatte halt in meiner Jugend auch den Optimismus, dass das schon noch werden wird.

Ja, also ich denke, ich wäre wahrscheinlich dann in meinem beruflichen Alltag sehr viel mehr in Konflikte gekommen, aber da kam dann zum Glück schon die Wende.

(00:05:26)

Okay, und Sie haben schon erzählt, wie sie zum Journalismus gekommen sind. Und wir haben schon über ihr Studium gesprochen, und wie war das Studium für Sie? ... Was beinhaltete ihre Ausbildung, damals?

Also das war wie bei eigentlich fast allen Studiengängen in der DDR, ja ich glaube selbst Ärzte und Ingenieure haben das gehabt. Sehr viel Marxismus-Leninismus, also zwei Jahre so eine Art wie man will Grundstudium, wobei ich sagen muss, dass gerade die politische Ökonomie der Kapitalismus mir sehr geholfen hat, die wird ja auch heute noch so gelehrt. Marx hatte da schon recht. Das hat mich jetzt so weit nicht besonders gestört. Wir haben zum Beispiel auch *Das Kapital* gelesen. Also, ich fand mich dann ein bisschen unausgelastet, ich hab also nebenbei noch einen Abendkurs als Französischübersetzerin gemacht, weil ich mein Französisch nicht verlieren wollte. Wir hatten an der Uni nur noch Russisch und Englisch, und ich hatte versucht, dann noch Außenpolitikseminare und Vorlesungen vor den Außenpolitikern zu belegen, aber das haben die mir dann nicht erlaubt, wegen unseres Stundenplans. Weil in derselben Zeit eine Vorlesung der Journalisten war, und für mich jemand hätte mitschreiben müssen. Das fand ich dann ein bisschen ärgerlich, aber gut. Und ich hab dann in der Spezialisierung, die wir dann in den letzten Studienjahren machen konnten, auch Außenpolitik belegt, in der schwachen Hoffnung, mit meinen Sprachkenntnissen und so eventuell dann doch mal ein Fuß aus der DDR raus setzen zu können. Also das wollte ich schon ganz stark, nicht um das Land zu verlassen, aber um meinen Horizont zu erweitern. Und ansonsten, also was wir an journalistischem Handwerk da gelernt haben, denke ich, kann nicht schlecht gewesen sein, weil eigentlich alle, die ich so kenne, die aus Leipzig ungefähr in meinem Alter gekommen sind, sind nach wie vor in den Medien auch erfolgreich tätig. Also, abseits all der Ideologie, würde ich sagen, dass das nicht so übel gewesen sein kann. Und ich denke auch, dass die enge Praxis-Verzahnung gut war. Wir wurden dazu angehalten, dass jeder in irgendeiner Leipziger Betriebszeitung oder einem anderen Organ, irgendwie arbeitet neben dem Studium, also nicht um Geld zu verdienen, sondern um quasi an der Basis zu sein. Und im Prinzip hatte jeder Betrieb

eine eigene Zeitung. Das waren oftmals nur so hektographierte Blätter, aber da war schon ein Anspruch, die Wirklichkeit relativ nahe wiederzugeben.

Wobei natürlich an dieser Wirklichkeit dann wieder von der Partei auch ständig rumgemäkelt wurde, wie man die das drehen soll. Dass alle immer nur bereit sind, den Plan überzuerfüllen, so ein Quatsch. Aber letztendlich war das so ein geheimes Einverständnis aller Leute in der DDR, dass man so eine Sache nicht ernst nahm. Weil jeder wusste, wie solche Aussagen zustande kommen. Und, dass der Plan eh nicht erfüllt wird. So hat man das zwar dann so geschrieben und alle haben drüber geschmunzelt und ihren Teil gedacht. Also das war nicht so, dass wenn man heute mit dem Abstand noch mal eine Seite ND liest oder so, also „Neues Deutschland“, dann denkt man natürlich die waren all ein bisschen verblendet. Aber es ist einfach so, dass man, das ist ja wohl in allen Diktaturen so, sehr viel zwischen den Zeilen liest, und sehr viel informell. Ja manchmal mit einem Komma an der anderen Stelle oder so, oder eine andere Gewichtung von irgendeinem Titel schon sehr viel Tendenzen ausdrücken kann. Wo man heute mit dem Hammer den Leuten sagen muss. „Das ist aber so!“ Das hat sich also dann vieles indirekt vermittelt.

(00:09:09)

Und was, also sie haben ein bisschen von den Enge, ... dass sie sehr viel gelernt habe über die Praxis von Journalismus und das es ihn geholfen hat und auch ihre Kollegen. Können Sie ein bisschen weiter davon erzählen?

Also wir waren unterteilt. Wir waren sechs Seminargruppen. Insgesamt etwa 100 Studenten, und davon war eine Gruppe für Agentur Journalismus. Das waren also Leute, die dann später für ADN (Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst) arbeiteten sollten. Dann gab es

drei Pressegruppen. Aus den verschiedensten Zeitungen. Also es war wirklich so, dass Leipzig die einzige universitäre Ausbildung für Journalisten war, das heißt, ob dann jemand aus Thüringen oder aus Rostock kam, die wurden alle dort ausgebildet. Es gab dort auch noch einen Fern- und Fachschul-Studiengang für Leute, die aus der Praxis eingestiegen waren, und da noch einen Abschluss machen sollten.

Aber die Hauptausbildung war da. Was auch dazu führte, dass in der DDR die Journalisten sich irgendwo alle untereinander kannten. Oder dann auch so ein Netzwerk entstand praktisch. Und dann gab es eine Rundfunkgruppe. Das waren wir mit 12 Mann plus 3 Ausländer, also 15, und eine ähnlich große Fernsehgruppe. Da war es auch so, dass es Leute waren, die dort schon Volontariat gemacht haben, und wir haben dann eben auch entsprechend unseren Medien eine etwas andere Ausbildung gehabt. Wir waren dann im Funkhaus Leipzig und haben also auch schon von der Technik her und so ganz anders gearbeitet. Und die Fernsehleute entsprechend.

(00:10:38)

Und ihre erste Tätigkeit nach dem Studium war bei diesem Jugendradio?

DT64, ja.

Und wie lange haben Sie da gearbeitet?

Bis 19... Ende 1992. Also man muss dazu sagen DT64 war ein nationales Jugendradio. Also das könnte man in der ganzen DDR auf guten UKW Frequenzen (Ultrakurzwellen) empfangen. Und nach der Wende war die Frage, was daraus werden soll. Weil die Struktur des Rundfunks, Hörfunk und Fernsehen in Westdeutschland ist eine länderorientierte. Und das wollte man dann für die DDR wieder, für die neuen Bundesländer. Und dann hat sich ja

praktisch der Norden, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern dem NDR (Norddeutscher Rundfunk) angeschlossen. Und dann waren die drei Länder des Südens: Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt und Thüringen so schlau und sagten, wir machen das zusammen. Wir bilden einen Verbund. Das ist der MDR (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk) heute. Was natürlich die Finanzierung und viele Sachen einfacher machte. Und dazu kam, oder der Hintergrund war der, dass da alle CDU-Regierung hatten nach der Wahl. Und der „Rote Osten“, also sprich Brandenburg, blieb dann übrig, und hat demzufolge dann seine eigene Anstalt aufgebaut den ORB, (Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg). Der DDR-Rundfunk hatte insgesamt 5 Sender. Das waren *Radio DDR 1 und 2*. *DDR 1* hatte, die hatten beide Landesfunkhäuser in jeder Bezirkshauptstadt der DDR, das waren ja 15, also sehr flächendeckend und zum Teil noch mit kleineren Bezirksstudios in anderen Städten. Und diese Struktur ist dann in die jeweiligen Länder-Anstalten überführt worden weitgehend. Da sind auch relativ viele Journalisten geblieben weil, ich sag mal aus dem Westen, aus Köln zum Beispiel, hatte jetzt keiner Lust irgendwo nach Schwerin in so ein kleines Funkhaus zu gehen. Da kamen ein paar Chefs, jemand hat das alles mit so umstrukturiert, aber im Prinzip sind die Leute vor Ort erst mal geblieben. Dann gab es *Stimme der DDR*, das war eigentlich ein direkt an den Westen gerichteter [Lachen] Propaganda-Rundfunk kann man sagen. Und witzigerweise hat man den fusioniert mit RIAS, Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor in West Berlin. Die wurden zum Deutschlandradio. Also man muss wirklich sagen, die beiden, die sich bis wenige Stunden vor der Fusion noch im Äther angeschrien haben gegenseitig. Und das ist für mich die einzige Fusion, die in diesem Medienbereich 100% geklappt hat, man hat nämlich wirklich alle Stellen paritätisch besetzt. Beispielsweise in der Wissenschaftsredaktion ein Ost Redakteur und ein West Redakteur, oder Redakteurin. Genauso Kultur, Literatur alles. Und sobald die alle in einem Zimmer saßen und gemeinsam ein Feld verantworten mussten,

haben die sich prima zusammengerauft, weil, es ging dann um Sachthemen, und die ganze Ideologie fiel hinten runter. Das finde ich ein ganz interessantes Experiment, also wenn Sie jemanden von Deutschlandradio oder vielleicht sogar zwei aus dem Osten und Westen kriegen könnte, das wäre bestimmt interessant.

Dann hatten wir den Berliner Rundfunk, das war eine ziemlich komische Konstruktion, weil er ganz deutlich aus der Hauptstadt und für die Hauptstadt gesendet hat, aber in der ganzen DDR zu empfangen war. [Lachen] Und der war relativ beliebt, weil er ein bisschen flottere Musik gemacht hat einfach, und ein bisschen lockerer im Umgangston war. *Radio DDR* war relative behäbig. Also, womit kann man das heute vergleichen, mit altem *Deutschlandfunk* oder so etwa in der Richtung.

Und dann kam als fünftes *Jugendradio DT64* dazu. Und insofern, ach so, *Stimme der DDR* wurde fusioniert, und der Berliner Rundfunk, existierte zunächst, weiter und wurde relativ schnell privatisiert. Dem Namen nach existiert er noch. Aber nicht mehr mit den ganzen Frequenzen, sondern ich glaube, der sendet wirklich jetzt nur um berlinbrandenburgisches Sendegebiet, und ist ein komplettes privates Radio, werbefinanziert, hat sich auch im Format völlig geändert. Aber da blieben zunächst mal auch relativ viele Kollegen noch und machten erst mal weiter. Und wie gesagt dann gab es also *DT 64*, und das passte nun überhaupt nicht rein. Weil ein zentrales Jugendradio für ein ganzes Land oder mehrere Bundesländer gab es ja im Westen nicht. So nun war die Frage, was machen wir damit? Und dann war angedacht, dass irgendeine diese anderen Anstalten, MDR, ORB zum Beispiel zusammen es übernehmen. Also der NDR wollte nicht, die hatten eine eigene Jugendwelle [aus den westlichen Funkhäusern], die sie in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern ausgestrahlt haben. Es gab dann auch massive Hörer-Proteste [gegen die Abschaltung des Jugendradios DT 64]. Die haben die Autobahn besetzt, die

haben Staatskanzleien [Sitz der Landesregierung eines Bundeslandes]besetzt, weil sie wollten, dass wir weiter machen. Und witzigerweise hat dann der schwarze CDU-MDR uns übernommen, und dann wurden wir als MDR-Sputnik weiter gesendet. Weil ein Problem war, dass die Frequenzen neu verteilt werden sollten. Wir hätten zwar weiter arbeiten können, aber es hätte uns keiner mehr gehört. Was ein bisschen sinnlos ist. Und dann hat der MDR und übernommen, also das war dann da das erste Programm, was über den Sputnik, also per Satelliten, und zwar Astra ausgestrahlt wurde. Weil man davon ausging, junge Leute sind am ehesten bereit, sich so ein komisches Bastelradio zu kaufen, mit dem man dann Satellitenempfang hat. Das ist ja noch nicht so gewesen, das jeder einer Satellitenschüssel hat, und dann so was hören kann. Und es kamen dann später wieder ein paar Mittelwellenfrequenzen dazu komischerweise. Die war noch übrig und da hat man uns dann auch ausgestrahlt, für normale Radios. Und ausgerechnet der ORB war dann aber der Meinung, mit dem „schwarzen“ [politische Richtung] MDR können wir nicht zusammengehen, und die haben dann noch ein eigenes Jugendradio, eine eigene Jugendredaktion aufgemacht. Daraus ist heute „Fritz“ geworden. Über ein paar Umwege.

Also, dass zu der kurzen Frage, wie lange ich da gearbeitet habe, muss man das jetzt als Hintergrund erklären. Also bis 1992 waren die in Berlin, sogar bis 1993, aber es hieß, da wir jetzt vom MDR übernommen wurden, wir haben dann auch von MDR Arbeitsverträge bekommen, müssen wir nach Halle umziehen. Und zwar der MDR-Staatsvertrag sah vor wegen der Dezentralisierung, dass [der Hörfunk in Halle angesiedelt wird, also Sachsen-Anhalt]. Das hatten sich das Land ausbedungen, dass es nicht so hinten runter fällt. Sonst wären nämlich Hörfunk und fernsehen in Sachsen gewesen, alles in Leipzig und Dresden gewesen, und nichts mehr in der Fläche, weil diese ganzen Landesfunkhäuser dann immer mehr einschließen. Das steht im Staatsvertrag, dass das Radio für den ganzen MDR aus Halle kommt. Und Fernsehen ist

im Dresden [Sachsen]. Das sind so die beiden großen Standorte. Zu dem Zeitpunkt war aber noch niemand von den MDR-Radiomachern in Halle. Die wollten da alle nicht hin. Weil, die saßen ja alle in Leipzig oder in Magdeburg und für die war Halle eine Provinz. Dann hat man gesagt, okay die aus Berlin sind eh neu, gehen die mal als Vorboten, dass wir es wirklich so ernst meinen usw., gehen die mal nach Halle. Damals wurde auch das Funkhaus erst noch gebaut, das war so alles ein bisschen provisorisch. Wir haben dann in so einer alten Villa erst mal gegessen. Und das war denn der Punkt, wo ich mich entscheiden musste. Weil mein Mann hatte nach wie vor noch seiner Arbeit, auch sehr unsicher, aber immerhin noch Arbeit in Berlin. Wir hatten eine kleine Tochter, die war damals dann drei Jahre alt, und alle Großeltern waren auch hier in Berlin. Also, wenn ich jemand haben wollte, der auf das Kind aufpasst ... Und ich kannte ja durch dieses Studium in Leipzig, wie sinnvoll so eine Wochenendbeziehung ist und wie das funktioniert. Also das kann man vergessen. Und dann habe ich dann gesagt, gut ich gehe nicht mit nach Halle, damit endete dann auch mein Arbeitsvertrag, sondern mache mich halt selbstständig. Dann hat das mit dem Umzug noch bis November 1993 sich verzögert, sodass ich also dann ab 1.2.93 freischaffend war, aber im Prinzip das Gleiche machte wie vorher, noch bei DT 64 gearbeitet habe. Wie gesagt bis November, und dann habe ich an den Wochenenden Sendungen in Halle gemacht, wenn halt Freie arbeiten, damit die Festangestellten nicht am Wochenende arbeiten müssen. So mich alle 14 Tage oder so ..., bin ich sonntags dann nach Halle gefahren und hab da eine Sendung, eine aktuell-politische Abendsendung gemacht. Aber das habe ich dann, also es war relativ anstrengend, und dann kam dazu, dass der Sender sich in der Zeit extrem verändert hat, und das auch nicht mehr mir Spaß gemacht hat. Das habe ich dann unter dem Vorwand, dass ich wieder schwanger war mit dem zweiten Kind dann beendet. So 1994-95 habe ich dann

Schluss gemacht. Die Sende-Reihe, für die ich da gearbeitet hatte, gibt es inzwischen auch nicht mehr. Die haben sich wie gesagt, sehr verändert.

Und sind viele Kollegen nach Halle gegangen?

Sehr wenige vom alten Stab. Und das hatte relativ wenig mit Halle zu tun, weil wir waren ja relativ jung und viele auch noch ungebunden. Sondern damit, dass der Sender sich verändert hat. Also man muss sehen in der Wendezeit, das war allerdings die Zeit, wo ich im Mütterjahr war (Erziehungszeit), in der Wendezeit hat der Sender sich eine eigene Chefetage gewählt. Es war also relativ ungewöhnlich, aber basisdemokratisch haben die aus ihren eigenen Reihen eine neue Chefetage gewählt. Die alte ist, glaube ich, relativ freiwillig in Ruhestand gegangen. Und dann bekamen wir im Zuge der, weiß ich nicht, also der, man kann sagen der Art Machtübernahme, fand auch in Radio statt. Bekamen wir wieder eine Chefredaktion von draußen aufgedrückt. Und das war ein ehemaliger DDR-Dissident, habe ich dann später erfahren, ich kannte den gar nicht, der mal in seiner Jugend auch bei Stimme der DDR gearbeitet hat, und irgendwie politische Probleme kriegte, und dann ausgereist ist oder so. Der kam jetzt wieder, und das war also eine enorme Aufbruchzeit. Ich habe die dann ab 1990 wieder miterlebt. Und ich meine, die hätte sich wahrscheinlich ohnehin abgeschwächt und ganz so jugendlich spontan wie wir bis dahin gearbeitet haben, wäre es auch nicht weiter gegangen. Aber es hat schon sehr starke Auswirkungen gehabt. Und der Chef macht heute beim MDR übrigens auch so eine Art fast privates Radio. Der hat damals schon versucht, diesen Sender sehr marktwirtschaftlich in den Mainstream einzusortieren. Sowohl was die Musik-Auswahl dann anging, also DT64 hat wirklich die verrücktesten Strömungen bedient, die es offiziell gar nicht gab. Also da gab es eine spezial Sendung in der Nacht wo dann weiß ich nicht, Grunge, und dann noch Hiphop und Rap, als diese aufkam, Housemusik gespielt wurde. Ja am Beispiel DJs wie „Marusha“, die aus

Nürnberg kam, die nirgendwo eine Plattform hatten, die durften dann bei uns auflegen und so eine Nacht-Sendung machen und so. Und das waren so Sachen, die er dann nach und nach, also dann auch unsere politisch etwas aufmüpfigen [frechen] Sendungen hat er dann alles wieder langsam eingestampft, und geerdet, den hohen Wort-Anteil alles. Und was eben bei uns in dieser Wendezeit war, waren unheimlich offene Diskussionen so in der Redaktion und auch viel experimentieren mit technischen Möglichkeiten und das wurde dann alles in irgendwelche Formate gepackt. Dann gab eben ein Format Comedy, damit wir gute Einschaltquoten haben oder so, aber das, was vorher sehr stark politisch satirisch war wurde immer mehr nur witzig, nur komisch oder so. Ja also insgesamt die ganze Atmosphäre wurde wieder sehr viel autoritärer, und ich glaub das war einer der Gründe warum, ich glaub ich könnte die Kollegen an zwei Händen abzählen, die dann wirklich richtig mit nach Halle gegangen sind. Und von denen ist meines Erachtens, auch heute, ich meine auch gut ist auch lange her, keiner mehr da.

(00:22:23)

Ich würde gern ein bisschen mehr über diese Diskussionen hören die passiert sind bevor, sie haben gesagt es gab so eine Chefetage, das von den Kollegen gewählt worden ist, und dann nachher eine Chefredaktion von draußen. Zwischen die Zeit gab es eine offene Diskussion. Also was haben die da diskutiert?

In Prinzip alles, was insgesamt in der Gesellschaft in dem Moment lief. Also die Frage, wo sollen wir denn jetzt überhaupt hin. Wird es die DDR noch geben, wenn ja wie? Was müssen wir alles ändern? Wobei ja dann im Prinzip schon mit den Wahlen im März 1990 sich das halbwegs erledigt hatte. Ja aber dann eben auch viele dieser Sachen, die dann im Zuge dieser Vereinigung oder des Anschlusses, kann man ja eher sagen, sich entwickelt haben, also dass die

ganzen DDR-Betriebe für „einen Apfel und ein Ei“ wie wir in Deutschland sagen, also für nichts, privatisiert worden in Anführungsstrichen um sie dann dichtzumachen. Dass Leute aus ihren Wohnungen mussten, dass Leute die Betriebe, die sie mit eigener Hand aufgebaut haben, wieder abbauen durften, und dann in die Arbeitslosigkeit gingen. Was an den Schulen lief. Wo die Lehrer auch extrem verunsichert waren, und eigentlich den Schülern überhaupt keinen Halt geben könnten, oder auch nicht mehr wussten was sie jetzt noch beibringen sollen, weil ja alles eigentlich infrage gestellt war, was sie bis dahin erzählt haben. Also diese ganzen ..., im Prinzip wirklich alles was in der Gesellschaft eine Rolle spielte, hat eben bei uns auch eine Rolle gespielt.

Und wie hat sich in dieser Zeit, der Praxis von Radiojournalismus geändert. Haben sie immer ... Hat ihr Job auch eine Wende gemacht, oder auch sich geändert in dieser Zeit, oder haben sie immer weiter gemacht wie vorher?

Na nicht ganz wie vorher, nein. Also wie gesagt, wir haben rein technisch mit etwas anderen Formaten gearbeitet. Also, als ich Volontariat machte, 1983/84, war das Radio noch relativ behäbig. Also es wurde zum Beispiel darauf geachtet, dass man reine Formen machte. Also ein Interview war auf jeden Fall ein Interview, das heißt also, akustisch ja, saß man da mit jemandem da, dann waren eben beide zu hören. Und der sagt was und der sagt was. Und ein Bericht war eben ein Bericht. Und der war dann auch aber total trocken. Da war jetzt kein Geräusch zu hören, maximal noch vielleicht gut, vielleicht, dass er jetzt in der Fabrikhalle steht, aber dann hat dann nur einer gesprochen. Und während ich im Studium war, wurden dann die sogenannten gebauten Beiträge diskutiert. Das heißt, das was wir heute als völlig normal kennen, so ein Kommentator Text, und dann kommt ein O-Ton, jemand der was erzählt, dann kommt ein Stück Atmosphäre weiß ich, der Bagger fährt gegen die Wand, und dann wird wieder was erzählt

von beiden Seiten, und dann kommen noch irgendwie Geräusche, Musik irgendwas dazu, das war neu. Und da haben die dann an der Uni untersucht, ob das jetzt eine neue Genre-Form ist. Ich hab dann in meiner Diplomarbeit geschrieben, es ist totaler Quatsch. Es sind nur andere Mittel um letztendlich das gleiche wie einen Bericht, eine Reportage, ein Interview, ein Porträt zu gestalten, ja sind einfach nur andere Mittel, aber es ist halt einfach lebendiger. Ich glaube, das hatte jetzt relativ wenig mit der Wende zu tun. Das hat einfach unheimlich zugenommen. Und dann sind wir sehr viel kurzer und knapper geworden, also es war, aber das war auch schon Trend beim Jugendradio zu DDR Zeiten einfach, weil die Hörgewohnheiten nicht dem entsprachen, was man noch so aus dem Dampfradio kannte. Also jetzt man hört wirklich aufmerksam zu, wenn einer 10 Minuten was erzählt. Ja und als ich dann wieder kam, waren eben in diesem Abendjournal die Beiträge 3 : 30, 3 Minuten 30 Sekunden, das war die Norm. Also gut 3 : 40, 3 : 20 ging auch, aber so relativ strikt. Und das hatte sich alles ein bisschen mehr beschleunigt, was auch sicherlich damit zu tun hatte, dass wir uns dem, was im Westen gesendet wurde, noch deutlicher anpassen mussten. Die haben in Berlin immer alles empfangen können, so war es nicht, aber das denke ich war also ... auch ein bisschen Zug der Zeit. Das hatte jetzt nicht nur mit der Wende zu tun.

(00:26:54)

Ich würde jetzt gerne ein bisschen weiter hören über den Journalismus in der DDR. Was war Ihre Meinung nach der Rolle der Journalist in der DDR?

Der Journalist war Agitator und Propagandist, [*Lachen*], ich denke diesen Lehrsatz haben sie schon viel gehört. Ja, also das war eine ganz deutlich staatstragende ... und Organisator aber auch ... ganz deutlich staatstragende Rolle, und die wurde auch sehr ernst genommen. Das mag

in kleineren Redaktionen in der Provinz nicht ganz so schlimm gewesen sein, aber wir waren ja nun wirklich in der Zentrale, und zum Beispiel, Rundfunk und Fernseher waren staatliche Komitees, die beim Ministerrat der DDR angesiedelt waren. Wir waren also nicht direkt Partei Radio, während ja das Neue Deutschland zum Beispiel oder auch die Bezirkszeitungen unterstanden richtig der SED. Und es gab aber auch Zeitungen, die von anderen Blockparteien waren. Ich weiß nicht ob Sie das schon gehört haben, also die CDU die es auch in der DDR gab, oder die LDPD, die Bauernpartei, die hatten eigene Zeitungen.

Genau, ja.

Allerdings kann man nicht sagen, dass sie deshalb sehr viel freier waren. Von den allgemeinen Staatsdoktrinen. Und also das haben die einmal dadurch abgesichert, dass sie versucht haben, möglichst viel Genossen unter den Journalisten zu haben, also die haben auch im Studium massiv geworben. Und dann gab es jeden Morgen eine Sitzung, wo tatsächlich richtig Direktiven vom Zentralkomitee der SED durchgestellt worden. Also beispielsweise wird jetzt eben wieder über die Planerfüllung ganz viel diskutiert, es darf aber nicht erwähnt werden, das - weiß ich nicht - der Artikel gerade knapp ist, damit die Leute nicht noch mehr kaufen. Oder wir bezeichnen jetzt das und das Land nicht mehr als jungen Nationalstaat, weil, die Führung war grade in Richtung Westen unterwegs. Also das war tatsächlich so und da sollte auch jeder so ein Büchlein haben, wo er immer fleißig seine neuesten Direktiven rein schrieb. Also das war richtig so von oben durchgestellt und das hatte dann so zu sein. Und das funktionierte dann auch so, dass also ehe man jetzt los gerannt ist um irgendeinen Beitrag zu machen, hat man den vorher vorgestellt. Und der wurde dann noch eingeplant. Das ist dann in Prinzip nicht sehr viel anders also heute, wenn ich als Freie, muss ich auch erst mal eine Redaktion finden, die das haben will. Also dabei passierte schon mal die erste Vorauswahl, wenn was zu Irres kam, haben die gesagt:

„Machen wir nicht, wollen wir nicht, haben wir nicht.“ Dann hatte man normalerweise, wenn man dann halbwegs fertig studiert war, seinen Beitrag gemacht, wie man dachte, und dann wurde der noch mal abgehört. Also gegengelesen. Und auch dazu die Töne gehört. Und das durfte nur ein bestimmter Kreis der Kollegen. Die hatten also die sogenannte Abhörerlaubnis. Was nichts mit der Stasi zu tun hat, sondern damit, weil es ja Rundfunk war, dass man... Also, wir hatten dann damals noch mit Schreibmaschine so ein Stück Manuskript geschrieben, Autorentext, dann kam der Band Einspieler nur kurz markiert und dann wieder so ein Stück Autorentext, und wir haben uns nicht die Mühe gemacht diese ganze O-Töne abzuschreiben, das wäre in aktuellen politischen Sendungen auch gar nicht gegangen. Und deswegen also abhören, der saß mit dem Manuskript da und: „Spiel ein, ja.“

Dabei ist man schön korrigiert worden, wenn man von der Linie abbricht. Was natürlich langfristig dazu geführt hat, dass man auf der Linie blieb. Wenn man immer wieder, so wie ein Pferd einen langen Weg lang läuft, da ist links und rechts ein Zaun, nach und nach wird es in der Mitte des Weges bleiben. Oder eben man kommt so oft an die Grenzen und stößt sich da, dass man lauter blauen Flecken hat, und irgendwann aufgibt und woanders hingeht oder so. Also so, das war schon deutlich. Wobei, jeder an seinem Zaun ein bisschen gerüttelt und versucht hat, diese Grenzen immer wieder mal zu verschieben. Was eben in der DDR sehr ausgeprägt war, war eigentlich ein sehr enges Verhältnis zu den sogenannten Rezipienten, sprich zu den Hörern, Lesern, Fernsehzuschauern. Und das wurde auch immer extrem ernst genommen. Was heute passiert, dass jemand an seinen Sender schreibt, weil er irgendwas noch mal nachfragen will, oder ein Problem hat oder so, und das wird völlig ignoriert. Das hätte in DDR nicht gegeben. Also das war unheimlich wichtig, das würde sehr ernst genommen, weil man immer dachte, an der Stelle meldet sich das Volk, dem wir dauernd was erzählen, mal zurück, das müssen wir jetzt

auch ernst nehmen. Und wir hatten beim Jugendradio oft so eine Situation. Ich erinnere mich an eine Sache, da sind wir nach Neubrandenburg gefahren. Da war eine Schule, deren Turnhalle schon ewig gesperrt war, weil die mit dem Dach nicht fertig wurden, und die Schüler und die Lehrer eigentlich waren darüber total unglücklich und haben sich bewusst das Radio hingeholt, und wir haben dann mit dem Bürgermeister und mit sonst wem geredet, damit sich endlich was bewegt. Also, dieser politische Organisator konnte auch manchmal helfen. Und das hat, glaube ich, dann auch ausgemacht, dass die nach der Wende auch für uns gekämpft haben. Das da einfach das Gefühl war, wir können an den politischen Verhältnissen nicht viel ändern, und die müssen im Radio auch überlegen was sie sagen usw. aber man kann sich im Prinzip auf die verlassen. Das sind nicht die, die uns die ganze Zeit Lügen erzählen oder uns irgendwie mies behandeln, sondern die wollen eigentlich auch, dass sich was verbessert. So ungefähr denke ich, das war ein Grundkonsens. Und es gab auch wirklich Sendungen, die sich mit Leserbriefen beschäftigten, wo ein Stück Leserbrief kam und dann wurde das beantwortet, oder irgendwie was dazu gesagt oder so, oder Hörerbrief. Das war also ein sehr enger Kontakt. Das war wiederum die Kehrseite dieser Medaille. Also heute, wo einerseits Medien dazu führen können, dass man sich tierisch aufregt. Dass irgendein Skandal wochenlang hoch gepusht wird, aber sich trotzdem nichts ändert. Und andere Themen, die unheimlich wichtig sind, die die Leute eigentlich direkt betreffen, finden gar nicht statt. Oder so am Rande, dass es keiner mitkriegt. Das hat es eigentlich nicht gegeben. Also das war schon ganz eigenartig, es war einerseits viel wichtiger, viel kontrollierter auch, und viel überwachter, aber dadurch eben auch irgendwie von mehr Bedeutung. Während heute, heute schreiben sie so, morgen schreiben sie so, ist auch egal.

[Lachen]

(00:33:32)

Und, was war der Status oder Stand der Journalist in der DDR? Wie wurden sie das beschreiben?

Ich denke das war eher zweigeteilt. Zum einen war den Leuten schon klar, dass wir quasi im weitesten Sinne Organe der Partei sind, und uns da an diesen politischen Kurs halten müssen. Wobei das eben sehr unterschiedlich ist. Es gab auch Publikationen, die heute noch existieren wie *Das Magazin* zum Beispiel, oder so, die hatten in gewissen kulturellen Freiraum zum Beispiel. Wo also klar war das die ... Die haben immer mal so immer ein Beitrag drinnen gehabt, wo es um Frauenrechte ging, relative dröge oder so, aber dann dafür aber wieder ganz viel Mode, Kultur, und weiß ich nicht, eine erotische Geschichte oder so. Es war dann so ein, dann könnten man den einen Beitrag überblättern, und die anderen Sachen lesen. Also, das war schon sehr unterschiedlich. Und dann kam es natürlich darauf an, wie die Leute jetzt zu diesem Staat standen. Also wer natürlich dem sowieso ablehnend gegenüberstand, der wird mit einem Journalisten nicht viel anfangen können. Weil er ihn als verlängerten Arm der Partei empfindet. Wobei das dann wieder von Mensch zu Mensch auch noch ganz unterschiedlich sein könnte. Und wer dem Ganzen so relativ gelassen gleichgültig gegenüberstand, der dachte sicherlich, ja ist doch ein super Beruf, die kommen viel rum und erleben was oder so. Und dann hatte gerade Radio und Fernsehen, hat auch noch so ein bisschen, Glamour-Charakter. Ja also das war also denke ich diese Diskrepanz, wo man immer zwischen Baum und Borke hing, also ich hatte dann in der noch DDR-Zeit, in der Schulredaktion gearbeitet, also relativ viel mit Lehrern zu tun, wir waren dann auch auf dem Lehrer-Kongress. Und das war jetzt wieder immer unser Problem, also auf der einen Seite, Lehrerkongress bedeutete, dass da Margot Honecker vorne saß, die Bildungsministerin die auch ihren Stall mit einer sehr harten Hand geführt hat. Was ich von meiner Mutter weiß, und Torsten von seinen Eltern. Und auf der anderen Seite wollten wir vom

Radio aber von den Delegierten, die denn da waren, von den Lehrern, ja auch gerne ein paar neue und frische Aussagen haben. So dass die auch überlegt haben, sie hatten ja zum Teil wirklich gute Ideen, wollten Sachen anders machen, aber wie viel dürfen sie davon sagen, wenn das jetzt im Radio kommt, dann ist vielleicht der Versuch schon gestorben, weil sie es zu früh gesagt haben. Was sonst vielleicht an ihre Kleinschule irgendwo ganz gut gegangen wäre, wenn der Direktor mitspielt. Das war immer so ein Balanceakt, und wir wollten auch nicht so dröge (langweilige) Kongress Berichterstattung machen, wo wir nur vorlesen, was Frau Honecker grade gesagt hat. Das wollte kein Schwein hören. Also das war wirklich immer so ein Eiertanz. Wo man immer so einen kleinen Schritt vorwärts und wieder einen zurück macht, sich so versuchte, sich dann irgendwie da durchzuhangeln.

(00:36:39)

Und haben sie da unter eine bestimmte Ethik oder Verhaltensnormen in der DDR als Journalist gearbeitet, gab es ein Prinzip unter den Sie gearbeitet haben, außer Organisator ...

Also so weit mir das begegnet ist, war immer ganz wichtig, dass die Leute, mit denen wir zu tun hatten, man hat als Journalist immer seine Interviewpartner, Leute die einem Informationen geben und so, dass die mit dem Produkt was raus kommt, auch leben können. Und dass deren Souveränität auch gewahrt wird, also dass man zum Beispiel jemand der sich dann dauernd verspricht oder so, so schneidet, dass er wirklich gut klingt. Auch zum Beispiel wir haben dann zum Teil auch Sachen, bevor wir die wiederum in der Redaktion veröffentlicht haben, mit den Leuten noch mal abgestimmt, damit die keinen Ärger bekommen. Weil wir auch wussten, was da eventuell dann, wenn die sich ein bisschen zu mutig geäußert haben für die dran gegangen kann. Also das war eigentlich immer so das wir, und eben auch die Hörer, eigentlich immer als Partner

gesehen haben. Also dieses Ethos habe ich eigentlich überall angetroffen. Ich wüsste jetzt nicht, was heute jetzt viele machen. Die gehen da irgendwo hin, machen ein paar nette Fotos, und schreiben irgendeinen völlig bescheuerten Text dazu, der nichts mit der Tatsache zu tun hat. Nur weil sich das gut verkauft, und nett liebt, oder berührend, oder weiß ich was. Also so was wäre den meisten Kollegen sehr schmerzlich gefallen, also die, die ich getroffen habe, haben so was nicht gemacht. Das war eigentlich wichtig, also so weit es möglich war halbwegs wahrhaftig zu bleiben.

(00:38:17)

Jetzt würde ich gerne ein bisschen hören über Ihre Wende Geschichte hören. Ich weiß, dass sie ein ganz spezielles Erlebnis hatten in die Wendezeit. Also wie sie die Wende erlebt haben.

Also ich war wie gesagt bei DT64 in der aktuell-politischen Redaktion, und das hieß, dass wir das Frühprogramm verantwortet haben. Und Frühprogramm begann damals noch, war noch ein produzierendes Land, um 4. Früh um 4 und das bedeutet Nachtdienst davor. Also wir sind gleich abends da geblieben. Haben über Nacht noch Meldungen verfolgt, und wo das auch irgendwie auch möglich war, auch versucht dann aktuelle Töne irgendwie rein zu bekommen in das Frühprogramm. Das ging von 4 bis 9, also 5 Stunden Magazin mit vorbereiteten Beiträgen klar. Auch zum Teil Beiträgen, die auf unser eigenes Nachmittagsprogramm verwiesen, auch längeren Stücken dann. Aber war eben auch irgendwas Aktuelles. Ich weiß, einmal saß ich da und hab verzweifelt versucht, Rügen-Radio anzurufen, weil es eine Meldung gab, über ein DDR-Schiff, was auf der Ostsee irgendwie in Seenot war. Und das war natürlich extrem schwierig, gab ja kein Internet. Man musste im Telefonbuch gucken. Es war ja nachts, also war auch wenig da

besetzt. Aber irgendwann habe ich das auch noch hingekriegt, sodass wir wussten wie es den Leuten auf dem Schiff geht.

So und dann bin ich Ende September 1989 in Mutterschutz gegangen. Weil ich dann schwanger war und das war ja dann eigentlich die heißeste Zeit in der DDR. Oder, wo das dann kurz vor diese Wende stand. Deswegen war ich auch nicht bei dieser Demonstration am 4. November auf dem Alex. Dabei wäre ich auf jedenfalls dabei gewesen, aber ich war so dick, dass es irgendwie nicht gut gewesen wäre. Und der 30. Oktober war eigentlich der Entbindungstermin, also das wäre ein bisschen lebensmüde. Das habe ich mir dann im Fernsehen angeguckt. Also das war eine, wie soll ich sagen, das kann man vielleicht jetzt mit diesem Frühling vergleichen, wo man die ganze Zeit drauf gehofft hat, das diese Erstarrung und dieses Eis sich mal löst, und jetzt endlich, endlich was passiert, endlich wärmer wird, und das kam dann wirklich so bruchartig. So ähnlich wie jetzt das Wetter sich entwickelt hat, das ist eigentlich ein ganz guter Vergleich. Und dieser Überdruß mit der Erstarrung, mit dem ... das sich nichts bewegt, das es überall aneckt und man hat auch richtig gemerkt, wie dieses Staatswesen so auf lauter platten Reifen vor sich hinholpert. Es rollte nicht mehr glatt, das war völlig klar an allen Ecken und Enden knirschte es und fiel auseinander. Aber es war eben nicht klar, wie soll das jetzt enden oder weitergehen. Weil wir waren nicht allein auf der Welt, auf irgendeiner Insel, sondern es war klar: Wir gehörten zum Warschauer Pakt. Wir haben, gut die Zahl wusste man damals nicht, aber wir haben 500,000 sowjetische Soldaten im Land. Und dann gab es ja auch immer diesen Alleinvertretungs-Anspruch der Bundesrepublik. Deswegen war das ja möglich, was eigentlich irre ist, wenn Sie sich überlegen, irgendein kanadischer Bürger könnte in eine Botschaft der USA gehen, und wird sofort ein USA-Pass kriegen. Etwas komische Konstruktion, oder jeder Mexikaner könnte das tun. Aber die Bundesrepublik hatte diesen

Alleinvertretungsanspruch, dass sie für alle Deutschen das Mutterland ist. Das heißt, jeder DDR-Bürger, der es schaffte, in eine bundesdeutsche Botschaft zu kommen, hatte den Anspruch sofort einen bundesdeutschen Pass zu bekommen. Das war einer der Gründe, warum die DDR die Grenze so zugemacht hat, und da so, aus heutiger Sicht, paranoid war, sozusagen.

Aber wirklich jeder DDR-Bürger könnte jederzeit Bundesbürger werden, wenn er das wollte. Und insofern war auch klar, dass in dem Moment, wo die DDR aufhört zu existieren, dass gleichzeitig das andere Deutschland betrifft. Das die sich auch nicht raushalten können, das war jetzt wieder ihr Problem. Die konnten auch nicht sagen, pfft lasst die doch da machen oder so. Sondern plötzlich mussten sie das, was sie in den Sonntagsreden immer gesagt haben, „unsere armen Brüder und Schwestern im Osten“ ernst nehmen. Die waren plötzlich da dann, ich denke das war für die auch nicht einfach. Jedenfalls war aber das eigentlich eine Aufbruchstimmung, wo wir sagten, also wir müssen diese alte SED-Führung loswerden, mit Honecker und Mielke, weil das war einfach deutlich, das war schon Altersstarrsinn, es hatte also, das hatte nichts mehr mit Ideologie und Politik zu tun. Sondern die merkten, dass ihr Schiff sinkt, aber waren nicht bereit den Kurs zu ändern. Also wir saßen quasi schon auf dem Riff, aber mit denen konntest du, die waren so, es war nichts zu machen. Also insofern gab es viele, die der Meinung waren, wir werden diese Führungsspitze auswechseln und dann so ähnlich wie mit Gorbatschow, Glasnost, Perestroika, dann werden wir schon irgendwie umbauen. Da haben auch noch einige an Krenz geglaubt, aber das war so klar, dass er der Kronprinz, also der Ziehsohn von Honecker ist, das sich da viel nicht geändert hätte.

Ja, und dann gab es zu der Zeit schon relativ viele basisdemokratische Bestrebungen. Also das, das war ja dann so ein bisschen, da sind sie in ihre eigene Falle getappt. Dadurch, dass sie immer darauf so gedrungen haben, dass sich jeder beteiligt, war ja jeder DDR-Bürger in

irgendwelcher gesellschaftlichen Organisation drin. Also das könnte der Kaninchenzüchterverband sein. Oder die deutsch-sowjetische Freundschaft, aber in irgendwas war jeder irgendwie drin, und dort gerade ganz unten, und witzigerweise, auch in der Parteiorganisation in der Armee, oder in den Betrieben, die ja auch alle Kampfgruppen hatten, also die waren auch zum Teil bewaffnet, wenn man so will. Da war eigentlich das, wo sich dieser Widerstand zuerst geregt hat. Wo die dann plötzlich ihre bisher immer wieder gewählten Genossen abgewählt haben, und eine neue Leitung gewählt haben, oder eben auch gefordert haben, dass man doch wenigstens innerhalb dieses Rahmens der Partei mal ernsthaft und wirklich die echten Probleme, das waren ja sehr viele wirtschaftliche Probleme, mal wenigstens offen darlegt, oder diskutiert. Und ich weiß, dass in der Parteiversammlung im Sender, unsere Wirtschaftsredakteure gesagt haben, wir sind pleite als Land. Und zwar vor der Wende, also noch eine ganz, es war mindestens schon Sommer 90, wenn nicht sogar im Frühjahr, also Quatsch 89, also noch bevor das so offensichtlich war, alles Krachen ging. Die hatten also irgendwie Einblick da rein bekommen, wie tatsächlich die Auslandsschulden die DDR aussahen, das heißt also dieses zunehmende Gefühl, es kann auf keinen Fall so weiter gehen. Aber die Frage ist halt wie, wie macht man weiter, hat sich unheimlich zugespitzt.

Und ja nun bin ich in der Lage erst mal zu Hause geblieben, und hab dann am 9. November meine Tochter bekommen, und dadurch haben wir erst mal in der Familie das gar nicht mitbekommen, dass die Mauer gefallen ist. Das spielte überhaupt nicht eine Rolle.

Also Sie waren beschäftigt.

Und dann muss ich sagen, dass ich damals dachte, als die dann so schnell die Mauer geöffnet haben, das war es jetzt mit der DDR. Weil mir schon klar war, dass die im Prinzip wirklich nur durch diese Abschirmung existieren konnte. Weil all die Probleme die wir vor '61

hatten, dass also alle jungen qualifizierten Leute in den Westen gegangen sind, weil sie da einfach besser verdienen könnten. Die würden ja sofort wieder losrennen. War ja klar. Und damit würde dieses Land noch mehr ausbluten, und da habe ich also gedacht, da wird dann auch nicht mehr viel sich mit Reformen und so tun, weil wenn die Leute jetzt nur gucken, wo sie am besten schnell gutes Geld verdienen, was man ihnen ja nicht verdenken kann. Werden die aber keine Zeit in dieses Land stecken, um hier großartig Reform zu machen und irgendwas Neues aufzubauen.

Also insofern hat mich das jetzt gar nicht euphorisch gestimmt. Was ich toll fand, und was wir dann 1990 gemacht haben, war, dass ich endlich mal nach Paris konnte. Das war ja mein geheimer Traum, wo ich dachte, du kannst das mal als Rentner mal irgendwann machen. Aber ja, das war eben gleichzeitig ein bisschen traurig, weil mir war klar, dass das kann jetzt nicht mehr großartig eigenständig weiter gehen.

Und wann sind Sie nach Paris gegangen?

September 1990. Da hat dann meine Mama auf die Kleine aufgepasst. Und dann sind wir ganz billig, mit so einem Billiganbieter, Holiday Reisen, mit dem Bus nach Paris gefahren, und haben dann da, weiß ich nicht, 3 Nächte gehabt und dann wieder zurück gefahren.

Und wann sind sie wieder, wann haben sie wieder gearbeitet?

In der DDR gab es ein so genanntes Babyjahr. Das ging genau bis zum ersten Geburtstag des Kindes. Also am 9. November 1990 hätte ich theoretisch wieder arbeiten müssen. Aber ich glaub ich habe gleich einen freien Tag genommen, damit ich wenigstens zum Geburtstag da war. Also am 10. November dann.

Und hat sich da..

1990...

Hat sich da vieles geändert auf der Arbeit? In diesem Jahr, wo Sie weg war.

Ja, ich meine, ich hab Kontakt gehalten. Ich war so alle 1-2 Monate immer auch mal da, um mit den Kollegen zu reden und mitzubekommen, was so los ist. Ja ja, es hatte sich schon sehr viel geändert. Also wie gesagt wir hatten jetzt keine Chefredaktion mehr, die von der Partei eingesetzt war, sondern eine basisdemokratisch gewählte. Wobei zu der Zeit auch schon das Reinregieren begann, obwohl ja die DDR gerade erst aufgehört hatte zu existieren. Aber ich glaub schon seit Sommer 1990, hatten wir Rudolf Mühlfenzel, das war ein, ja weiß ich nicht, Manager oder so, der aus dem Westen kam, und der hatte den Auftrag diesen DDR-Rundfunk, der ja viel zu viel Mitarbeiter hatte, wie jeder DDR Betrieb, schlank zu machen, damit dann tatsächlich irgendwas in irgendwelche Anstalten überführt werden kann. Und der hatte zum Beispiel auch allen Sendern, also auch DT64 die Auflage gegeben so und so viel Leute zu entlassen. Wir waren ja 120 Mitarbeiter oder so, und das hat dann unsere basisdemokratische Redaktionsleitung dahingehend interpretiert, dass die alle jungen Frauen mit Kindern rausgeschmissen haben. Also schon sehr marktwirtschaftlich orientiert. Und dann bin ich nur durchs Raster gefallen, weil ich nicht im Oktober entbunden habe, wie die Ärzte berechnet hatten, sondern erst im November. Und die mussten bis 31. Oktober diese Liste abgeschlossen haben, wer raus fliegt. Also sonst wäre ich auch dann wieder nicht zurückgekommen. Und im Babyjahr durften sie mich nicht entlassen. Das war so ein Sozialgesetz. Also was heute noch gilt, im Mutterschutz darf man nicht entlassen werden, aber am ersten Tag, wenn man wieder da ist, darf man.

Gut, aber da war die Kündigungs-Welle vorbei, und insofern konnte ich erst mal dann weiter arbeiten.

(00:49:25)

Und also sie meinen, dass vielen die gekündigt waren, waren Mütter..

Ja, ja. Also ich habe das direkt gesehen, und bei uns in dieser Schulredaktion, waren wir 5 junge Frauen die zum Teil schon Kinder hatten, oder schwanger waren oder so. Und da sind genau 2 geblieben. Die anderen drei waren weg. Also ich würde nicht sagen es war nur die Kollegen, vielleicht sind ein paar auch freiwillig gegangen, aber waren jedenfalls aus sozialen Gründen genau die Falschen. Aber ich kann wiederum eine Redaktionsleitung verstehen, die mit weniger Leuten das gleiche Programm machen muss, und sagt, das sind die, die zuerst ausfallen weil irgendjemand krank ist. Ja, das fand ich aber trotzdem, hab ich gedacht, liebe Kollegen. Da sind wir ja schon im Westen angekommen.

Und von diesen Kollegen wissen Sie, ob die noch journalistisch tätig sind?

Umm, hmmm. Also zwei glaube ich nicht. Und die andere habe ich jetzt mal in Marzahn wieder getroffen sie macht jetzt so Beratung für Schulklassen. So Sexualberatung, oder Familienberatung so eine Sache. Also nicht direkt als Journalistin aber so in der Richtung.

Also ich denke da, sie waren noch sehr jung. Die werden sich dann auch irgendwie anders orientiert haben. Aber ich glaub journalistisch arbeiten sie nicht mehr, weil man hatte natürlich mit einem kleinen Kind ganz schlechte Karten gehabt, irgendwo unterzukommen, oder sogar mit 2 Kindern, manche hatten auch zwei.

Also was hat sich verändert jetzt. Also soweit in unserem Programm und in der Art zu arbeiten habe ich mich eigentlich ziemlich schnell wieder zurechtgefunden. Ich habe natürlich

auch in Babyjahr weiter den Sender gehört, dass ich auch so wusste was sind jetzt die Themen, und wie geht man da ran. Und vielleicht gab es auch die eine oder anderen neue Sendereihe, dass ich ungefähr wusste, was da los ist. Und ich hab dann dieses erste Jahr, das war relativ hart, aber auch eine ganz gute Schule. Hatte ich den Job mit 2-3 anderen Kollegen, die Aktualitäten des Tages zu besetzten. Das heißt, ich kam früh um 8 Uhr hin zur Sitzung, und dann wurde gesagt, um 10 ist eine Pressekonferenz mit dem Wirtschaftssenator oder Stiftung Warentest, Greenpeace, Einweihung einer neuen Schule, irgendwas. Und dann bin ich los gesaust, und hab dann für den Abend einen Bericht davon gemacht. Also ganz tagesaktuell. Das hatte den Vorteil, weil die Abendsendung um 18 Uhr anfang, dass ich es immer zum Kindergarten geschafft habe, um das Kind abzuholen. Nicht ganz unwichtig, weil wir haben das so gemacht, da Torsten später anfang zu arbeiten, hat er die „Frühschicht“ übernommen, also sie weggebracht, und ich habe sie aber abends abgeholt, sonst hätte er das nie pünktlich geschafft.

Und das hatte den Vorteil, dass ich dann West-Berlin wirklich gut kennenlernte, weil die Termine waren dann oft Rathaus Schöneberg, Zehlendorf oder Neukölln, Kreuzberg, was ich alles noch nicht kannte. Was ich auch eine irre Situation fand. Ich habe zu dem Zeitpunkt schon 24 Jahre in Berlin gelebt, und plötzlich machen sie die Stadt 2/3 größer, ja. Das ist schon Irre. Das ist so, als ob man in der Wohnung mit zwei Zimmern noch wohnt, und eines Tages schließt einer die Tür auf und da sind noch drei Zimmer. Also, ja das war eine relative harte Schule, weil man, wenn man mittags den einen Termin hat, und muss erst mal wieder eine Stunde in dieses blöde Funkhaus raus fahren, und dann war ja noch nichts digital. Also man musste dann diese Kassette aus dem Gerät nehmen, und die zum Umschneiden geben. Dann haben wir das auf diese langen Bänder gespielt, dann musste man es noch schneiden, einen Text dazu machen. Und das Ganze sollte dann bis 17 : 30 spätestens fertig sein. Das war also eine gute Schule eigentlich.

(00:53:05)

Und Sie mussten aber Ihre Beruf nicht neu lernen, also das war..

Nein,

Und wie wurden Sie sagen was der Einfluss der Wende auf ihre berufliche Entwicklung?

Also für mich war das erst mal ein thematischer, sehr großer Einschnitt, weil mit der Wende auch diese ganzen Umweltproblemen der DDR hochkamen. Und das war dann ein Thema wahrscheinlich, weil ich ein kleines Kind hatte, was mich sehr beschäftigt hat. Und mit dem ich mich dann auch sehr befasst habe. Ich bin dann zum Beispiel in Schneeberg gewesen als Dienstreise quasi. Weil damals die Probleme mit dem Uranabbau und der Wismut AG und der radioaktiven Verseuchung dort hochkamen. Da durfte früher nicht drüber geredet werden. Oder der Braunkohleabbau, und viele andere Sachen, dann auch schon das Thema Gentechnik, das kam dann quasi vom Westen rüber.

Also das waren dann so Themen, die mich sehr interessiert haben, und bei denen ich eigentlich bis heute auch noch geblieben bin. Und die hätte es ohne die Wende nicht gegeben, weil da durfte in der DDR nicht drüber geredet werden. Also insofern hat sich da thematisch so eine Menge geändert, ja und dann eben hat man einfach begeistert diese Möglichkeit aufgegriffen, jetzt wirklich über Probleme die die Leute, die den Leuten auf den Nägeln brennen schreiben und berichten zu können, und recherchieren zu können auch. Wobei ich dann witziger Weise, auch wieder darauf gestoßen bin, dass auch im Westen nicht die totale Freiheit herrscht. Also es war zum Beispiel in der DDR immer schwierig, Gespräche an Schulen zu machen. Weil man immer irgendwelche Genehmigungen vom Schulrat oder irgendwelchen übergeordneten Leuten brauchte. Und das ist im Westen dasselbe. [*Lachen*]. Das fand ich extrem witzig, dass

sich da also gerade im Schulwesen oder so überhaupt nichts geändert hat. Und dann auch die Erfahrung, dass eben auch gerade auf Gebieten der Wissenschaft oder wo es eben um ... na ja ... vermeintliche Skandale, oder Sachen geht, die nicht so laufen, wie sie sollen, oder was die Privatwirtschaft angeht, also dann genau solche Beschränkungen bestehen und man nicht sagen darf, was man gerne möchte. Oder nicht genannt werden will, wenn man einem was sagt usw. Das hat mich dann alles sehr erinnert.

Ja also einerseits eine große Freiheit, viele Probleme endlich ansprechen zu können. Andererseits da, wo es wirtschaftliche Interessen oder staatliche betrifft, ist es jetzt eigentlich auch nichts anderes. Da wird nach wie vor auch gemauert und versucht, dass Sachen nicht raus kommen.

(00:55:56)

Haben Sie bei DT64 oder, also jetzt, haben sie bestimmt, aber haben Sie Kollegen aus dem Westen bekommen, und was war das Verhältnis dazu?

Also das ist, DT64 ist in der Wendezeit eigentlich ein Sammelbecken für interessierte junge Leute geworden, kann man sagen. Also wir haben viele, die heute richtig groß im Medien-Geschäft sind. Es ist ganz witzig, gestern habe ich erst einen Kollegen getroffen, dessen Film, den er produziert hat, hat den Ökofilmpreis gewonnen. Der kam damals im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes, von der Straße zu uns, und das war einfach total flache Hierarchie, und wenn du da ankamst, dann fand sich ein Job, weiß ich nicht, dass du einen Telefondienst gemacht hast oder so was erst mal, wenn man da irgendwie dabei sein wollte. Und in dem Zuge, da hat man den Kollegen über der Schulter geguckt, hat auch noch Tipps gekriegt, ich hab da auch ein paar Leute an die Hand genommen. Und dann hat man seinen ersten Beitrag gemacht. Oder

irgendwas, also wir hatten dann zum Beispiel einen jungen Mann aus dem Erzgebirge kam der, ganz eng provinziell und der hatte das Unglück, schwul zu sein, und ist damit bei seiner Familie raus geflogen, der war vielleicht 17 oder so, der ist heute bei so einem Businessfernsehen in Frankfurt am Main.

Ja, jedenfalls und der machte dann eine ganz irre Reportage über Stricher. Also jugendliche Prostituierte, junge Männer, an Bahnhöfen und so. Weil das quasi ein Milieu war, wo er sich gut bewegen konnte, die haben ihn nicht als Feind angesehen. Und das war natürlich etwas, was es zumindest offiziell in der DDR vorher nicht gab. Was es wahrscheinlich im Untergrund trotzdem schon gegeben hat. Und was aber natürlich auch wiederum nach der Wende dann sehr zugenommen hat. Weil eben da viele junge Leute aus ihren Familien, die völlig zerfielen, weil die Eltern arbeitslos waren, sich trennten, in den Westen zogen. Es ist völlig durcheinander gewürfelt. Und wer dann noch aus Autoritätsproblemen oder weil er misshandelt wurde, oder weil er eine andere Sexualorientierung hat, oder was auch immer. Dann sich dann nicht wohlfühlte. Da gab es eine wirklich eine relative große Gruppe von jungen Menschen, die praktisch so rumzogen. Halb obdachlos waren, oder bei irgendwelchen Kumpels waren, und so, und ich denke, dass dadurch auch diese Szene größer geworden ist. Weil die sich ja dann irgendwie Geld verdienen mussten. Also das war zum Beispiel oft dann total spannend, was diese Leute so mitbrachten. Die konnten das dann zwar nicht fertig schreiben, da haben wir ihnen dann geholfen, aber wie gesagt, wenn jemand mit so einem Thema kommt, das lässt man einfach nicht fallen. Und in dem Maße kamen auch junge Leute, die zum Teil im Westen schon Erfahrungen gemacht hatten, in irgendwelchen Jugendredaktionen, zum Beispiel im Zündfunk von bayrischen Rundfunk. Und wie gesagt, wenn die dann mit irgendwas kamen, und irgendeinen Beitrag oder ein Thema machen wollten, oder sogar dann auch so eine Sendereihe

ist entstanden. Die hieß „Deutschland im Stau“, die hatte so ein akustisches Motiv wie auf der Autobahn, wenn die Leute dann bremsen müssen und nicht mehr weiter kommen und so, aber es war natürlich dieser Reformstau gemeint. Weil das Problem ist ja, auch für die alte Bundesrepublik, was ich bis heute sehe, ist, es gab ganz viele Sachen, die reformiert und erneuert werden hätten müssen. Und eigentlich wäre auch Kohl nicht wieder gewählt worden. Der hatte eigentlich abgewirtschaftet und auch der Bundesrepublik hätte es gut getan, wenn da was Neues gekommen wäre. Aber durch den Anschluss der DDR, hatte man das Gefühl, na ja jetzt kommen so viele neue Leute dazu, jetzt müssen wir die in unsere Struktur einsortieren. Wir können jetzt nicht auch unsere Strukturen ändern, das ist zu viel Veränderung auf einmal. Und außerdem haben wir den „Krieg“ gewonnen. Das kam also noch dazu, diese Mentalität, wir haben es immer gesagt wir haben jetzt recht behalten. Pfft. So.

Ein gutes Beispiel ist das Schulwesen. Also es gab in der Bundesrepublik eine große Bewegung dazu, eine Gesamtschule zu schaffen. Diese drei Gliederungen: Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium aufzutrennen. Weil es keine Übergänge dazwischen gab, und weil es die Leute schon sehr früh in der Schublade gepackt hat. In vielen Ländern schon nach der 4. Klasse, also mit 8 Jahren. Und gerade Kinder, die aus Familien kamen, wo nicht so gut Deutsch gesprochen wird, sei es aus Bildungsgründen oder weil sie einen Migrationshintergrund haben, die haben bis zur 4. Klasse nicht die Chance gehabt, das aufzuholen. Zumal es auch das, was es heute gibt, Förderkurse schon für Kindergartenkinder und so, gar nicht gab. Die kamen also oftmals mit der 1. Klasse, zum ersten Mal in eine deutsche Umgebung. Also die 4 Jahre haben sie gebraucht, um es aufzuholen, dann war ihr Leistungspotenzial gar nicht zu erkennen, und dann waren sie in die haupt- oder Realschule abserviert. Jedenfalls das war bekannt, da gab es eine riesen Bewegung was dran zu ändern, und mit dem Anschluss der DDR, haben diese neuen

Länder auch erst mal dieses bescheuerte Schulsystem übernommen, obwohl sie ein besseres hatten. Und heute ist man dann 20 Jahre später, letztendlich bei einem Schulsystem, was nicht in der Ideologie, aber in der Struktur, dem der DDR viel näher ist. Weil nun endlich diese Reformbewegung des Westens auch durchgegriffen hat. Aber eigentlich in vielen Sachen war es ein also, ein Rückschritt. Und dann eben, dass wir noch ein paar Jahre Kanzler Kohl bekommen haben, mit seinem sehr behäbige Aussitzen von Problemen, anstatt sie anzugehen. Das war auch, denke ich, für die alte Bundesrepublik nicht so gut, aber gut, das ist halt so gelaufen. Wo waren wir aber eigentlich...

Diese westdeutschen Kollegen...

Ach so, genau, die haben also bei uns auch die Chance gesehen, ich meine in den Westdeutschen Funkhäusern gab ja Jugendredaktionen, die auch ein bisschen mehr Narrenfreiheit hatten, aber es war doch auch sehr vieles festgefahren in ordentlichen Gleisen, und das macht man nun mal so. Die durften sich bei uns ausprobieren. Und dann gab es dieses „Deutschland im Stau“ zum Beispiel, und das war von der Machart und wie sich es anhörte, sehr schrill sehr stark, wie man heute Comedy macht, aber eben mit einem sehr starken politischen satirischen Anspruch. Also genau dieser Reformstau, oder diese von vorne rein falschen Versprechungen der Politiker, also dieser Satz von damals, Blüm der war Sozialminister, „die Rente ist sicher“, alle werden weiter ihre Rente auf jeden Fall bekommen usw. Und solche Sachen wurden da hinterfragt, oder eben auseinandergenommen, wenn sie in letzter Woche noch das gesagt haben, und nächste Woche dann dieses. Und das aber auf eine sehr witzige Weise zum Teil so mit nachgestellten Szenen, zum Teil mit Originaltönen und mit sehr viel Geräuschen und so. Und das war dann auch eine richtige Kultsendung. Und die grundsätzliche Idee hat glaube ich damals Pierre..., jedenfalls ein Kollege aus Nürnberg mitgebracht, aber es gab dann

sehr viele Kollegen von Jugendradio die dann voll eingestiegen sind. Es hat sich fantastisch ergänzt, und das war eben dieser gemeinsame Anspruch so ein bisschen rotzig frech das Establishment zu ärgern. Und das hat eigentlich sehr gut funktioniert und kam auch bei den Hörern sehr gut an.

(01:03:32)

Also da gab es eigentlich keine wie soll ich sagen, Vorbehalte oder so, wir waren da gegenseitig aufeinander gespannt und auf die Themen hatten wir eben auch entsprechend eine ganz andere Sicht. Aber die waren auch uns gegenüber nicht überheblich. Und haben gesagt, ihr habt immer Staatsrundfunk gemacht, sondern haben das als eine tolle Möglichkeit empfunden was auszuprobieren. Also man hat einfach geguckt, wir haben, wie gesagt 24 Stunden Programm gehabt, wo passt jetzt irgendwas rein. Und es gab halt noch nicht diese Vorschrift, ja der Wortanteil darf aber nur 17% sein oder 11 oder so. Sondern, wenn du was Gutes zu erzählen hast, dann mach doch.

Hatten Sie nach der Wende mehr oder weniger Autonomie in ihre Arbeit? Oder war das nicht so ein Unterschied?

Als im Prinzip zunächst mal natürlich mehr, weil ganz viel wohin es gehen sollte und was jetzt gemacht werden so, war ja immer von der Partei vorgegeben, zum Republik-Geburtstag, zum Ersten Mai, und irgendwelche Planerfüllung und weiß ich nicht was, und schreiben vorgefertigte Sachen, die gemacht werden müssen. Das ist schon heute deutlich ... oder sagen wir mal so, es war in der Wendezeit sehr viel mehr möglich, es ist heute auch wieder beschränkt, aber anders. Also zum Beispiel mein Thema Umwelt, mit dem ich ja dann viel zu tun hatte. Da gab es dann in der Wendezeit und danach, und übrigens auch in der ARD und im ZDF gab es

festen Umwelt-Sendungen, weil eben auch dieses Thema damals gesellschaftlich einfach noch mehr diskutiert wurde. Aber mit dem Jahr 2000 kann man sagen, sind in fast allen ARD und ZDF Anstalten diese Umwelt-Sendungen verschwunden. Oder eingepasst worden in andere Themen, also entweder Umwelt und Landwirtschaft oder Umwelt und Wissenschaft, beispielsweise. Was natürlich immer dazu führt, dass man das eben nicht mehr als alleinstehend betrachtet, sondern wenn Umwelt und Landwirtschaft ist, ist immer „wie kann man aus den Pflanzen und den Tieren mehr raus holen“, im weitesten Sinne jetzt. Oder bei der Wissenschaft ist auch immer, ich hab jetzt was ganz Tolles entdeckt, damit kann ich dreckiges Wasser wieder sauber machen. Aber nicht mit dem Gedanken, wie mache ich vielleicht das Wasser gar nicht erst dreckig, sondern immer die technische Lösung. Oder ich kann jetzt genauer messen, wie groß das Ozonloch wirklich ist. Aber die Überlegung, vielleicht sollten wir noch mehr tun, damit es keins gibt. Es ist halt ein anderes Herangehen, was da gekommen ist. Und diese Beschränkung erlebe ich und tausche mich auch mit Kollegen aus, das erleben wir eben sehr stark. Und eben dann, dass diese Themen die wir gerne machen würden, immer erst durch dieses Gitter der Redaktion und deren Denken durch muss. Was natürlich logisch ist. Es kann nicht jeder ständig alles machen, kann man ja nicht senden und nicht bezahlen, das ist klar. Aber das ist halt extrem davon abhängig, was hat dieser Redakteur, dem ich das jetzt anbiete, für einen Horizont. Und klar das ist nicht mehr eine Parteilinie, der das unterliegt, aber es ist zum Teil ein Senderlinie, und auch diese Sender haben auch inzwischen ja viel an Veränderungen und Einsparungen und Beschränkung erlebt. Es wird ja überall gespart und entlassen. Und dann wird da auch alle 3 - 4 Jahre immer wieder alles neu erfunden. Und auch die Kollegen in den Redaktionen sind dadurch ziemlich verunsichert. Ich meine, es ist sicherlich nicht mehr zeitgemäß, eine Sendereihe 20 Jahre lang genau so zu machen. Dafür verändert sich einfach alles zu schnell, aber das ist halt für

die Leute auch sehr verwirrend. Und dann bleiben sie oftmals auch bei Sachen, die ihnen sicher erscheinen. Und das sind dann schon Beschränkungen, also ganz viele Themen, die ich ganz gerne machen möchte, mit denen laufe ich 5 oder 6 Jahre ständig Sturm, bis ich endlich mal eventuell was machen kann.

(01:07:46)

Und finden Sie in ihre Nach-Wende Berufsalltag, also jetzt oder nach der Wende, einige Elemente aus Ihre DDR-Ausbildung noch hilfreich oder sind die noch benutzbar

Ja, ganz viel. Also das reine Handwerk, was wir gelernt haben zum Beispiel. Das ist uns am Anfang furchtbar schwergefallen und wir fanden es wie so eine Art Kasten vor dem Kopf, aber es ist eigentlich ganz gut, es gab so eine Doktrin, dass man immer Thema und Absicht formulieren muss, für seinen Beitrag oder was man jetzt machen will, seine journalistische Arbeit. Das heißt, man formuliert ein Thema, ich habe was gerade gemacht über Trinkwasserqualität. Das wäre jetzt mein Thema und jetzt die Absicht, wo will ich jetzt damit hin? Das muss ich mir vorher ausdenken und aufschreiben. Das wurde dann kontrolliert, wie Schularbeiten, und dann auch nachgeguckt, ob der Beitrag das jetzt erfüllt. Das hat mir aber, beim Exposé-Schreiben für heutige Redaktion sehr geholfen. Ich meine, ich schreibe nicht mehr Thema und Absicht hin, aber ich weiß was muss rein, damit derjenige der das liest, ein Gefühl davon bekommt, was will ich eigentlich machen. Also vieles, was da so schematisiert war und uns furchtbar geärgert hat, war in Prinzip doch nicht so dumm. Und dann auch relativ viel von dem, was wir jetzt zum Beispiel in Marxismus-Leninismus mal lernen mussten. Zumindest was den Kapitalismus betrifft, stimmt ja nach wie vor, und wenn ich heute mit irgendwelchem Versicherungsvertreter, oder Anlageberatern zu tun habe, dann verstehe ich die trotzdem noch

ganz gut. Würde das jetzt nicht alles als unnütz ansehen. Was ein bisschen hinderlich, oder unnütz war, wir haben im Studium noch mal Russisch und Englisch gehabt, aber da haben wir uns fast ausschließlich auf Übersetzen konzentriert. Wenig auf sprechen. Was also einfach wirklich doof ist. Ja das haben wir dann zum Teil dann ein bisschen ausgleichen können durch Bekanntschaften und so, die man gemacht hat. Aber ja, wir haben dann also irgendwelchen blöden Text aus der Prawda übersetzt, und so. Das sind so Sachen auf die man gerne verzichtet. Ich meine, so was gibt es sicherlich in jedem Studium. Aber so generell würde ich sagen, das war jedenfalls keine verschwendete Zeit.

War übrigens einer der Studiengänge, die sofort unterschiedslos akzeptiert wurden. Es gab ja einige Studiengänge, die Probleme hatten mit der Anerkennung im Westen, aber bei Journalistik war das nicht der Fall. Wobei es auch im Westen eigentlich nicht üblich war, dass man unbedingt eine Hochschulausbildung als Journalist machte. Sondern man konnte irgendwas studieren, oder auch nicht, und ging an so eine Journalistenschule, was eher so Fachhochschule oder College ist, vielleicht würde ich sagen, und das reichte dann eigentlich auch. Insofern war das jetzt nicht so kompliziert, das jetzt anzuerkennen.

(01:10:52)

Wie wurden sie, oder was ist ihre Meinung nach der Rolle des Journalismus jetzt in vereinigtem Deutschland oder Deutschland nach der Wende? Ist da ein unterschied zwischen das und die Rolle in der DDR?

Ja, ich denke ein ganz riesiger. Weil es einen großen Anteil Journalismus gibt, der im weitesten Sinne unterhalten soll. Sage ich jetzt mal. Und würde ich sagen, das sind bestimmt 2/3 oder so. Und wenn man sich das Privatfernsehen anguckt, ja fast durch weg. Also das, was wir

da hatten, mit dem kollektiven Propagandisten, Agitator und Organisator, findet nur noch in der Richtung statt, dass die Leute animiert werden irgendwas zu kaufen. Oder irgendwelche Mode gut zu finden oder sich dafür zu interessieren, welcher Prinz grade mit welcher Prinzessin was hat oder so. Das sind halt so Themen, die mir total fremd sind. Okay, ich meine, ich weiß, dass auch zu DDR-Zeiten Leute die irgendwie mal eine Zeitschrift aus dem Westen kriegen könnten, so eine Sache mit Begeisterung gelesen haben. Also offenbar gibt es da ein gewisses Interesse und Bedürfnis. Was ich ein bisschen bedauere, dass diese Bedeutung von Journalismus in der Gesellschaft eigentlich abnimmt. Also man hat den Eindruck, es ist nicht so, weil ja letztendlich durch Veröffentlichungen Minister gestürzt werden, weil die ihre Doktorarbeiten abgeschrieben haben oder so. Aber letztendlich sage ich mal, bewirkt das ja auch nicht viel. Ich meine dann setzen sie die andern Partner rein. Aber eigentlich dieses, was in der gesellschaftlichen Wahrnehmung wirklich was bedeutet, nimmt immer mehr ab. Wobei ich das auch jetzt auch nicht nur dem Kapitalismus anlasten will, sondern ich glaube, das ist auch ein gesellschaftlicher Effekt dessen, dass inzwischen ja jeder überall alles lesen und schreiben kann. Also auch durch diese Verbreiterung mit dem Internet, dass es so viele andere Informationsmöglichkeiten gibt, gibt es halt nicht mehr Die Zeitung oder Das Fernsehprogramm über das sich dann alle aufregen, oder wundern oder freuen oder so. Das ist sicherlich ein ganz normaler Trend. Ich wurde mir halt für viele Themen einfach, von denen ich finde, dass die unheimlich wichtig sind, mehr Aufmerksamkeit wünschen. Aber das geht halt in diesem ganzen Gebrabbel unter. Oder die werden zum Teil dann auch durch die Medien und die Politik gemeinsam tot geredet das die keiner mehr hören kann.

Also ein schönes Beispiel ist diese Endlager-Suche für den Atommüll da in Gorleben. Da haben Jahrzehnte lang Menschen gekämpft das es nicht bei ihnen verbuddelt wird, in diesem

völlig unsicheren überfluteten Salzstock. Da hatten die eigentlich auch noch sehr viel Solidarität von allen Seiten. Und jetzt, wo sie endlich erreicht haben, dass Gorleben nicht mehr das einzige Lager sein soll, ist das aber durch die Politik und durch diese ständigen Diskussionen, und weil man jetzt wieder ganz von vorne anfängt, auch zu so einem Thema geworden ist, was wirklich keiner mehr hören will. Weil das halt so 40 Jahre lang diskutiert wurde, und zu keinem Ergebnis führte, außer dem, dass man wieder von vorne anfängt ...

Und dann mache ich mir ein bisschen Sorgen, weil es gibt noch so ein paar Leitmedien, der „Spiegel“ ist ein super Beispiel, die werden halt von allen so verherrlicht oder vergöttlicht, dass immer alle denken, was jetzt da steht, das ist es jetzt aber auch. Und wenn natürlich einer so Meinungsmachend ist, und es gibt eigentlich kaum noch jemanden parallel dazu, weil die Zeitungslandschaft total im Umbruch ist, und auch in einer Art Verwässerung, wie ich finde, dass tut ja keinem gut, wenn er so wie ein Gott auf so ein Podest gestellt wird. Er zweifelt sich dann selbst nicht mehr an, und gleichzeitig hat man es auch leicht, wenn man die in der Tasche hat, dann hat man gleich alles in der Tasche, dann muss man sich nicht mehr weiter einen Kopf machen. Es wird vieles nicht mehr so richtig wahrgenommen, habe ich so den Eindruck. Und ich meine auch, den „Spiegel“, wer liebt den, es ist wirklich so eine gewisse Elite, und die anderen lesen dann lieber die Bildzeitung. Gut das ist halt so ein Problem. Wenn sie überhaupt noch Zeitung lesen, und sich das nicht nur im Fernsehen angucken.

(01:15:25)

Wie würden Sie sagen, was war der Einfluss der Wende auf Ihre berufliches Selbstbild? War das einer Einfluss?

Ja, auf jeden Fall. Das Gefühl sehr viel freier arbeiten zu können, Themen selbst zu setzen. Oder Themen, die man vorher schon gesehen hat, aber jetzt endlich machen kann, gleichzeitig natürlich eine viel größere Unsicherheit, weil ich ja seit 1993 jetzt selbstständig bin, und immer gucken muss, ob und das ich was irgendwas unterbekomme und was machen kann. Dazu auch eine viel größere wirtschaftliche Verantwortung. Also es geht ja damit los, dass man jetzt eine Steuererklärung machen muss, und dass alles selber machen muss.

Ja, mehr Freiheit, mehr Verantwortung, mehr Stress.

Ich würde ein bisschen mehr hören über diese Wechsel zu Freiberuflichkeit. Also Sie waren fest angestellt und jetzt sind Sie freiberuflich. Was ändert das für Sie in ihrem Arbeitsleben? Wahrscheinlich viel?

Also das war damals eine etwas komische Situation, weil, wie gesagt fast das ganze Jahr 1993 habe ich noch so gearbeitet wie vorher, und wurde aber jetzt für jedes einzelne was ich gemacht honoriert, da habe ich sogar mehr verdient als vorher, als fest Angestellte, weil ich oftmals an einem Tag zwei Beiträge gemacht habe. Oder irgendeine Schicht und einen Beitrag noch, und wenn das alles extra bezahlt wird, das wäre für den Sender sehr teuer. Es hat sich dann auch erledigt. Das war also schon mal einfach ein bisschen witzig diese Situation, weil ich, es hat sich auch im Verhältnis zu meinen Kollegen oder so nichts verändert. Ich habe auch weiter feste Schichten gemacht, ob jetzt Moderation oder Redaktion. Das ist also ein sehr langsamer Übergang gewesen. Das war eigentlich ganz angenehm. Das ist für einen Freien sonst nicht so. Ich hatte eine sehr gute Beratung durch unsere Gewerkschaft. Also ich war in der DDR in der Gewerkschaft, und bin auch im Westen gleich drin geblieben.

Welche Gewerkschaft war das in der DDR?

Das war einfach nur der FDGB, also Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund.

Wahrscheinlich gab es eine Abteilung Medien, aber das haben wir nicht so gemerkt. Gut, die Gewerkschaft hatte für uns nicht so einer Wahnsinnsbedeutung. Also hätte es sicherlich gehabt, wenn man irgendwie Probleme mit seiner Lohnabrechnung hatte, oder keinen Ferienplatz gekriegt hat, oder weiß ich nicht. Die hat sich um alles Mögliche gekümmert. Also ich habe meinen Beitrag bezahlt und das war es, also mit der Gewerkschaft hatte ich zu der Zeit gar nichts zu tun. Und die Westgewerkschaft war aber gerade im Bereich der freien Berufe ziemlich fit. Und die haben dann gleich Seminare gemacht für uns, weil auch das westliche System sehr kompliziert ist für Freie. Da gibt es ein richtiges Beratungsbuch, und das habe ich dann wirklich getreu alles, was da beschrieben wurde, abgearbeitet an Schritten, worüber ich auch heute noch sehr dankbar bin, weil es in der Bundesrepublik einige soziale Absicherungssysteme für freie Journalisten und freie Künstler insgesamt gibt. Die einfach spätestens heute echt lebensrettend sind.

Und was sind die?

Also das ist zum Beispiel die Künstler Sozialkasse nennt sich das. Es ist ja so üblich, also bei meinem Mann zum Beispiel, der bezahlt ja in die Krankenkasse und die Pflegeversicherung, und in die Rentenversicherung ein, und sein Arbeitgeber bezahlt einen andern Anteil. Und dieser Anteil würde bei einem Freien fehlen. Beziehungsweise, man müsste jedem, für den man einen kleinen Artikel mit 50 Zeilen zahlt da noch was drauf drücken, was keiner bezahlen würde. Und da springt diese Künstlersozialkasse ein. Wenn man dort Mitglied ist, dann bezahlt die diesen Arbeitgeber Anteil. Also man muss nur so viel an diesen Abgaben bezahlen wie ein Festangestellter, und zahlt aber in die Kassen genauso so viel ein. Das heißt, man ist dann genau so gut Kranken- oder Rentenversichert wie ein Festangestellter. Das ist also für viele andere die

sich selbstständig machen, einen Problem, dass die quasi den doppelten Anteil bezahlen müssen. Das ist das eine, dann gibt es zum Teil bei den Funkhäusern eine Pensionskasse, die auch von jedem Honorar ein paar Euro oder Cent auch dann so in eine Rentenkasse für später einzahlen. Und es gibt das Presse Versorgungswerk, wo man auch etwas günstigere Versicherungen oder Rentenzuschüsse noch abschließen kann. Und es gibt die VG Wort, das ist so ähnlich wie die GEMA, das sagt Ihnen vielleicht was, wo die Künstler, also Musiker oder so für jedes Lied von ihnen, was im Radio oder auf einem Konzert gespielt wird, ein bisschen Geld bekommen. Und das gibt es auch für Wort-Journalisten. Und auch für Fotografen übrigens. Und da man ja selber jetzt nicht, ich kann nicht kontrollieren, ob ein Zeitungsartikel irgendwo kopiert wird und wiederverwendet, oder ob jemand im Radio was mitschneidet und wiederverwendet, und dafür gibt es eben Anteile. Und da zahlen die Herausgeber ein, und die Leute, die kopieren, die müssen dafür feste Sätze bezahlen und daraus wird dann wieder an die Leute, die was gemacht haben ausgeschüttet. Und das sind alles so kleine Zusatzeinkünfte, die einfach unheimlich wichtig sind. Aber wenn man das nicht weißt, dann kann man sich nicht drum kümmern.

(01:20:47)

Und für den Alltag, für den Arbeitsalltag gibt es große Unterschiede?

Ja, also wie gesagt, das war am Anfang dann gar nicht anders. Aber spätestens als DT 64 im November 1993 in Halle saß wurde es anders. Also ich hab dann natürlich auch schon ein bisschen vorher aufgepasst. Die hatten ja beim ostdeutschen Rundfunk Brandenburg auch eine Jugendredaktion aufgemacht und witzigerweise saßen die am Anfang auch mit uns in einem Haus. Weil in Potsdam-Babelsberg, wo die dann hinzogen, noch nichts fertig war, haben wir quasi Tür an Tür gearbeitet. Und das waren auch Kollegen von uns, die sich entschieden hatten

nicht zum MDR zu gehen, sondern zu ORB. Und da habe ich also geguckt, dass ich auch da mich als Freie Autorin dann langsam schon mit ins Gespräch bringe, und gleichzeitig auch mit auf unserem Gelände saß das ehemalige *Radio DDR*, was grade dabei war, *Radio Brandenburg* zu werden, also auch vom ORB. Und da habe ich dann erste Umweltbeiträge untergebracht. Also ich habe einfach geguckt, weil mir klar war, die gehen nach Halle, du wirst nicht ewig für die arbeiten können, wo kann ich sonst was unterbringen. Und dann habe ich, als die dann in Halle waren, relativ viel bei Radio Brandenburg gemacht. Die saßen dann schon in Babelsberg und über die und ihre Fusion mit dem SFB (Sender Freies Berlin in West Berlin) zum RBB, (Radio Berlin Brandenburg) bin ich dann sogar in die Masurenallee gekommen, zum SFB, hab da also dann auch Leute kennengelernt, für die ich arbeiten konnte, und hatte dann sogar da 3 Jahre ein Umwelt Magazin, das war auch eine ganz verrückte Geschichte. Jedenfalls hab ich einfach versucht, immer wieder dann über diese verschiedene Wege irgendwo, meinen Fuß in die Tür zu bekommen, damit ich dann Beiträge loswerden kann. Also sag ich mal, dieser ständige Wandel, dass Sendereihen für die ich 1 oder 2 Jahre gearbeitet habe, dann nicht mehr existieren. Dass man immer gucken muss, wo man schon wieder jemand anderen kennt, wo man dann auch irgendwas machen kann. Diese ständige Veränderung, das ist auf jeden Fall völlig anders als das, was ich vorher hatte. Aber ich kenne inzwischen auch viele Westkollegen, denen geht es genauso. Weil die haben zum Teil, die sind vielleicht ein bisschen älter als ich, die haben 10, 20, 30 Jahre für eine Redaktion gearbeitet, oft auch mit einem Redakteur. Und spätestens jetzt, wo die in Rente gehen, wird alles anders.

Also es gibt dann bestimmte Strukturen mit dem man gearbeitet hat die gibt's gar nicht mehr, und dann kommen neue Leute, die kennen einen nicht, bei denen wird man nichts los, egal was man anbietet. Einfach weil die ihre eigenen Autoren mitbringen. Also das ist ein ständiger

Wandel. Ich meine es hatte auch seine positiven Seiten denke ich, weil ich dadurch mir auch meine Zeit einfach anders einteilen könnte. Wenn man fest angestellt ist, ist man da von 8 - 18 Uhr mindestens. Dazwischen geht nicht viel. Ich habe das dann genutzt, als DT64 wegging, haben die zum Beispiel viel Technik stehen lassen. Und da habe ich mir für wenig Geld, so einen Redakteursarbeitsplatz, also 2 Band-Maschinen und ein Mischpult so was im Prinzip gekauft, und konnte damit dann also flexibler arbeiten zu Zeiten, wo ich das machen konnte. Also zum Beispiel, wenn es irgendeinem Kind nicht gut ging, dann habe ich die zu Hause betreut und wenn Torsten dann kam, bin ich ins Büro gefahren und habe dann weiter gearbeitet. Also diese zusätzliche Flexibilität, denke ich, das war schon wieder eine sehr günstige Sache.

Also, unsicher, klar man weiß immer nicht, ob dann irgendein nächster Auftrag kommt, aber man kann aber dadurch die Zeit auch sehr viel freier einteilen. Und ich denke, dass ich mehr Zeit für die Kinder hatte, war auch nicht verkehrt. Wenn wir beide in so einem 8-18 Uhr Job gewesen wären, wäre das sicherlich schwieriger gewesen.

(01:24:22)

Ich wollte auch fragen, am Anfang haben sie gesprochen ... Die Frage ist, von die mit Ihnen studiert haben, wie viel von denen sind noch journalistisch tätig?

Ich denke der überwiegende Teil. Also wir haben Moment, wir sind 88 fertig geworden, und wir haben 2008 mal ein Seminar Gruppen treffen, oder ein Studienjahrestreffen, in Leipzig gemacht, und da waren auch, ich denk so in etwa die Hälfte der Leute waren bestimmt da, oder eher noch ein bisschen mehr. Und zum Beispiel auch in der Seminargruppe von Torsten ist der Zusammenhalt sehr eng, die kennen sich alle noch und also es arbeitet kaum noch einer da, wo er damals gearbeitet hat, aber journalistisch eigentlich fast alle noch.

Aber ich meine, wir waren auch eine begnadete Generation durch die Wende. Weil wir hatten noch die durchgehende komplikationsfreie Ausbildung in der DDR. Also ich weiß von Leuten, die dann nach uns noch an der Uni waren, was für ein Chaos da ausbrach, die wussten dann auch nicht mehr. Was sollen sie noch unterrichten. Wer steht noch zu Verfügung? Ist das noch was wert? Wird das anerkannt? Also die haben zum Teil 1 - 2 Jahre länger studiert, um endlich ihren Abschluss zu haben, weil einfach so ein Chaos war. Und wir hatten dadurch, dass wir das Praktikum vorher hatten und wieder in unsere Redaktion konnten, und noch ein Jahr gearbeitet haben, auch schon diesen Praxisanschluss.

Es ist was anderes, wenn man sagt, ja ich habe studiert und ich habe auch ein Jahr da gearbeitet, als wenn man frisch von der Uni kommt und noch nie was selbst veröffentlicht hat, oder so. Das ist ja mal das Schwierigste, eigentlich den Anfang zu finden. Und gleichzeitig waren wir noch so jung, dass wir noch nicht in dieses ganze Hierarchische so verstrickt waren. Weil, es war oft so, dass die Leute, die kamen von Studium, haben 1 - 2 Jahre gearbeitet und dann wurden sie an die Parteihochschule geführt, weil sie später Leitungsfunktion haben sollten. Und dann haben sie mindestens 1 Jahr noch Parteihochschule gemacht. Und waren dann auch in diesen ganzen Gremien, konnten immer weniger als Journalist arbeiten saßen auf Sitzungen, die habe ich auch nicht beneidet. Und ich denke, die hatten es dann schwerer, sich umzustellen. Weil wir waren noch ziemlich frisch und ziemlich offen für alles. Also insofern denke ich, war unsere Generation ziemlich begnadet, behütet aufgewachsen, gut ausgebildet, aber noch nicht so mit dem ganz dicken Brett vor dem Kopf.

(01:26:45)

Ich wollte auch Fragen ob Sie, wenn Sie jetzt Ihren Lebenslauf anschauen, sehen Sie die Wende als „Bruch“ oder sehen sie mehr Kontinuität zwischen das Alte und das Neue?

Hmm ... Also im persönlichen Bereich und letztendlich auch im Beruflichen ist das schon eine Kontinuität. Aber ich sag mal, eine die nicht so ganz natürlich ist, sondern die man ständig sich hat erarbeiten müssen. Also es hat ja viele in der DDR gestört, dass man praktisch, wenn man aus der Schule kam und einen Beruf gelernt hat, oder ein Studium gemacht hat, die nächsten 40 Jahre seines Lebens schon klar waren. Also wenn man nicht grade einen Unfall hatte, oder sonst irgendwas völlig Unvorhergesehenes passierte, gab es ja ganz viele, was übrigens noch im Westen damals so war, die fingen an einer Arbeitsstelle dann an. Entwickelten sich dann da vielleicht ein bisschen höher, aber das Prinzip war, möglichst schon vom Lehrling bis zur Rente in einer Firma. Und vielen war das zu vorhersehbar, zu geordnet, zu langweilig. Zumal eben, wie gesagt, die DDR ziemlich verstaubt war, und da wenig Neues passierte. Und insofern denke ich, also das ist auch für viele im Westen heute so, dass es eine ganz andere Lebensweise ist. Das hat jetzt relativ wenig mit der Wende zu tun, aber da heute noch jemand zu finden, der jetzt schon 20 Jahren bei der gleichen Firma ist, durfte ziemlich schwierig werden. Also einfach, weil sich die gesamte Wirtschaft und das gesamte gesellschaftlich Leben so gedreht hat, dass sich ständig alles verändert. Also insofern hat mich die Wende, garantiert vor einem gewissen langweiligen Dasein bewahrt, wobei ich denke, in dem Beruf wäre das nicht ganz so schlimm gewesen. Und man kann ja auch dann sein Privatleben ein bisschen anders gestalten oder so. Ich glaube ganz so fest gefahren wären wir nicht. Also es hat auf jedenfalls den Horizont und die Möglichkeiten enorm erweitert. Natürlich auch die Unsicherheiten.

Aber es war natürlich andererseits auch schon ein ziemlicher Bruch in der Biografie. Also es ist, ja das kann man wirklich sehr schwer jemanden, der das nicht erlebt hat, klar machen, dass

man quasi in einem gesellschaftlichen System ins Bett geht, und in im nächsten früh aufwacht. Also das ist, und es ist ja eben nicht relativ langsam gekommen, sondern dadurch, dass wir uns doch einfach dem anderen System angeschlossen haben, und dessen ganze Strukturen angenommen haben ... Ja, also man hat im selben Haus in derselben Wohnung gewohnt, eben war noch Sozialismus, und plötzlich lebt man im Kapitalismus. Und mit allen, wirklich mit allen Veränderungen, die das dann mit sich bringt, das hat, denke ich, auch gerade bei unserer Generation drei, vier Jahre der Anpassung gebraucht.

Was ich übrigens ganz interessant finde, ich kenne viele Familien bei denen der Abstand zwischen den beiden Kindern, wenn die eins so Mitte 1989 bis Mitte 1990 bekommen haben, die haben fast alle einen Abstand von 5 bis 6 Jahren zum nächsten Kind. Und das ist glaube ich die Zeit, die man gebraucht hat, um sich so ein bisschen zu etablieren, dass man sagt, okay wir werden noch morgen auch eine Wohnung und irgendein Einkommen haben. Man kann sich noch ein Kind leisten. Man kann dieses Risiko noch eingehen. Es ist ganz interessant. Ich habe das bei Laura im Kindergarten beobachtet, da waren relativ viele Familien, die dann mit großem Abstand ein zweites Kind kriegten.

Und bei meiner Cousine zum Beispiel, bei den ist der Abstand zwischen den beiden Kindern genau so groß. Wir kannten uns zu der Zeit gar nicht, das war überhaupt keine Absprache. Aber das ist genau das Gleiche, und man kann es auch an den Geburtenzahlen ablesen. Die gehen 1995, 1996 wieder hoch. Und nach der Wende ging das gerade im Osten wirklich so runter. Also daran kann man, denke ich, so eine Art Bruch ablesen. Wenn die Leute sich nicht mehr trauen Kinder zu kriegen, das ist denke ich schon, das ist so ein Symptom. So ein Symptom, wo man dann drüber nachdenken sollte. Aber wir haben natürlich die Geburtenzahlen im Osten nie wieder erreicht. Weil das halt, was das anging, wenn es auch auf Pump war, aber es

war ein extrem soziales System, wo man also nicht dem Gefühl hatte, dass ein Kind zu kriegen jetzt ein soziales Risiko darstellt. Und das wird diese Gesellschaft nicht hinkriegen, und darum wird sie auch ihre demografische Probleme nicht im Griff kriegen, aber na ja. Auch eines der vielen Themen.

(01:30:22)

Wenn Sie jetzt Ihre Kollegen anschauen, sehen Sie einen Unterschied zwischen sich selbst und ihren westdeutschen Kollegen, mit dem sie jetzt arbeiten? Oder, gibt es einen Unterschied zwischen einem ehemaligen Ostjournalisten und Westjournalisten?

Hmmm, also ich kenne jetzt nur einen ziemlich schmalen Ausschnitt, also zum Teil Leute mit denen wir studiert haben, die aber eigentlich, wo sie das angestrebt haben, im Westen gut angekommen sind. Weil man muss wirklich sagen, diese Ideologie, die sozusagen den Unterschied darstellte, war ja immer etwas auch von außen Herangetragen, es war ja nicht so, dass wir irgendwelche Windung im Gehirn anders haben. Also man wusste immer ganz gut zu trennen zwischen offizieller Linie und Propaganda und dem was man wirklich denkt, und dem was irgendwo an Wahrheit tatsächlich existiert. Deswegen fiel es, glaube ich, den wenigsten schwer, was das angeht, sich da umzustellen. Und der schmale Ausschnitt, den ich jetzt kenne, wo ich auch Ost und West Journalisten vergleichen kann, ist der von Radio Feuilletonisten, weil wir da so ein Kreis haben von Leuten, die sich treffen, und wo außer mir, glaube ich nur noch ein oder zwei Osis drin sind. Und dazu muss man auch sagen, es ist jetzt auch wieder eine sehr spezielle Auswahl von West Journalisten, weil das sind alles sehr (politisch) links orientierte Leute die, wie soll ich sagen, auch was zumindest das wirtschaftliche angeht, nicht so materiell orientiert sind, auch so im Hinterhaus wohnen noch ... und denen eben das Radiomachen, und

ihre Themen wichtiger sind, als das dicke Auto. Es ist schon ein sehr spezieller Kreis. Und bei denen erlebe eigentlich nicht so viele Unterschiede. Und da spielt auch dieses Ost/West, wir sehen manche Sachen anders, oder haben anderes erlebt, aber das wird gleichberechtigt anerkannt. Also da gibt es jetzt nicht, „Ihr könnt da eh nicht mit reden.“ Also weder von der einen noch von der andern Seite. Wir kommen da eigentlich sehr gut miteinander klar. Ich habe auch eigentlich nicht in den Funkhäusern erlebt, dass man mich jetzt irgendwie deswegen komisch angesehen hätte, oder gesagt hätte, „die rote Socke,“ „alles irgendwie Stasi Spione,“ oder weiß ich nicht, was eine weiter einfallen könnte. Das ging dann eigentlich um Themen, um Fachliches, und wie gesagt, ich habe auch dann relativ nahtlos für den SFB, das Westberliner Radio gearbeitet, das ging eigentlich.

Und da ging es dann wirklich immer um irgendwelche handwerklichen Sachen, wenn man sich da irgendwie mal unterschieden hat. Oder wenn jemand was anderes haben wollte, oder so. Und dann, aber weil die das eben so machen, oder so ausdrücken, oder dann eben jemand einen Gesprächspartner zum Beispiel so ankündigt vor dem O-Ton, und nicht so. Aber es waren jetzt nie irgendwelche politischen oder historischen Ressentiments. Das war eigentlich nicht das Problem.

Und das war unterschiedlich, wie die Menschen halt sind. Manche waren besonders neugierig, und wollten gerade wissen, wie wir bestimmte Sachen sehen. Manchen waren es egal. Aber ja, so sind die Menschen halt. Also das hatte jetzt, glaube ich damit am wenigsten zu tun.

(01:34:56)

Was hat sich in ihrem Beruf in den letzten 20 Jahren am meisten geändert?

Na ja diese Unbeständigkeit. Dieser ständige rasche Wechsel. Also ja, und eben auch diese ganzen Strukturen, die in den, bei mir jetzt in den Funkhäusern, ständig angepasst und geändert werden. Also ich weiß, es gab beim SFB keine Programm-Reform, wahrscheinlich in 20 Jahren oder so, und durch die Fusion mit dem RBB, also mit dem ORB zum RBB, wurde da eben auch ganz viel geändert. Was die Leute auch, die eben dann auch schon 30 - 40 Jahre dabei waren, extrem fertiggemacht hat, unter anderem. Und dann kam noch dazu diese technische Seite, diese Digitalisierung. Damit kamen die überhaupt nicht klar. Und da weiß ich, dass ganz viele aus Überdruß in Vorruhestand gegangen sind. Also wer konnte, wer das Alter erreicht hatte, und wem man da ein vernünftiges Angebot gemacht habe, die sind alle weggegangen.

Ja, und was ich als unangenehm empfinde, ist das auch in den öffentlich-rechtlichen Sendern, die von den Gebühren der Hörer finanziert werden, die dann nicht irgendwelchen Werbeeinnahmen eigentlich unterliegen, dass da immer mehr an Wort, und an, ich sag mal, auch Bildungsauftrag oder vernünftiger Information gespart wird, hin zu einer mehr oder weniger leichten Unterhaltung. Und ich finde, das machen ja die Privaten. Und die machen es ohnehin meistens besser. Insofern sollte man nicht dem hinterher rennen, sondern versuchen, ein Gegengewicht aufzubauen, wo Leute, die das wollen, noch ein bisschen verlässliche Informationen herbekommen können.

Also man sieht es im Fernsehen eigentlich noch stärker, wenn die dann da auch so eine „Daily Soap“ machen, und denken, irgendjemand hinter dem Ofen vorzulocken. Das ist ein Trend, den ich nicht so gut finde, der sich aber deutlich abzeichnet.

Und arbeiten Sie mehr für die öffentlichen Rechtlichen?

Ja ja, beim Privaten kann man als Freier eigentlich gar nicht arbeiten, weil die Beiträge, in dem Sinne, nicht bezahlen. Die machen ja auch keine Beiträge. Wenn man sich das Radio

anhört, maximal rufen die jemand an, was sie nichts kostet, also irgendeinen Experten, oder weiß ich, der gerade zugeguckt hat, wie der Bagger umgefallen ist. Den rufen die dann an. Dafür kriegt er kein Honorar und der Mensch im Studio, wird ja für seine Schicht, die er da macht, bezahlt. Also das ist die einzige Form, wie man als Freier beim privaten Radio arbeiten kann, in dem man so eine Schicht macht als Moderator, oder weiß ich nicht, ob die wirklich noch Redakteure haben, das wage ich fast zu bezweifeln, jedenfalls. Dann wird man halt so als fester Freier für diese Schicht bezahlt, aber da passe ich überhaupt nicht rein. Also die Leute am frühen Morgen schon anzuschreien und superfröhlich zu sein, ist überhaupt nicht mein Ding.

Ich denke da kommen wir langsam zum Ende. Haben sie noch was, dass sie gerne dazu sagen wurden, oder noch fragen?

Nö, das war ganz interessant, nach so langer Zeit über so was mal wieder zu reden.

Ja es war auch für mich sehr interessant...

(01:38:21)

...

(01:39:16)

Was ich noch ganz interessant finde, weil wir gerade von Wende und Ost West sprachen. Ich denke auch, dass die Wende auf einem rein technischen Niveau zur richtigen Zeit gekommen ist. Weil, wir waren in der DDR technologisch immer so bis zu 10 Jahre zurück. Also es war damals schon ganz neu, dass wir für die Nachrichten einen Computer hatten. Also vorher kamen die Nachrichten auf so eine Art Faxgerät, Fernschreiber nannte sich das, als Papierausdruck. Und da musste man sich da so eine Meldung ..., die waren ja von ADN, die konnte man im Radio

nicht so vorlesen. Dann haben wir uns die mal abgerissen und da drauf rumgekrakelt, weil es lohnte nicht, um die jetzt einmal vorzulesen im Radio, dann flogen die ja eh weg, noch mal abzutippen (auf der Schreibmaschine), das dauerte einfach zu lange. Und dann bekamen wir Computer, und das waren noch diese fetten Dinger, wo der Bildschirm dunkelgrün war, und dann so kleiner grüner Cursor darauf rumhüpfte, ohne Maus nur mit Tastatur natürlich. Und dann hatten wir die Meldung und konnten die dort direkt bearbeiten, und erst wenn die bearbeitet war, ausdrucken. Das war schon eine echte Revolution. Also da hatten wir das ganz erste an Erfahrungen mit einem Computer. Und jetzt kam die Wende, und was ich so witzig fand war, dann kriegten wir auch ein Faxgerät, und es gab auch junge Westkollegen, die nicht wussten, wie sie das bedienen sollten. Das heißt, wir waren genau so doof wie die. Das fand ich damals noch sehr angenehm, wir haben das alle zusammen gelernt, wie herum muss ich das jetzt reinlegen, das es auch beim anderen ankommt. Und ich muss ein Fax nicht vorher kopieren, die Maschine frisst es nicht ... Oder es gab genau so Leute aus dem Westen die, wenn sie am anderen Ende einen Anrufbeantworter hatten, erst mal aufgelegt haben, überlegt haben, was sie jetzt sagen werden, sich das sogar aufgeschrieben haben, und dann noch mal angerufen haben. Also diese anfänglichen Probleme mit Technik waren noch ungefähr auf einem gleichen Niveau, wo wir gut anschließen könnten. Aber ich sag mal die Wende, 5 oder 10 Jahre später, und wir wären wie Leute aus der Steinzeit gewesen. Es wäre unwahrscheinlich schwer gewesen, auch technisch da den Anschluss zu bekommen.

Und so wir kriegten dann, dadurch dass wir beim MDR waren, kriegten wir etwas moderne Computer, die auch schon Wort-Verarbeitungsprogramme und so was drauf hatten, und wir haben dann schon 1993, genau als Freie haben wir uns schon so eine Soundkarte bestellt. Genau Torsten und ich, wir haben uns 1992 den ersten Computer selbst angeschafft für Zuhause,

eigentlich mehr so zum Schreiben. Und dann gab es eine Soundkarte mit einem Programm, mit dem man digital schneiden kann. Und damit habe ich auch relativ früh angefangen, einfach weil das auch eine enorme Freiheit bedeutete. Ich konnte dann, obwohl ich das erst vor ein paar Jahren gemacht habe, diese dicken Bandmaschinen abschaffen. Und kann jetzt wirklich zu Hause an einem normalen PC alles machen. Also bisschen Filmschnitt und so, das geht jetzt alles an einem PC. Aber ich denke, wie gesagt, 5 oder 10 Jahre und wir wären in diesen ganzen Strom mit E-mail, Internet und weiß ich nicht was, nur nach einem Anpassungsjahr mit neuem Studium oder so reingekommen. Also insofern, denke ich, kam das auch technisch gesehen zu richtigen Zeit und ich glaube auch, dass so ein abgeschottetes System wie die DDR heute nicht mehr möglich wäre, eben weil es diese ganzen technischen Möglichkeiten gibt. Also zum Beispiel mit dem Handy unabgehört mit jemand telefonieren zu können, da hätten sich diese ganzen Dissidenten, die da irgendwelche Papiere im Hosenbund über die Grenze geschmuggelt haben ... ja das hätte sich alles erledigt.

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